



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

False Prophets- Warning Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus preached one of the greatest sermons covering all the areas of life of a person. As a climax He is forcing them to make a decision before going down the mountain.

Matthew 7:13-14, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Our Lord brings a choice, forces a decision.

The response to The Sermon on The Mount is not to admire it, not to extol its ethical virtue.

The only permissible response to The Sermon on The Mount is decide.

- Go through the narrow gate onto the narrow way that leads to life, or
- Go through the wide gate onto the wide way which leads to destruction.

Those are the only two alternatives there are.

- You have the religion of divine accomplishment,
- You have the religion of human achievement.

Divine accomplishment is where you recognize your own sinfulness and accept what Christ has done.

The religion of human achievement, where you believe you are good enough.

Through the narrow gate, you go on the merits of Christ.

- ✓ You must enter,
- ✓ You must enter this gate,
- ✓ You must enter alone,
- ✓ You must enter with difficulty, and
- ✓ You must enter naked.

On the other hand, to choose the broad gate you can take your sin, your selfishness, your self-will, your self-righteousness because the gate is wide. Wide way easily entered.

Everyone must make a choice.

You either choose God's way or man's way.

You either believe your own human achievement or what Christ accomplished.

Jesus was trying to force a decision out of those who heard The Sermon on the Mount.

The religious elect had the wrong view of

- self,
- the world,
- the Word of God,
- morality,
- giving,
- praying,
- fasting,
- money,
- possessions, and
- other people.

And all of these were the wrong things, and so Jesus was showing them that they were going the way of self-righteousness.

The message is not just to be heard and admired but demands a response.

Our Lord calls for the proper response!

V 13, *“Enter in at the narrow gate.”*

That is the great call that comes from the heart of our Lord, and throughout the entire Sermon on the Mount.

The gospel always comes as a command to be obeyed or disobeyed. This is not a suggestion but a command from the Saviour.

This is not unlike our Lord Jesus Christ. He has called people elsewhere in the Scripture.

The compassionate, loving, earnest, tender heart of Christ longs for men to enter into His right path. To forsake their sin and their self-will, and to come repentant over their sinfulness to the only source of true righteousness.

Matthew 4:17, *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Jesus recognized the burdens that men bind on themselves by their sinfulness, and the impossible religious duties that they try to carry all alone.

Matthew 11:28, *Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

John 7:37-38, *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

John 6:35, *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

John 10:11, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*

John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

John 11:25, *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*

If you are thirsty come and He offers drink.

If you are hungry, He is the bread.

If you are lost, He is the shepherd.

If you lost your way, He is the door and way.

If you are dead, He is the resurrection.

Repeatedly Jesus offers invitation.

In the Old Testament God offers similar invitation.

Isaiah 1:18-19, *“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. ¹⁹If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;*

God has always wanted to wash men’s sins, but men have always had to recognize the need before they sought the solution.

Until a person realizes his sin, it doesn’t become as snow and wool.

Isaiah 55:1-2, *“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. ²Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.*

You have no resources on your own and nothing good in yourself.

You don't have anything to bring and offer God. You come strictly and only on the merits of His good and gracious gift in Christ.

We find it in the Old Testament and in the New.

Revelation 22:17, *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

The loving heart of God constantly beats in a compassionate attitude toward men and their salvation, their transformation.

Jeremiah 13:17, *But if you will not hear it, My soul will weep in secret for your pride; My eyes will weep bitterly And run down with tears, Because the Lord's flock has been taken captive.*

The whole book of Jeremiah we can see the tears of God towards His people.

The compassion of God that calls to man from the heart of God.

Luke 19:41, *Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it,*

God is not all love and nothing else. If you don't hear the call and come the way God says to come, verse 13 says, you will get on a road that will lead you to destruction and eternal punishment.

God's love mingled with judgment.

The final judgment of the ungodly is in view there.

So, the Lord is saying, "love calls, and judgment lingers, but the time will come when love is set aside, and judgment is imminent."

Come through the narrow way.

Every man, woman, young person, stands at a crossroads.

- To the right is the narrow gate, the narrow way that leads to life.
- To the left is the broad way, broad road that leads to damnation.

Both are marked "heaven."

- One is true and
 - One is a lie.
- One is the religion of divine accomplishment done by God,

- Other is the religion of human achievement done by man,

You make a choice.

It is not an easy thing to get into that narrow gate.

“Few there be who are able to find it.”

Once you have found it, you must agonize to enter into it.

Why?

Standing in front of those two gates as you stand at that crossroads are false prophets, doing everything they can in their power to push you the wrong way.

They are there, obscuring the narrow gate, and waving people on, like some spiritual traffic cop, to the broad road that leads to damnation.

Jesus says, “Having given you the invitation, He is going to warn you too.”

Matthew 7:15-20, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and*

thrown into the fire. ²⁰Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

He must warn us of false prophets.

V 15, *“Beware of false prophets.”*

They stand at the midst of the crossroads, trying their best to obscure the narrow way and to push men on the broad way, and they succeed.

They succeed and they are highly successful.

See at the end of the broad way when it all finally comes to an end.

