

Title: Beware of False Prophets

Scripture: Matthew 7:15-20

Speaker: Vic Redding

Event: Sunday Evening Service

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**Matthew 7:15-20** *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."*

William Booth – founder of the Salvation Army once said "The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, heaven without hell." Our century is that century. These things are happening now. One of the biggest dangers are false prophets.

A man who changes an existing road sign might inconvenience drivers by switching the direction of the sign or the sign altogether. One who changes the label on a bottle of poison falsely identifying it as a medication might be charged with murder. One who alters religious Biblical truths can lead others to eternal doom.

1. **The Description of False Prophets** – In order to know a false prophet, we have to know who they are, what they do, and how they do it. The Bible gives us some truths about false prophets in verse 15:
  - a. Our Lord describes false prophets as those who wear sheep's clothing. Shepherds in Jesus' day wore sheepskin. This was a reversible piece of clothing that would work in winter or in summer. People knew who shepherds were because of what they wore. A wolf who is disguised in a sheep skin is extremely dangerous. Once they get in they can devour whatever they like. They do it to get closer to their prey. False prophets may look and sound like someone you can trust but they aren't.
  - b. He also describes them as destructive wolves. Ezekiel 22:27 *"Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain."* Acts 20:29 *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."*
2. **Jesus' first few words were "Beware of false prophets"**- If a person is a false prophet, you must know how to identify them. Again, the Bible gives us examples of how to identify them:
  - a. Beware of those who preach an "easy" religion. Jeremiah 6:13-14 says *"For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."* An easy religion will not offend anyone. Everyone is happy.
  - b. Beware of prophets who push God to the back of their messages. Joel Osteen's success is measured by popularity. He preaches what is popular. II Corinthians 5:19 *"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."* Jesus gets pushed to the back. God did not charge the church to become engulfed in social issues. It's not a preacher's/teacher's business to discuss the welfare system, protest against racial events, or any other matters in church. When church members, preachers, and teachers focus on these things, God gets pushed out. We should be focused on the word of God and getting lost sinners saved. If God's not exalted then the religion isn't worth having.
  - c. Beware of prophets who cast doubts on the scripture. II Timothy 4:3 *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having*

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*itching ears;*” Jim Jones and David Karesh were two cult leaders who manipulated the word of God to say what they wanted to say. People were defiled and killed because they followed the words of man. Their faith was in these men instead of God. There are two things that a cult will use when they twist the scriptures –

- i. They have to deny the work of Jesus Christ and the falling of humanity. People will say that Jesus didn’t do all he claimed to do or that he was just a good man. Some believe that Jesus failed God when he died on the cross because he wasn’t supposed to die.
  - ii. They will deny the true inspirations of the scriptures. II Timothy 3:16 *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”*
3. **The Fruits of a False Prophet** – Second-hand religion says living in a Christian home makes one a Christian. Just because your grandma and granddad were church members doesn’t mean you are saved. Second-hand religion tries to tell you that simply doing the best you can is enough. Our best will never be enough to repay Christ for what he did for us. The power of positive thinking is a big thing taught today. Constant positivity is a deception of the scriptures.
4. How can we avoid being misled by false prophets? By doing the following:
- a. Study the scriptures II Timothy 2:15 *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*
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