



A Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers – Part 1

By

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Introduction

Many churches still have a tradition of giving people a Bible when they become Christians. How about also giving them a copy of *A Layman's Guide to False Preachers and Teachers*? You didn't know there was such a guide? There is and you can get your own copy for free!

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

Matthew 7:15

Wait a minute! Isn't that in the Bible?

Yes, it is! Welcome to *A Layman's Guide to False Preachers and Teachers* – a wonderful *guide* inside The Book.

If you have a Bible, you already have *A Layman's Guide to False Preachers and Teachers*.

I recommend that when we hand a Bible to a new Christian we also introduce them to the *Layman's Guide to False Preachers and Teachers*. Why? Because new Christians and Christians who are still 'babes in Christ' (no matter how long they've been saved) are prime targets for false preachers and teachers.

Chapter One

Spiritual Parasites

False preachers and teachers are 'wolves in sheep clothing' and 'parasites.' They live off the lives of others in ways that are similar to parasites. Parasites live on or in a 'host' organism. Parasites feed off their host to the host's expense. Parasites (e.g. hookworms, roundworms, flatworms, pinworms, tapeworms, threadworms, fleas, ticks, mites, lice) can cause serious diseases in humans (e.g. seizures, blindness, heart failure). They take your health and leave disease in its place. Parasites ravage bodies. They are dangerous and can even lead to the death of their host (an estimated one million people die every year globally). Millions of people in the United States and millions more around the globe have parasites and many of them are not even aware they are in danger – until it's too late.

False preachers and teachers do the same thing. They target new, young or unsuspecting Christians and feed off of them – at the Christian's (host's) expense. They do the same thing to people spiritually that parasites do to people physically. They feed off the health of others until they've stolen it and left the person in a weakened condition – vulnerable to many types of diseases. Millions of people in the United States and millions more around the globe are influenced and even dominated by false preachers and teachers and many of them are not even aware they are in danger – until it's too late.

What does the medical community do when they discover a person has parasites? Doctors begin treating them immediately. For what purpose? To help the body rid itself of the parasites.

Doctors and others in the health and medical communities do not want parasites to continue to live in a person's body. That's why they begin immediate and often aggressive treatments to help people get rid of these terrible creatures.

False preachers and teachers are *spiritual parasites* and *'wolves in sheep's clothing'*.

Let me repeat that –

False preachers and teachers are *spiritual parasites* and *'wolves in sheep's clothing'*.

What should the Christian community do when they discover a person or a church is being influenced and 'infected' by false preachers and teachers? Christians who know what they're doing should begin treating people and churches for parasitic false preachers and teachers 'immediately'. For what purpose? To help people rid themselves of these terrible 'creatures'.

Christian leaders, parents and others in 'church' communities should not want these false preachers and teachers to continue to 'feed' on their members and children. That's why they must begin immediate and aggressive treatments to help people and churches rid themselves of these spiritual parasites and 'wolves in sheep's clothing'.

Spiritual Parasite and Wolves List

Here's a *Spiritual Parasite and Wolves List* to help identify false preachers and teachers who may be targeting you or others in your family, church family or sphere of influence'. We are using information available in *A Layman's Guide to False Preachers and Teachers* for this list.

- false preachers and teachers are ungodly and dangerous to your spiritual health
- false preachers and teachers are everywhere and into everything 'Christian'
- false preachers and teachers claim to speak for God, but are really spokespeople for the enemy of Christ (Satan)

- false preachers and teachers have one purpose and that is to promote themselves and dominate people
- false preachers and teachers accomplish that by raising (read praising) themselves and lowering (read diminishing, demoting, denigrating) God
- false preachers and teachers cause divisions between Christians and within churches
- false preachers and teachers claim God 'speaks' or 'appears' directly to them, so they know things others cannot know by simply reading the Bible
- false preachers and teachers claim to see 'visions,' but their visions are false and deceptive
- false preachers and teachers manipulate people for their (false preachers and teachers) benefit rather than 'minister' to people for their (people's) benefit
- false preachers and teachers present a message that is different than Jesus Christ and His apostles
- false preachers and teachers are depraved and doomed
- false preachers and teachers will be known by their fruit

- false preachers and teachers are able to disguise themselves and appear as sheep — but are in fact wolves who feed off unsuspecting people



Identifying the Problem

You may be thinking – no way! No way this could be going on in our churches, in our youth groups, in our children's ministries, in our small group ministries, at Christian conferences and concerts. Don't we have pastors and teachers, elders and deacons to protect us from bad people trying to do bad things to God's people?