V 22, *“Many”*

V 13, *“the many that go in the broad way”*

The many who went in now come to an end, and they think they have arrived at heaven.

V 22-23, *Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*

It's the wrong road, but many go in that way!
Because there are false prophets pushing them that way.

Jesus is saying as you strive to enter that narrow gate, beware of those who would mislead you.

Warning.

V 15, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

Jesus doesn’t leave any doubt in our minds about whom He is speaking.

Now, this is very common thing in the Bible.
Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote to us.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5, *“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and 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,’ ³you 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. ⁴You 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. ⁵But 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.

Moses told the people, “When you find a false prophet, kill him.”

Why?

They are very serious.

They are very deadly.

Isaiah 30:9-10, *That this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the Lord; ¹⁰Who say to the seers, “Do not see,” And to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.*

Isaiah says there will be people who want to prophesy these things, and there will be people who want them to do it!

There is always a market for false prophets because people don't want to hear the truth. There is always a hearing for the false prophets.

Jeremiah repeatedly from **chapters 5 to 23** warns about the marks the false prophets.

Jeremiah 23:9-12, *My heart within me is broken Because of the prophets; All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, And like a man whom wine has overcome, Because of the Lord, And because of His holy words. ¹⁰For the land is full of adulterers; For because of a curse the land mourns. The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up. Their course of life is evil, And their might is not right. ¹¹“For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness,” says the Lord. ¹²“Therefore their way shall be to them Like slippery ways; In the darkness they shall be driven on And fall in them; For I will bring disaster on them, The year of their punishment,” says the Lord.*

Jeremiah 23:16-17, *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. ¹⁷They 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.’ ”*

Jeremiah 23:21-22, *“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. ²²But 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.

Jeremiah 23:25-31, *“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’²⁶ 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,²⁷ who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbour, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal.²⁸ “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.²⁹ “Is not My word like a fire?” says the Lord, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?³⁰ “Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, “who steal My words every one from his neighbour.³¹ Behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, “who use their tongues and say, ‘He says.’³² 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.*

Matthew 24:11, *Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.*

Again, that word many!

There are many false prophets, who deceive many people, and many go on that road, and many wind up saying, “Lord, Lord,” and He says, “I don’t know any of you many.”

Matthew 24:24-25, *For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you beforehand.*

False Christ, they try to present themselves as if they were Christ, shams, phonies, and liars.

Romans 16:17-18, *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

1 Timothy 4:1, *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*

1 John 4:1-3, *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. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is*

the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

The Bible warns us over and over about false prophets. They are going to be around.

They always have been around. There have been many false prophets, and there shall be false prophets. Till Jesus comes, they are going to be here.

V 15, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

1. Definition:

What is a false prophet?

Ever since the fall of man, it is apparent that man is hopelessly lost. Man turns his back on God, runs from God.

No man seeks God, Romans 3.

There is no one among them who can turn them around, for man does not have in himself such a resource.

God chose certain people, redeem them, and use them to draw man’s heart back to God. These are His prophets.

These are His prophets.

We find in the Old Testament and the New that a true prophet was known by two things.

- ✓ Divine commission, and
- ✓ Divine message.

He was called by God, and he was given his content by God.

He gave God's message, and he was God's man.

God selected men for this very strategic function.

A true prophet was God's voice.

Exodus 4:11-12, *So the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?"¹² Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."*

God had called Moses out of a burning bush into his prophetic office.

There was the commission of God, and there was the content of God, and that consummated the role of a prophet. He was God's man who spoke God's message.

No sooner did God have His true prophets to speak the true message, to be the true shepherds drawing the wayward sheep back to God, than Satan began to counterfeit.

We find false prophets all over the Old Testament just like they are every place today.

In Jeremiah alone we could about false prophets more than anywhere.

Jeremiah 14:14, *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.*

They wear the garment of God,
They say they represent God,
They say they speak God's Word,

But they are lies.

Jeremiah 5:31, *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?*

They enjoy because false prophets tickle their ears. Just like in the future when men heap to themselves teachers to tickle their ears.

The Old Testament has to constantly warn that there's going to be prophets who are false.

A vivid picture of a false shepherd.

Zechariah 11:16, *For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces.*

Can you imagine a shepherd that doesn't bother to go find the lamb that gets lost?

Can you imagine what kind of shepherd he would be?

The idea of tearing their hooves to pieces means that he literally rips the hooves apart to get every little last morsel of meat on that frame.

What kind of shepherd is that?

Zechariah 11:17, *“Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded.”*

God is going to judge. Now, that is a picture in the future of the Antichrist, who is the prototype of all false prophets. He cares nothing for the sheep. He masquerades as if he were Christ and representing Christ, and the fact is he rips and tears and shreds the flock.

The scribes and the Pharisees were classic examples of this. No wonder that they crucified Jesus.

Jesus literally unmasked them so mercilessly. They were the ones who paraded themselves as if they were godly and righteous. Whereas they were self-seeking, and self-serving, and they used the people to gain their own ends.

So, the false prophets were there in Christ's time, Old Testament time, future time, and present time.

