

The Peril of False Prophets (Part 2 of # 24)

Matthew 7: 15-20

In our last study we began to consider Jesus' teaching concerning false prophets, those who come in among the church in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. I remain convinced that this passage needs to be preached and taught in every Bible believing church in the world. We may choose to ignore the dangers, but that will never change the fact that those who seek to spread their false doctrine are prevalent, even in our day.

Really this should come as no surprise to any of us. Satan seeks to do all he can to hinder and defeat the church. One of the tools that he likes to use is deception. If he can distort the truth, causing people to believe a lie, then he has succeeded in his efforts. He used the tactic of deception in the Garden, seeking to distort God's Word in deceiving Eve. [Gen.3:1 – Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?](#) [Gen.3:4 – And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:](#) Satan seeks to cause doubt in the minds of believers, as well as, presenting doctrine that contradicts the pure doctrine of God.

Tonight I want to conclude our study as we continue considering the [dangers](#) concerning false doctrine raised in the text dealing with: [The Peril of False Prophets](#). Last week we noticed:

I. The Exposure of False Prophets (15)

A. Their Danger – Beware

B. Their Description – Beware of false prophets.

C. Their Dispersion – Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing.

D. Their Disguise – Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing.

E. Their Depravity – but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

II. The Evidence of False Prophets (16-18) – Here Jesus reveals several ways that one can identify false prophets. They will often seek to be subtle and deceptive as well, but a close examination will always reveal truth. Consider:

A. The Recognition of Fruit (16) – *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* Jesus provides a simple and yet effective means of detecting false doctrine. We simply consider the fruit that is born of men. We can know and discern their motives and many times their doctrine by the fruit they bear. We find a simple illustration that bears much weight. Grapes do not grow on thorn bushes and figs are not produced among thistles.

- This test will work without fail. The word **know** in the text has the idea of “**complete and full knowledge**.” Allow me to illustrate. There are some who have the ability to properly recognize a tree by its bark or the leaves that it bears. However, not everyone has that ability. I think it is safe to say that all can properly identify a tree when it is bearing fruit. An apple tree will produce apples every time. If you see apples hanging on a tree, you can know with confidence that it is in fact an apple tree. *Rev.2:2 – (Church at Ephesus) I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: **and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:***

- There is something that we need to consider before we move on. Depending on the time of year, it may be difficult to properly identify a tree. In the dead of winter or when a tree begins to bloom, it is possible to misidentify a tree. However, when the fruit begins to show, it is unmistakable. It may take time and prayer, but eventually you will know one’s motives by the fruit he bears. Many times the false prophet will work slowly among people. Often they don’t want to reveal their true motives too quickly. But, if you give it time, eventually the fruit will appear.

B. The Production of Fruit (17) – *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* Jesus also reveals another significant fact. Eventually every tree, spiritually speaking, will bear some manner of fruit. I am aware that all trees are not fruit trees, but when we consider the spiritual nature of man, eventually fruit will show.

- Man has a spiritual nature. He will worship and promote something. He either seeks to identify with and promote the Lord Jesus Christ or he will seek to promote the desires of the flesh, led by the devil and his evil influences. Many may not like to admit it, but we are all servants to our master. We are either servants of the Lord or we are servants of Satan. *Rom.6:16 – Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* The fruit we bear will be in direct correlation to the master we serve, but we will bear fruit that reveals the inner desires of our heart. It may take a while for the fruit to show, but eventually it will come forth.

C. The Condition of the Fruit (18) – *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.* The tree will be known by its fruit. It is impossible for a pear tree to produce an orange. The tree will always bear fruit after its kind. Those who are born again will

produce fruit consistent with their relationship with Christ, and those who are lost will bear fruit that is consistent with their spiritual condition.

- Now we know that God's children fail and miss the mark at times. There have been occasions in all our lives when we have done things that were not consistent with our faith. Even a good apple tree will produce a rotten apple once in a while. It is not impossible for us to sin, but those who are born again will consistently produce fruit that reveals and confirms their salvation.
- I know some lost people that overall are good people. They are considerate of others, honest, hardworking people. They may bear some fruit that resembles that of the Christian, but spiritually their fruit reveals they have never been born again. They have no desire to submit to the lordship of Christ and serve Him with all their being. They do not seek to promote the cause of Christ. We must keep in mind that good people don't go to heaven, and bad people don't go to hell. The defining factor in our eternal existence is our relationship with Christ!
- As we consider the context of the passage, the false prophet will not bear good fruit; he cannot do so. He is seeking to promote his own agenda rather than the doctrine of Christ. He will be deceptive and often manipulative, but in the end, his fruit will be revealed for what it truly is, evil.