Aaaha! You have identified an important part of the problem. Many church leaders who are supposed to feed and protect (e.g. shepherd) the people of God are either not aware of the problem, don't know how to identify the problem, don't care about the problem or ARE the problem.

Repeating for emphasis and memory –

Many church leaders who are supposed to feed and protect (e.g. shepherd) the people of God are either –

- not aware of the problem
- don't know how to identify the problem
- don't care about the problem
- ARE the problem.

If our shepherds did what Jesus told the Apostle Peter to do (John 21:15-17 .. feed and protect), warning sirens would be going off continually in our churches.

Do you hear warning sirens going off in your church? In your youth group? In your children's ministry? In your small group? At Christian conferences and concerts? If so, that's great, but it seems the majority of churches and church leaders today are silent on the problem of false preachers and teachers. It's rare you ever hear a pastor or teacher even mention it as an issue about which Christians should be concerned.

What may be even worse is that many pastors and teachers who know, or should know, the truth about false preachers and teachers are actually sharing pulpits and platforms with known false preachers and teachers. What does that communicate to the Christians under their care? It communicates that they (the Christians) can trust what the false preachers and teachers say because their pastor/shepherd allowed them to preach or teach or shared the stage with 'wolves in sheep's clothing'. If it was otherwise, you would think our pastors would warn us if there was anything about which we should be alarmed. Right?

Unfortunately, when we do hear someone sound the alarm it's often the wrong alarm. Many church leaders often end up warning people not to believe people who sound the false preacher/teacher alarm in their churches, conferences or denominations.

What?

Repeating for emphasis –

Many church leaders often end up warning people not to believe people who sound the false preacher/teacher alarm in their churches, conferences or denominations.

It makes no sense! It truly is 'senseless.'

Is There A Way Out?

Is there any way out of this mess? There is, but the way out will be VERY difficult. Why?

Because much of the church leadership in the 19th and 20th centuries, and so far into the 21st century, has allowed false preachers and teachers to go basically unchallenged. It is very hard to be heard or taken seriously about the problem.

The abandonment of God's 'sheep' by God's 'shepherds' has allowed the number and impact of these spiritual parasites, these wolves in sheep's clothing, to grow exponentially. We are surrounded within and without by false preachers and teachers.

That's what happens when parasites are not treated in a human body. They grow and infect great harm on the body. Adult tapeworms can grow to be longer than 80 feet and live in a human for decades ([Mayo Clinic](#)). That very large tapeworm (along with other parasites) is feeding off the host (usually living in a person's digestive tract). The tapeworm actually lives and grows because it robs its human host of nourishment for physical life.

As bad as that sounds – as terrible as parasites are in a human body – think about the damage inflicted on churches, Christians and people who think they are Christians by parasitic false preachers and teachers? They have affected tens of millions of people in hundreds of thousands of churches in the United States and around the globe. Their

devastating impact can last for generations! These false preachers and teachers attach themselves to the inside of churches and feed off the membership. They are robbing churches and their members of spiritual life.

Chapter Two

“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

The Problem

The problem (some might call it a ‘crisis’) of false preachers and teachers wandering around inside churches, conferences and denominations as if they owned the place has truly gotten out of hand. Many church and denominational leaders who care about the problem don’t know what to do, so some do nothing. Others appear on stage or in videos with false preachers and teachers thinking they may be able to make a difference by sharing the truth of God’s Word in the hearing of these people and their audiences. Others don’t seem to care at all. Once orthodox preachers and teachers have changed their stripes to fit in with the new wave of Neo-orthodox, liberal, progressive, emergent and post-truth theology sweeping modern churches and denominations.

That's a terrible way of shepherding God's people. Unfortunately, it's what more and more shepherds are doing every year. The problem is — it doesn't work that way. That's not how Jesus Christ builds His Church. That's not how He blesses leaders or members in His Church. If we want to obey Christ, bring glory to God and receive God's blessings in our churches, we must make big changes — starting now.



#1 – false preachers and teachers are ungodly and dangerous to your spiritual health

Turning to our *Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers* we read this –

“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude 1:4

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” Acts 20:25-31

Old Testament 'Ungodly'

Keep in mind that our focus for this first part of the study is that false preachers and teachers are both 'ungodly' and 'dangerous' to the health of God's people. Let's begin in the Old Testament.

"Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:1-3

We are introduced to the "ungodly" at the beginning of the Hebrew Psalms – "Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly." The Hebrew word translated 'ungodly' is *rəšā'îm*. It means "evil, wicked, criminal, guilty."

