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Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (Part 1)

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 7:15-20

Matthew 7:15, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*

Jesus shared with His listeners the narrow way that leads to life and gave warning to beware of the broad way that leads to destruction. He now warns those on that narrow path to beware of those who would mislead them.

It is imperative to acknowledge that if Jesus is speaking about “false prophets,” that there are false prophets seeking to lead believers astray. John Stott said, “There is no sense in putting the notice ‘Beware of Dog’ on your garden gate if all you have at home is a couple of cats and a budgerigar! No. Jesus warned his followers of false prophets because they already existed.” These are spoken of in the New Testament as ‘pseudo-prophets,’ ‘pseudo-apostles,’ ‘pseudo-teachers,’ and ‘pseudo-Christ.’ Pseudo being the Greek word for lie.¹

We must be men of the Book!

I. The Warning of Jesus (Matthew 7:15)

A. Jesus warns us to “beware.”

1. Beware - *prosechō* - take care; pay attention to. To be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately.
 - a) Be sober, be vigilant.
 - b) Don’t be naïve!
2. What is the action?
 - a) To pay attention
 - b) To keep on the lookout
 - c) To be alert
 - d) To be on one’s guard

B. Beware of False Prophets - a deliberately deceptive person pretending to be a prophet. The intent of a false prophet is to fool, to deceive, to devour, to destroy.

1. The promise of false prophets (**Matthew 24:11**, *And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Matthew 24:24*, *For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*)
2. The testing of false prophets (**1 John 4:1**, *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*)
 - a) Anything that adds to the Gospel of Christ (Gospel plus...)
 - b) Anything that takes away from the Gospel of Christ (Gospel minus...)
3. The profile of a false teacher
 - a) He is accursed, unregenerate, lost (**Galatians 1:6-9**).
 - b) He is prideful, lacks understanding, craves controversy, produces unrest, constant friction (**1 Timothy 6:3-5**)
 - c) He is antichrist (1 John 4:1-3)

C. The Outward Appearance of a False Prophet

1. False prophets wear a disguise – False teachers do not claim to be atheists, agnostics, Satanists, etc.
 - a) **2 Corinthians 11:13–15**, *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*
 - b) As Sheep
 - (1) Sheep are domesticated not wild.

¹ Stott, John R. W., and John R. W. Stott. *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture.* The Bible Speaks Today. Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

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- (2) Sheep are herd animals not loners.
 - (3) Sheep are dependent on a shepherd
 - (a) To Lead
 - (b) To Feed
 - (c) To Protect
 - c) As Believers
 - (1) Bible Study teachers
 - (2) Pastors, Podcast hosts.
 - (3) Leaders of ministries and Seminaries
- D. The Inward Reality of False Prophets
1. What they are - Ravenous wolves
 - a) Ravenous – excessively greedy, grasping, and thieving.
 - b) Wolves – predatory, pack hunters.
 - c) Nocturnal and love darkness, undomesticated.
 2. What they do
 - a) They arrive unnoticed and operate in secret
 - (1) **Jude 4**, *For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*
 - (2) **2 Peter 2:1**, *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.*
 - b) They garner loyal followers
 - (1) **2 Peter 2:2**, *And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.*
 - c) They create divisions and obstacles (prohibit righteous behavior & promote sinful behavior)
 - (1) **Romans 16:17–18**, *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*
 - d) They deny Jesus is the Christ
 - (1) **2 John 7–11**, *For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. 9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, 11 for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*
 - e) Some Start in truth and end in error
 - (1) **1 Timothy 4:1–3**, *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*
 - f) They prey on the ignorant (naïve) and twist the Scripture (Romans 16:17-18)
 - (1) 2 Peter 3:14-18, esp. vs. 16
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