I. The Exposure of False Prophets (15)

II. The Evidence of False Prophets (16-18)

III. The Examination of False Prophets (19) – **Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.** Here Jesus reveals that every tree will be examined of Him and dealt with according to the fruit it bears. Keep in mind that the tree represents the false prophet. Notice:

A. The Selection – Jesus is aware of the lives we live. He is aware of our motives and the doctrine we promote. He knows if we seek to serve Him or if we are motivated by the flesh, seeking to promote its desires.

- As I considered Jesus' teaching here, I was reminded that all people fall under one of two categories without exception. All are either a good tree bearing good fruit (saved and born again) or they are a corrupt tree that bears evil fruit (lost and undone before God.) The false prophet, and even the lost man in general, may do a pretty good job of deceiving others, but Jesus knows the heart. He knows those that belong to Him.

B. The Separation – Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down. Each tree that does not bear good fruit will eventually be removed from the orchard; it will be hewn down and separated from the trees that bear good fruit.

- Sadly we live in a day where it is often hard to tell. Many who profess Christ are often no different than the world. It is no wonder that the world is skeptical of the church. There are so many that attend church, claiming to be Christians, and yet their lives are lived no differently than the world.
- Many today have built very lucrative ministries, but they are based on false doctrine and deception. Their focus is not on the gospel of Jesus Christ, but promoting their fleshly desires, using their “so called ministry” as a vehicle for their greed. On the surface, some may have a hard time distinguishing their true motives, but Jesus knows their hearts and He will eventually separate the sheep from the goats. Rom.2:2 – But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. Mat.25:32-33 – And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: [33] And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. The verses in Matthew deal with the Tribulation, but they illustrate the separation that will come for those who sought to please themselves, promoting their fleshly desires and denying the gift of grace in salvation.

C. The Condemnation – Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. It is certain that Jesus dealt with many false prophets in His day and the Word of God is filled with many accounts of those who denied the truth and promoted a lie. Their end is all the same. One day we shall all stand before the Lord and be judged of the life we have lived. The false prophet, being lost in his sin, will be cast into the fire. They lived a life promoting their own wicked agenda, but in the end, judgment will come. These will be separated from the redeemed and cast into the lake of fire. Mat.25:41 – Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: [46] And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

- The false prophet may enjoy a season of dominance and indulgence in this life, but he will eventually be judged for his error and rebellion. Sadly, all those who follow his deceptive teaching will find the same end.
- This is a serious matter because the eternal destiny of souls hangs in the balance. We have the truth of the gospel. We know that Jesus is the only way of redemption. We are obligated to share and promote truth. We must do all we can to keep the false prophet from contaminating the truth. We must ensure that the true gospel is proclaimed to all who need to hear. Eternity is a long time, and those who reject the gospel, following false doctrine will face eternal judgment.

This has been an enlightening study on the perils of false prophets. I pray that you see the urgent need in standing for truth. We need to do all we can to share the truth with a lost and dying world, while seeking to prevent the false prophet from gaining entrance among us.

I am thankful for the truth this church embraces. She was built upon a solid foundation. However, we must not be so naive as to think that a false prophet couldn't enter in among us. Satan would like nothing more than to corrupt the pure doctrine that is taught and preached here. Jesus has given us direction and wisdom regarding these false teachers. [Mat.7:20](#) – **Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.** We must know what we believe and why we believe it. I would urge each of you to study the Scriptures, seeking to know the truths of God's Word. If we know the truth, we will readily spot a counterfeit.

If there is a need in your life, I urge you to bring that to Jesus. If you have never embraced the truth of the gospel, why not come to the Lord right now? Church, we need to pray for wisdom and courage to stand in this evil day. Why not come and seek the Lord to give us the wisdom we need to maintain doctrinal purity?