*“The narrow meaning of **rasha**’ lies in the concept of ‘wrongdoing’ or ‘being in the wrong.’ It is a legal term. The person who has sinned against the law is guilty.” W.E. Vine, Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible, 1940*

The idea of the word ‘counsel’ (*ba‘āṣaṭ*) is receiving ‘advice’ from someone. It’s interesting that the first Psalm of the Hebrew people would have emphasized the importance of the people of God (‘blessed’) having nothing to do with the ‘ungodly’ and especially not walking (*hālak* – “come and go”) in their counsel (advice).

Why would the psalmist (King David) have focused on the ‘counsel’ of the ungodly? Because their counsel will be ‘ungodly’!

It’s interesting to see how David began by pointing to the ‘walk’, the ‘stand,’ and the ‘sit’ of the blessed man, followed by his ‘delight’ (*ḥep̄ṣōw* – pleasure) in God’s Law and to ‘meditate’ (*yehgeh* – to meditate, muse, moan, utter, speak) in God’s Law.

David explained the process of how godly people can become influenced by ungodly people.

- They begin by 'walking' with the ungodly
- and listening to their ungodly counsel
- That can lead to 'standing' in the path of sinners

The word 'stand' in Hebrew is *'āmāḏ* and means 'to take one's stand.' After listening to the counsel of the ungodly and taking their stand with sinners, it's a quick step to "sitting in the seat of the scornful." The word 'sits' is *yāšāb* and means "abide, remain, dwell." It's the idea of being comfortable in the seated position with a view toward permanent seating. The word 'seat' is *ūḇəḡmōwōšab* and means "assembly, dwelling place." The word 'scornful' is *lēšîm* and means "mock, have in derision."

The reason David warned the godly against 'walking' with the ungodly and listening to their counsel was because he knew that could lead to the godly sinning with sinners and mocking with mockers.

That full process of not walking in the counsel of the ungodly, not standing in the path of sinners, not sitting in the seat of the scornful, delighting in the Law of the Lord and meditating in the Law of the Lord will lead a blessed man to be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. That man will, like the tree, bring forth fruit in its season, will not wither and whatever he does will prosper.

From this we learn that there is a danger to listening to the counsel of ungodly false preachers and teachers –

“The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

Psalm 1:4-6

If you listen to and follow the counsel (advice) of ungodly preachers and teachers, there is a good chance you will take your stand with them, dwell with them and end up like them – chaff which the wind drives away.

The idea of not standing in the judgment is powerful and should be a strong warning to anyone who would walk in the counsel of ungodly preachers and teachers –

“Not, before a human tribunal: nor merely in the last judgement, (as the Targum and many interpreters understand it): but in every act of judgement by which Jehovah separates between the righteous and the wicked, and vindicates His righteous government of the world.”
Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

“Properly, shall not rise. Probably like our phrase, ‘shall not hold up his head.’ Will be self-convicted, and shrink away before God’s unerring scrutiny, like the man without a wedding garment in our Lord’s parable (Matthew 22:12).”
Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers

Another way of stating this is if you live your life (come and go) according to the counsel of the ungodly (false preachers and teachers), their advice will mess up your life! The day will come when you won't be able to raise up your head when you face judgment in this life and the life to come. That is one of the dangers of following after false preachers and teachers.

Chapter Three

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."

We have been **warned!** Christians and their churches, conferences and denominations are surrounded on every side, within and without, by false preachers and teachers.

Really? On every side? Within and without? Who are they? Where are they?

That's one of the challenges facing Christians today – how to identify false preachers and teachers. Some of them are easy to identify, some are difficult – but identify we must because that's what God has told us to do.

How do I know that to be true? Because I've read *A Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers*. If you haven't read the first part of our special series, [please click here](#) to read it.

[You'll find a copy of *A Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers* in your Bible.]

#1 – false preachers and teachers are ungodly and dangerous to your spiritual health

Turning to our *Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers* we read this –

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

1st Century Jewish Understanding

What would a Jewish audience listening to Jesus of Nazareth in the early part of the 1st Century AD understand by the words “false prophets”? What about the reference to ‘wolves’ in ‘sheep’s clothing’?

Jews of that time period believed that the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament of the Christian Bible) was the Word of God. They knew a lot about false preachers and teachers (aka false prophets).

