

# Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

## False Teachers in the Church

Matthew 7:15, 20, 13:24-30



- \* In the explanation of parable of the Wheat and Weeds, Christ declares that He Himself is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* When Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17; Mark 3:2), He meant the \_\_\_\_\_ realm which exists on earth side by side with the realm of the \_\_\_\_\_ one (1 John 5:19).
- \* The enemy in the parable is \_\_\_\_\_. In opposition to Jesus Christ, the devil tries to destroy Christ’s work by placing false \_\_\_\_\_ in the world who lead many astray.
- \* We are not to \_\_\_\_\_ such people in an effort to destroy them; one has only to look at the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades, and the reign of “Bloody Mary” in England to see the results of men taking upon themselves the responsibility of separating true believers from false, a task reserved for God alone.
- \* We are not to take it upon ourselves to \_\_\_\_\_ unbelievers because the difference between true and false believers isn’t always obvious.
- \* Jesus alerts us to “*watch out for false prophets*” in (Matt. 7:15). He compares these false prophets to \_\_\_\_\_ in sheep’s clothing. Jesus also tells us how to identify these false prophets: we will recognize them by their \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 7:20).
- \* Throughout the Bible, people are warned about false \_\_\_\_\_ (Ezek. 13, Matt. 24:23–27, 2 Peter 3:3). False prophets claim to speak for God, but they speak \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* No matter how innocent and harmless these teachers appear on the outside, they have the nature of \_\_\_\_\_—they are intent on destroying faith, causing spiritual carnage in the church, and enriching themselves. They “secretly introduce destructive heresies,” “*bring the way of truth into disrepute,*” and “*exploit you with fabricated stories*” (2 Peter 2:1–3).
- \* The false teachers put on “sheep’s clothing” so they can mingle with the sheep without arousing suspicion. They usually are not up front about what they \_\_\_\_\_; rather, they \_\_\_\_\_ in some truth with their falsehood and carefully choose their words to sound orthodox. In reality, as Jude said, they “*follow their own ungodly desires*”

(Jude 1:17–18), and “*they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed*” (2 Peter 3:14).

- \* By contrast, a \_\_\_\_\_ prophet teaches God’s Word fully (Deut. 18:20). Wolves in sheep’s clothing twist God’s Word to deceive or influence the audience for their own purposes. Satan himself \_\_\_\_\_ as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), and his ministers masquerade as servants of \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Cor. 11:15).
- \* The best way to guard against wolves in sheep’s clothing is to heed the warnings of Scripture and know the truth (Matt. 12:33). When looking for “fruit,” here are three specific tests to apply to any teacher to determine the accuracy of his or her teaching:
  - 1) What does this teacher say about Jesus? (Matt. 16:15-16, 2 John 9, 1 John 2:22)
  - 2) Does this teacher preach the gospel? (1 Cor. 15:1-4, Gal. 1:7, 9)
  - 3) Does this teacher exhibit character qualities that glorify the Lord? (Jude 11, Matt. 7:15-20)
- \* In the Old Testament, God speaks a lot about blessing His servants with earthly health, wealth, and honor. Material blessings were part of the Mosaic and Land Covenants for Israel. However, the New Testament focus is on \_\_\_\_\_, not earthly rewards.
- \* A preacher who presents God as a \_\_\_\_\_ by which we can obtain earthly wealth is a \_\_\_\_\_ preacher and a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.
- \* Prosperity teachers use \_\_\_\_\_ such as faith, positive confession, or visualization to “release” the abundance God has in store.
- \* The gospel becomes little more than a repackaged \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ scheme, with the ministers becoming richer than the listeners.
- \* The \_\_\_\_\_ from truth to error can be subtle, and some well-meaning preachers have been caught up in it. We must be careful not to judge a preacher’s entire message by only one or two sermons. (Eph. 5:5) has strong words for greedy people. While we should ask God to \_\_\_\_\_ for our needs and expect Him to do so (Phil. 4:19), Jesus warned us not to stockpile earthly wealth. Rather, we should store up \_\_\_\_\_ in heaven (Luke 12:33).
- \* The imbalanced focus of prosperity preachers on \_\_\_\_\_ treasure is in direct contrast to the many passages that warn us not to desire riches (Prov. 28:22; 2 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:5, 1 Tim. 6:8-10).
- \* The following are some common traits of many prosperity preachers or false teachers:
  - 1) The core of his/her messages is always God’s desire to \_\_\_\_\_ everyone
  - 2) There is little, if any, mention of Jesus’ words about \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_, taking up our \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ to the flesh (Luke 9:23; Matt. 10:38, 16:24)

- 3) Almost all their teaching focuses on the \_\_\_\_\_ of fleshly desires rather than spiritual transformation (Rom. 8:29)
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ to God's commands is rarely mentioned as a prerequisite to His blessing (Jer. 18:10)
- 5) Positive \_\_\_\_\_ about oneself and one's situation is often equated with faith and is presented as the means by which one can obtain financial blessing
- 6) There is a marked absence of any teaching on the necessity of \_\_\_\_\_ in the life of a believer (2 Tim. 2:12; 3:12; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29)
- 7) Very little distinction is made between God's children and the unsaved in the positive \_\_\_\_\_ of the message (Mal. 3:16–18; Rom. 9:15–16)
- 8) The speaker rarely attempts any type of real \_\_\_\_\_ expository teaching that does not support the continual message of positivity and blessing (1 Cor. 3:1–3)
- 9) He or she stays away from passages that \_\_\_\_\_ the positive spin of the message (2 Tim 4:3)
- 10) Personal \_\_\_\_\_ of the minister is often far above the average lifestyle of his congregation (Ps. 49:16–17)
- 11) The only attributes of God ever mentioned are \_\_\_\_\_ and generosity. Scant attention is given to His holiness, justice, and righteousness (Eph. 4:22–23)
- 12) Neither the \_\_\_\_\_ of God against sin nor the coming \_\_\_\_\_ is ever mentioned (Rom. 2:5; 1 Peter 4:5)
- 13) The only "sins" discussed at length are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or a person's failure to \_\_\_\_\_ in themselves (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Phil. 3:3)
- 14) The \_\_\_\_\_ of faith is often referred to as the means by which humans "leave God no choice but to bless me" (Job 40:1–2)

\* There has been a subtle \_\_\_\_\_ within Christianity toward a version of the gospel that the apostles would not recognize.

\* These \_\_\_\_\_ teachers are attracting huge crowds, just as Jesus did when He fed the thousands (Matt. 14:21), healed the sick (Mark 1:34), and performed miracles (John 6:2). But when Jesus began to teach the hard truths of the gospel, "*many of his disciples turned away and no longer followed him*" (John 6:66).

\* Waning popularity did not cause Jesus to \_\_\_\_\_ His message. He continued to teach truth whether people liked it or not (John 8:29). Likewise, the apostle Paul exonerated himself before the Ephesians with these words (Acts 20:26–27).