

## WARNINGS

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Matthew 7:15-23

1. The single most important issue in every person's life is whether or not they have found and entered the narrow gate and are now on the narrow way.
2. Jesus issued a warning when He stated that it is the narrow way that leads to life and relatively few people actually find it.
3. If a person has not found and entered the narrow gate they are on the broad way that leads to destruction.

NOTE: Jesus declared that He was both the Door and the Way, and that no one could come to the Father but through and by Him.

4. Knowing the above, the Devil works very hard:

- a. To distort and discredit the Word of God.
- b. To distract, discourage, and destroy the testimony of those who are on the narrow way.

5. He is helped in this process by those Jesus referred to as false prophets.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, **whose end will be according to their deeds.** 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

NOTE: They will be judged based on their works.

6. Jesus warned His followers to beware of false prophets.

NOTE: The word beware tells us to not bring near, be attentive to, or attached to false prophets.

7. There are numerous Bible passages that deal with this issue.

- a. And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many...24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance." Matthew 24: 4-5, 24-25

- b. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:13

8. God has not left us defenseless.

- a. The fact that Jesus warned us to beware indicates that we have the ability to identify false prophets.

- b. He also commended the church at Ephesus for doing so. Revelation 2:2

"I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.

### I. The description of false prophets.

A. Jesus said, "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

B. Paul used the same terminology in his final warning to the church leaders at Ephesus.

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29

"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to

draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."

C. False prophets are not the same as false Christs.

1. False Christ's are those who establish and promote what we call cults by departing from what the Bible teaches and by offering a substitute salvation.

2. False prophets look like, act like, and sound like one of us.

a. In Jesus' day it was the shepherds who wore "sheep's clothing"—clothing made from wool.

b. False prophets do not deceive the flock by impersonating sheep, although they claim to be one; rather they impersonate shepherds of the sheep.

D. They are effective deceivers because they themselves are deceived.

## II. The detection of false prophets.

A. Jesus stated, "You will know (recognize) them by their fruits."

B. Identifying false prophets requires that we focus on four things.

1. Their character:

a. Are their lives characterized by inward holiness and outward godliness?

b. Are their lives characterized by humility or pride?

c. Are their lives characterized by moderation or excess?

(1) The early church referred to false prophets as "Christ merchants" because they used Christ and the church to serve their own ends.

(2) Paul wrote, "But we are not like **many**, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak Christ in the sight of God." 2 Corinthians 2:17

2. Their authority:

a. Notice in verse twenty-two that the basis for their false hope is their apparent spiritual power and success. Note again the word **many**.

b. Paul warned the Colossians about those who, "... (take their) stand on visions they have seen, inflated without cause by (their) fleshly mind." Colossians 2:18

3. Their creed:

a. What is their emphasis?

NOTE: In warning Timothy about false prophets Paul wrote the following. 1 Tim 6:3-5  
If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, **who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.**

b. What do they not say?

(1) 2 Corinthians 4:1-2

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, 2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating (adding to or taking from) the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

(2) They are not like Paul who wrote, "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." Acts 20:26-27 NOTE: Paul dealt with the full range of biblical teaching on issues such as human depravity, repentance, judgement, personal holiness, selflessness, sacrifice and lordship.

4. Their converts, who will have the same superficial, self-centered, and unscriptural orientation that their teachers do.

a. 2 Timothy 4:3-4

For the time will come when they (people who profess to be Christians) will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

b. 2 Peter 2:1-3

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be **false teachers** among you, **who will secretly introduce destructive heresies**, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 **Many will follow their sensuality**, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and **in their greed they will exploit you with false words**; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

### III. The destination of false prophets.

A. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

B. "But he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven will enter."

1. They will enter by the narrow gate, through Jesus and based on genuine repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. They will walk the narrow way, the way that God prescribes in His Word while being empowered and led by the Holy Spirit.

C. Many will be excluded who sincerely believed that they were included, who confessed Jesus as Lord, and who manifested what appeared to be Spirit anointed power.

NOTE: They will plead their works, and demonstrate by doing so that they never trusted Jesus for their salvation.

D. At the Great White Throne Judgment they will hear Jesus say, "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

### APPLICATION

1. Our best defenses against false prophets are:

a. A genuine salvation experience based on genuine repentance towards God and genuine faith in and surrender to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

b. A growing knowledge of and commitment to the Bible.

c. A personal and intimate walk with God characterized by prayer and obedience.

d. Being filled with, empowered by, and led by the Holy Spirit.

e. A covenant relationship with a church that preaches, teaches, and practices the truth.

2. There is an old saying that states, "There is safety in numbers."

3. That is not always true from a worldly perspective, but it is always true when we are part of a genuine, local body of believers that is actually functioning according to God's original intent.