The people of Israel had a long history (as in many centuries) of listening to false preachers and teachers and they paid dearly for it. God led them out of slavery in Egypt by the prophet and Lawgiver, Moses. Here's what Moses warned the Israelites about false prophets –

“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His

voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.” Deuteronomy 13:1-5

“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” Deuteronomy 18:20-22

We are introduced here to two types of false prophets that Moses warned Israelites about in the Old Testament –

1. The first is a prophet who gives the people a sign or wonder and it comes to pass. Sounds good so far, right? The problem with the first type of prophet is that he also says, “Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them.” Not good.
2. The second is a prophet who speaks in the name of the Lord, but the thing they prophesy does not happen or come to pass. Also, not good.

What should Israelites have done with either of those two types of false prophets?

1. “that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death”
2. “that prophet shall die.”

Was there ever a time in Israel's history where they DID put false prophets to death for either type of false prophecy? Yes.

Here is one example –

“And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.’ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!’ And Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!’ So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.” 1 Kings 18:36-40

Was there ever a time in Israel's history where they did NOT put false prophets to death for either type of false prophecy?

Yes.

For example, let's look at some of Judah's prophets and priests prior to and through the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Jerusalem and captivity of God's people –

“An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?” Jeremiah 5:30-31

*“Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely.”
Jeremiah 6:13*

“Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’ ‘And the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not be in this land’—‘By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!’” Jeremiah 14:13-15

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has said, ‘You shall have peace’; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’ For who has stood in the counsel of the

Lord, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury—A violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings. ‘Am I a God near at hand,’ says the Lord, ‘And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him? says the Lord; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the Lord. ‘I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his

neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. 'The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?' says the Lord. 'Is not My word like a fire? says the Lord, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? 'Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,' says the Lord, 'who steal My words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets,' says the Lord, 'who use their tongues and say, 'He says.' Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,' says the Lord, 'and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,' says the Lord.' So when these people or the prophet or the priest ask you, saying, 'What is the oracle of the Lord?' you shall then say to them, 'What oracle?' I will even forsake you,' says the Lord. 'And as for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, 'The oracle of the Lord!' I will even punish that man and his house. Thus every one of you shall say to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, 'What has the

Lord answered?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more. For every man’s word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God. Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ But since you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Because you say this word, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ and I have sent to you, saying, ‘Do not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ ‘therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.’ Jeremiah 23:16-40

“Therefore do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they prophesy a lie to you; for I have not sent them,” says the Lord, ‘yet they prophesy a lie in My name, that I may drive you out, and that you may perish,

you and the prophets who prophesy to you. Also I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon'; for they prophesy a lie to you. Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city be laid waste? But if they are prophets, and if the word of the Lord is with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, do not go to Babylon.'"

Jeremiah 27:14-18

"Your prophets have seen for you False and deceptive visions; They have not uncovered your iniquity, To bring back your captives, But have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions." Lamentations 2:14

The Jews who heard Jesus teach knew about false prophets and how those false prophets had brought Israel and Judah to ruin.

They also understood the phrase “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” They knew that God referred to His people as ‘sheep’ – “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:1 ... also, Psalm 79:13; 95:7; 100:2-4) They also knew the danger of wolves mixing with a flock of sheep. The wolves would scatter the sheep and kill many of them.

The word picture Jesus painted was not lost on His Jewish audience.

Video

We invite you to watch this video and consider the message about what's happening in churches across our country. May God help us to do His will.

[END TIME CHURCH: The Great Falling Away | David Wilkerson & Paul Washer](#)

Chapter Four

“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

We are well into our special series about identifying false preachers and teachers. However, some Christians wonder what all the fuss is about. Some people have told me I should not oppose any preacher or teacher who names the name of Jesus. That's an interesting thing to say in light of what we read in the Bible and see in the history of Christianity.

In the last chapter we looked at how the Old Testament prophets approached the issue of false preachers and teachers. Moses told God's people they should **kill** false preachers and teachers.

Wow! I wonder what the New Testament has to say about that.

Turning to our *Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers* we read this –

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Matthew 7:15

It didn't take Jesus of Nazareth long before He warned His disciples about false preachers and teachers. He warned them in the early part of His ministry and as He prepared His disciples for what would happen after He returned to Heaven and prior to His return to earth –

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you ... Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many ... Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false

prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matthew 24:3-4, 11, 23-25

Jesus knew the great danger of false preachers and teachers and warned His disciples, then and now, of the danger they would bring to the preaching of the truth. True preachers and teachers should always warn God's people about the dangers of false preachers and teachers.

#1 – false preachers and teachers are ungodly and dangerous to your spiritual health

We saw in the last chapter how a Jewish audience listening to Jesus of Nazareth in the early part of the 1st Century AD would understand the words “false prophets” and ‘wolves’ in ‘sheep’s clothing’?

