

Warning: False Prophets

Matthew 7:15-20

In Matthew 7:15-20, our Lord Jesus warns us that there will be people who claim to be preaching about His kingdom, but who, in fact, are preaching falsehood. And He warns us to be on guard for them. Just as we must be warned to enter into the kingdom through the narrow way (the way of faith, repentance, righteousness, holiness and obedience), so also, we must be careful not to listen to the deceptive influence of those who would pull us away from the truth. Jesus gives us three instructions about these false prophets.

1. We must be _____ of false teachers

The Lord Jesus Christ tells us that we must be on guard for those who profess to be true teachers and yet who twist the truth in their teaching and contradict the truth in their words and in their lives. In warning us against false prophets, Jesus was implying that truth matters. Scripture is filled with warnings about false prophets and false teachers (Deut. 13:1-5; Isa. 30:9-10; Matt. 24:11ff.) who will try to deceive God's people (cf. Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:6; 2 Peter 2:1,3; 2 John 7; Jude 4; Acts 20:28). The reason why God gave us apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastor-teachers is to equip us with the truth so that we will not be deceived by false teachers (Eph. 4:11-14).

2. We must be _____ of their fruits

False prophets are identified by their fruits. Jesus says the type of tree will determine the kind of fruit that it produces (v. 16). The condition of the fruit is also sign of a true or of a false prophet (v. 17). Then Jesus warns that fruitlessness in righteousness will lead to judgment and condemnation (v. 19). Three tests are necessary to distinguish the true from the false prophet: a. Test of creed (Matt. 15:9; 16:12; Mark 7:7,17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 1:3; 1 Tim 4:6, 13,16). b. Test of character (1 Tim. 6:3-5) and c. Test of converts (2 Tim. 2:16).

3. We must be _____ of their doom

In Matt. 7:21-23, the Lord is teaching us that our verbal profession of faith ought to be accompanied by practical obedience in our lives. A mere verbal profession of faith in Him without the reality of living a transformed life under His lordship is a sham. We need to make sure that our verbal profession of our faith is validated by our changed life (2 Tim. 2:19). In vv. 22-23, our Lord Jesus gives a terrifying promise to those people who are deceived; thinking that their good (spiritual) works are going earn/merit their salvation. Instead Jesus will reject them and send them to condemnation. The real issue is obedience to God (John 8:31, cf. 6:66-69; Matt 24:13; Col 1:22;23, 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 3:14; 10:38-39; 1 John 2:19). The judgment of false prophets and teachers is sure and certain (Matt. 24:51).

In view of these truths, ask yourself these questions: Is my profession false or is it real? Am I living under the lordship of Jesus or am I still living my own life? Does the fruit of the Spirit reign in my life?

May God give us a deep desire to know the truth and an even deeper desire to live by them and may God's Spirit enable us to identify those false teachings that seek to endanger our souls.