Let's now look at what the disciples of Jesus taught about that after Jesus Christ returned to Heaven, with a view toward false preachers and teachers being both ungodly and dangerous.

Warning! Warning!

False preachers and teachers are not just a 'nuisance' in churches, conferences and denominations. They are UNGODLY and DANGEROUS! The fact that there are so many of them (false preachers and teachers) and there is so little warning about them boggles my mind. How could we let this happen when Jesus and His apostles were so clear in their warnings almost two-thousand years ago? It's not like we just found out in 2020 that there are people in churches who preach and teach false doctrine. We've known about it since the beginning of Jesus' preaching!

What about this statement do we not understand?

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Matthew 7:15

And this warning from the Apostle Paul to the elders of the church in Ephesus –

“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” Acts 20:29

This warning from the Apostle Peter –

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.” 2 Peter 2:1

This warning from the Apostle John –

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1

And this warning from Jude –

“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude 1:4

Jude identified false preachers and teachers as *ungodly men*. The Apostle Peter said that false preachers and teachers would secretly bring in *destructive heresies*. The Apostle Paul called false preachers and teachers *savage wolves* who would come in among them (e.g. fellowships, churches, conferences, denominations) “not sparing the flock.” Jesus called them *ravenous wolves*.

We will look at many other warnings from Jesus and the apostles as we go through this series, but the first point is one of the most important –

False preachers and teachers are ungodly and dangerous!

The Danger of ‘Celebrity’

You may be saying an ‘amen’ right now, but what if you learned one of your favorite preachers, teachers or worship leaders was really a ‘wolf’ in sheep’s clothing?

Would you, could you, still say amen if you found out your pastor was a false preacher or teacher?

Would you, could you, still say amen if you found out a favorite speaker at a conference you were attending was a false preacher or teacher?

Would you, could you, still say amen if you found out some of your most important denominational leaders were false preachers or teachers?

Would you, could you, still say amen if you learned some of your favorite 'Christian' authors or devotional writers were false preachers or teachers?

Would you, could you, still say amen if you found out some of your favorite 'Christian' song writers were false preachers or teachers?

What would you say if you discovered that some of your favorite 'Christian' TV preachers or teachers were really false prophets – just like the kind Jesus and His apostles warned about in the New Testament?

What would you say? What would you do? Would you follow Christ or 'celebrity'?

There is a big danger in following a 'celebrity' – someone famous, well known, celebrated by others. Unfortunately, we have become a 'celebrity culture.' We love celebrated people so much that we want to see them in person, on television and video. We want to hear them speak. We want to hear them sing. We want to read their books. We want to hang on their every word. We want to read their hourly 'tweets' and 'like' their social media pages. We want to text our friends about the latest thing our 'celebrity' did or said.

We have allowed celebrated people to transform their celebrity into personal brands that make them millions of dollars off the backs of people who can barely afford to pay their bills. Even worse than that, we have allowed preachers and teachers to become 'celebrities' and many of them are false preachers and teachers.

Even some of our Christian leaders who do preach the 'true' Gospel have been fooled by 'celebrity' and have invited false preachers and teachers to speak at their churches or in their conferences. Some have even appeared on the celebrity's

stage or TV show and by doing that have given their approval to false preachers and teachers.

We have watched Christians around the world get swept up into a type of 'celebrity culture' that doesn't allow for critical thinking, reason or logic. Anyone who does think for themselves and raises questions about the theology of these so-called 'Christian celebrities' is often accused of being small-minded, bigoted, biased or unloving.

We have allowed preachers and teachers to become 'rock stars' in this Christian celebrity culture. We have turned our brains, hearts and souls over to people who very well may be ungodly and dangerous. WARNING!

Clear and Present Danger

We often romanticize what it must have been like to be part of the 1st century Church; to personally know the apostles and hear stories about what it was like to walk with Jesus and see Him alive after His Resurrection.

The fact is that 1st century Christianity was dangerous. We learn that as soon as we open the pages of the Book of Acts and read what Christians faced in those early days. They were often persecuted, jailed and even killed for their faith in Christ.

We also learn about the dangers as we read the letters the apostles sent to various churches in the 1st century. False preachers and teachers were already busy tearing into the flock of God.

Here are two examples of what Jesus thought about the danger at the end of the 1st century. He dictated letters to John the Apostle to deliver to seven churches in the region of Asia Minor (western part of modern-day Turkey).

“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold

the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Revelation 2:14-16

“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2:20-23

The Apostle Paul also warned Christians about the dangers of false preachers and teachers. This is from his letter to churches in the region of Galatia (central part of modern-day Turkey).

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9

Keep in mind that Jesus and Paul were pointing out people who the Christians receiving the letters would have known personally. Some of the false preachers and teachers may have been family members of church leaders. Some may have been church leaders.

What Jesus and Paul said to church leaders and members would have been received as *personal*. There's no way around that. We can't talk about the dangers of false preachers and teachers without it becoming *personal*. They are *persons* known and often loved and admired by other persons. The point here is that the danger is clear and present – personality and celebrity cannot and should not be an issue.

Why Not Name Them Now?

I was asked recently why I'm not identifying modern-day false preachers and teachers by name in this series (so far). That's a fair question since many Christian writers do identify people they believe to be false preachers and teachers. They may or may not be correct depending on the criteria they use to make their determination.

I'm following the example of Jesus and His apostles. They did not, for the most part, name the false preachers and teachers of their day (Jesus did identify groups like the Pharisees, Saducees and Nicolaitans). What they did do was give Christians a clear description of what false preachers and teachers look like and what they say and do. If we look closely at what Jesus and His apostles said and then look closely at today's preachers and teachers (including authors, singers, etc), we should be able to identify them without much difficulty. We will share examples of false preaching and teaching during the series to help make that identification a little easier.

Jesus and His apostles spoke and wrote for the long game. Their teachings have helped Christians identify false preachers and teachers for almost two-thousand years. Their teachings will continue to do that for as many years as we have between now and our Lord's return.

What is important for us to remember is that false preachers and teachers are described as being 'ungodly' and 'dangerous' to your spiritual health.

Chapter Five

If someone asked you where they could go to avoid being influenced by a false preacher or teacher, what would you tell them? Would you tell them your church or youth group or small Bible study group is safe from false preachers or teachers? Would you tell them your denomination is a safe place? How about Christian concerts where you get to enjoy your favorite singers and bands? How about Christian conferences where you get to see your favorite speakers and authors?

If you think you can point to any place where Christians gather as being a safe-zone from false preachers and teachers, what I'm about to write may surprise you.

[We wrote this article in July of 2019, months before Covid-19, so think about the concerts and conferences you attended before the pandemic.]

Turning to our *Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers* (the Bible) we read this –

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” ACTS 20:28-30

#2 – false preachers and teachers are everywhere and into everything ‘Christian’

The Apostle Paul warned the leaders of a 1st century church (Ephesus) that **wolves** would come in among them, “not sparing the flock.” Paul also told them men would rise up “from among them” to draw away the disciples after themselves. Paul was writing about 25 years after the death

and resurrection of Jesus Christ and was already warning Christians about the dangers of false preachers and teachers. What we see from Paul's comments to the overseers in the Ephesian church was that false preachers and teachers would come at them from both **outside** the church and **inside** the church. We see that in churches today. Some false preachers and teachers are already inside our churches, while others are outside trying to get into churches.

We also see that in all things 'Christian.' False preachers and teachers are also in our denominations, Christian schools, Bible colleges and seminaries, Christian bookstores (e.g. books, music), Christian publishing companies (e.g. books, church curriculum and church school curriculum), Christian concerts, Christian conferences, etc. Many pastors and Bible teachers 'purchase' their sermons and lessons instead of studying the Bible themselves. Some of the suppliers of those sermons and lessons are false preachers and teachers. They are truly everywhere – just as Paul warned.

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you.” 2

PETER 2:1

The Apostle Peter also made the point that even as Israel had false prophets “among the people,” there would be false teachers “among you.” Peter was writing to Christians about 30-35 years after Jesus rose from the grave and after Peter first preached on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). False preachers and teachers were already a problem in local churches – thus the reason for Peter’s warning.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 JOHN 4:1

The Apostle John told Christians toward the end of the 1st century AD that they should “test the spirits” to see whether they were of God or not. Why? “... “because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” John wrote this letter within 50-60 years of the resurrection of Christ and had to

warn Christians to test the spirits to see if what they were seeing and hearing was really from God.

We saw Jude's warning in a previous study about false preachers and teachers, ungodly men, who had "crept in" to Christian congregations "unnoticed" (Jude 1:4). Jude called them "spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves (Jude 1:12). That demonstrates that those ungodly false preachers and teachers had become part of the local congregations and were ruining people from the inside.

Beware, They're Everywhere!

What Paul, Peter, John and Jude were saying was "Beware, they're everywhere!" False preachers and teachers are in churches, denominations, Christian schools, Bible colleges and seminaries, working at Christian publishing companies, and at Christian concerts and conferences. They are truly everywhere Christians go. How do they do it?

False preachers and teachers are able to get into everything Christian because they are very good at hiding in plain sight. That's why the Apostle John told Christians not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits. What does that mean and how do we do it?

John did not tell Christians to "test the spirits" with no context. He started the context early in his letter –

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." 1 John 1:6

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." 1 John 1:10

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does

not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:3-4

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” 1 John 2:15-16

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.” 1 John 2:22

“These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.” 1 John 2:26

“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” 1 John 3:10

It's good to remember that 1 John is a letter. There were no chapter and verse divisions in his letter. Here are the two sentences that precede John's call to Christians to "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God."

"And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." 1 JOHN 3:23-24

That leads us to John's next sentence –

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 JOHN 4:1

Testing the spirits in the context of John's letter has to do with what kind of spirit is behind the preaching and teaching in their churches. Is it from God or the devil. If it's from the devil, we need to remember why the Son of God (Jesus Christ) was revealed –

“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

1 JOHN 3:7-8

Who Does The Testing?

Testing the spirits (δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα) is something John said Christians should do. That means every Christian. Far too many Christians believe that the testing John wrote about is something for church leaders to do.

That's a big part of the problem given that so many of the false preachers and teachers the apostles warned us about are leaders in churches, denominations and schools. Christians handing over the testing of spirits to church leaders is, in many cases, handing the sheep to the wolves. Wolves love being in charge of sheep because they're hungry.

As Paul wrote the Ephesian elders –

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

That's what wolves do – they eat sheep. They don't 'shepherd' sheep – they don't care for sheep – they don't guard sheep – they eat sheep. They don't spare the flock – they eat sheep until they're full. Wolves have a ravenous appetite and they will keep on eating until the end of the age.

Video

We invite you to watch this video and consider its message. Speakers include Voddie Baucham, Paul Washer and David Wilkerson.

**END TIME CHURCH 2: Another Gospel, Another Jesus |
David Wilkerson, Voddie Baucham, Paul Washer**

Chapter Six

Do you agree with this statement?

false preachers and teachers are everywhere and into everything 'Christian'

How would anyone know if that's true? And if it's true, what could you do about it?

Turning to our *Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers* (the Bible) we read this –

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.
MATTHEW 7:15

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ACTS 20:28-30

Even as Paul warned the leaders of the 1st century Ephesian church that ‘**savage wolves**’ would come in among them, “not sparing the flock,” we are sharing that same warning in the 21st century.

The Apostle Peter warned about it as well –

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you. 2 PETER 2:1

As we pointed out in the last chapter, false preachers and teachers are in most every church, denomination, conference, Bible college, seminary and Christian concert. False preachers and teachers have a **ravenous** appetite and their feeding ground ('killing field') is the Church. That's the clear warning of Jesus and His apostles.

Jude wrote –

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ ... These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;

*raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame;
wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of
darkness forever. JUDE 1:3-4, 12-13*

So, what's a Christian to do about that? It's one thing to know false preachers and teachers are leaders in our churches and denominations, instructors at our colleges and seminaries, speakers at our camps and conferences, authors and publishers of our books, and song writers of our church music and singers at our concerts. It's another thing to be able to identify them and warn others about them in a way that is clear and effective.

Identifying False Preachers and Teachers

God has given us many ways to identify the false preachers and teachers among us.

Jesus said “You will know them by their fruits.” Here’s His statement in context –

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Matthew 7:15-20

For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Luke 6:43-45

The Apostle John wrote this about how to identify false preachers and teachers –

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 JOHN 4:1

John is well into his first letter and has already addressed some of the issues concerning false preachers and teachers. His identification included the phrase “children of the devil.” That’s pretty strong, but we’ll wait to get into that in more depth in the next part of our study.

John's identification process is:

1. Do not believe every spirit
2. Test the spirits, whether they are of God

It's interesting that John wrote 'do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits' instead of "do not believe every man, but test every man.' Why did the apostle write it the way he did?

It's clear from John's first letter that our battles in this world are **spiritual** and with **spirits**. He wrote this several sentences before sharing how to 'test' the spirits –

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1 JOHN 3:8

False preachers and teachers are part of "the works of the devil" that Jesus came to destroy. How does Jesus destroy the 'works' of false preachers and teachers? It appears through what Jesus told His apostles and what they told

followers of Jesus that He will oppose false preachers and teachers through Christians.

WHAT? We are just flesh and blood. How can we participate in the Lord's plan to destroy the 'works of the devil'? How can we as physical beings test spiritual beings?

It's good to remember that the letters of the apostles have no chapter divisions. The context for 1 John 4:1 is found in what we read in 1 John 3. Here's the verse that John wrote just before telling Christians to 'test' the spirits –

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. 1 JOHN 3:24

We know that Jesus Christ 'abides' (μένω – stay, remain) in us "by the Spirit whom He has given us." Jesus has given every Christian great spiritual power because of the Holy Spirit whom He has given us. Our ability to 'test' spirits comes through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. That would include the

first step John gave to us ('Beloved') of not believing (πιστεύω – trust, have confidence, be persuaded) every spirit. It shouldn't surprise us that Christians are so easily led away by false preachers and teachers. The Apostle Paul wrote this shortly before his death –

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 2 TIMOTHY 4:2-4

Paul told Timothy to 'Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.' That sounds like a serious charge to the young pastor. Why so serious? Because the falling away of Christians from sound doctrine (ὑγιαίνω διδασκαλία – healthy, uncorrupted, instruction, teaching) was going to happen in Timothy's lifetime.

Has anything changed in the past two-thousand years? It has not. Christians are still not enduring (ἀνέχομαι – holding up, bearing with) sound doctrine. Because of their own desires, because they want to hear something that makes them feel good about themselves (itching ears), they heap up (ἐπισωρεύω – heap together, accumulate, obtain multitude of) for themselves false preachers and teachers. They turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside (ἐκτρέπω – turn away, avoid, shun) to fables. False preaching and teaching is about fables (μῦθος – untruth, false account, idle tale, fanciful story). It's never about truth.

Don't Believe Them!

The first step, says the Apostle John, is “do not believe every spirit.” Christians must understand that false preachers and teachers are sitting next to them in church, serving on boards and committees with them, preaching from the pulpits of their churches, teaching classes in their churches and small groups, and singing to them from church stages on Sunday mornings. Until we understand how pervasive the problem of

false preaching and teaching is in our churches, we will not be able to take the first step to combatting this terrible problem.

If I believe everything every Christian preacher, teacher, singer, song writer, denominational leader, special speaker and author says, sings and writes is true, then I am not going to be able to 'test the spirits.' I have to take step one and 'not believe every spirit.' We must understand that the danger is all around us and be ready to identify it.

Some of us wonder why Christians don't see the danger. How can they see something that is so clear to us? Others wonder why we make such a big deal about false preachers and teachers. If someone says they're a Christian preacher or teacher, that's good enough for them. We should believe them and give them a platform to be heard. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with that is we're ignoring the plain warnings of Jesus Christ and His apostles! If falling prey to false preachers and teachers isn't something about which we should be concerned, why did Jesus and His apostles warn us about them so many times? Why did Jesus call them

'ravenous wolves'? Why did Paul call them 'savage wolves'? Because Christians are sheep and hungry wolves eat sheep! Do you want to be eaten by wolves? If not, heed the clear warnings in the New Testament. Begin by acknowledging that what Jesus and His apostles said is true and start "not believing" everyone who claims that what they're saying (or singing or writing) is true.

Now, I don't mean that we should become unfriendly and contentious with everyone at church. Not at all. That goes against many other things Jesus and His apostles said and wrote. What it does mean is that our 'truth antenna' is always engaged. We are always listening and comparing what is said/sung/written by people who say they are Christians to the final authority of Christianity – the Bible.

Video

We invite you to watch this video and consider what you see.

4 Ways to Spot a False Teacher in Your Church

Next eBook

We will begin looking at four specific tests for false preachers and teachers in the second part of our special eBook: *A Layman's Guide To False Preachers and Teachers*.

Resources

We have been publishing articles and eBooks about false preachers and teachers for many years. Here are some you may find helpful:

[A Prophet's Perspective About Prophets](#)

[The Prophet's Voice](#)

[A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists – Part 1](#)

[A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists – Part 2](#)

[A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists – Part 3](#)

[Evangelistic Apologetics: The Church Under Attack – Part 2](#)

[Thinking About Christian Unity – Part One](#)

[Thinking About Christian Unity – Part Two](#)

Thinking About Christian Unity – Part Three

Thinking About Christian Unity – Part Four

Thinking About Christian Unity – Part Five

Thinking About Christian Unity – Part Six

Thinking About Christianity Unity – Part Seven

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