The New Testament calls them by many things.

False brothers, **2 Corinthians 11:26**,

False apostles, **2 Corinthians 11:13**,

False teachers, **2 Peter 2:1**,

False speakers, **1 Timothy 4:2**,

False Christs **Matthew 24:24**.

But there is always an audience.

Jeremiah 5:31, "My people love to have it so."

Why?

Because they are of their father the devil, who is the father of lies, they hear his lies well.

John 8:44-45, *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.* ⁴⁵*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.*

They heap to themselves teachers who lie.

There is an audience all over the place for false prophets.

Ephesians 5:6, *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

Colossians 2:8, *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

So, the warning begins with a definition: a false prophet is one who does not have a commission from God, and he does not have a message from God.

2. Danger.

V 15, *“Beware”*

Not only who they are, but why we ought to beware, because they are very dangerous.

Whenever you see a sign that says beware you stop.

In the Greek it means, hold your mind back from.

Don't ever expose your mind to the influence of a false prophet. Don't pay attention, follow, notice, devote yourself, don't even put your mind in his vicinity.

They pervert the mind and poison the soul.

2 Peter 2:2, *And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.*

Jude calls them brute beasts, spots on your love feasts. They are flatterers who flatter people to gain a personal advantage. They are dangerous. They are clever.

False prophets violate and pervert the mind.

V 15, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."*

Ezekiel 22:27-29, *Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain.²⁸ Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for*

them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord God,' when the Lord had not spoken.²⁹ The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger.

Ezekiel uses that same term, and so we see it not only in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament.

The number one enemy of the sheep in Palestine was the wolf, a natural enemy, roaming the hills, seeing a flock, and at the precise right moment as it trailed the flock coming out of its hidden place, and snatching that sheep and ripping it to shreds, and a sheep utterly, totally defenceless against a wolf.

A good shepherd, according to John 10, a good shepherd is always on the alert for the wolf.

A good shepherd cares for his sheep, so he watches, awake, and alert.

You have the good shepherd, cares for his sheep, he will give his life for his sheep. He will do anything he has to do to keep them from the wolf.

Then you have the hired labourer, the hireling, as soon as he sees the wolf he runs. Reason this is only a job to him. As soon as the going gets tough, he is gone.

This is the paid Christian professional, who doesn't want any of the heat, just wants the glamour. Just collects his money.

Hired laborers are bad.

Hired laborers just run but wolves eat the sheep.

The wolves are the worst enemies.

The good shepherd protects the flock.

The labourer he just abandons the flock.

But the false prophet tears and shreds and destroys the flock.

Why are they the worst?

Because they are ravenous!

They are so dangerous, false prophets, that we are to be wily and wary as we ever even come near their presence.

For one thing, even if they didn't influence us, if we got involved with them, somebody might think we were condoning them, and somebody with less discernment than us would get eaten up.

They are very, very dangerous.

Jude 1:21-23, *keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²²And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³but others*

save with fear, pulling them out of the ^ufire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

There are three categories given of the people we are going to reach.

1. “Have mercy on some who are doubting.”

When you find somebody who’s doubting, go along with them, and put your arms around them, and love them, and be merciful to them.

2. We call these the endangered disbelievers.

These are the ones who don’t believe, and they are on their way to hell. You must get hold them out. These are just the unbelievers, the people who are indifferent, the outsider totally.

3. The confirmed false religions.

When you go after somebody to win them to Christ, and they are engulfed under the influence of a false prophet, you better go in the fear of God. Lest your own garment be spotted by even getting in the influence of the false prophet.

What Jude says that this is so serious that in you attempting to rescue somebody under them, you can be defiled by their influence.

They are vile, dangerous, brute beasts, and false prophets. It is like a leprosy. You don't want near it, because of its terrible influence.

When you even try to rescue somebody from under their influence, you will find yourself near to being polluted with the vile flesh.

Don't think false prophets are good, well-meaning, misguided people. They are dangerous, devouring wolves, who endeavour to shove people onto the broad road to hell.

Sometimes they know what they are doing, and sometimes they are duped just like the people who follow them.

3. Deception.

You don't see the truth. Inwardly they are rapacious wolves, but they come to you in sheep's clothing.

The Old Testament, and the New, in the case of John the Baptist, a prophet was known by what he wore.

Elijah, for example, wore a very rough, hairy, rugged, burlap, uncomfortable garment. It was a statement to society that he was foregoing create comforts for the cause of God calling His people to obedience.

John the Baptist came as one in the wilderness. He had a camel's hair coat, and he ate locusts and wild honey. Again, he wore the garment of a prophet. Very rough, very uncomfortable, but again, a statement of coming aside from the system, from creature comforts.

The rough garment designated the prophet, and when the prophet came, he came with no worldly goods, he came with no worldly wardrobe.

He came in rough, rugged fashion, as if he had come out of the wilderness of communing with God.

Therefore, when anybody wanted to play the part of a prophet, he went out and got a prophet costume. He got a rough, rugged, burlap garment, and he played the role.

Zechariah 13:4, *“And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.*

False prophets wear a rough garment in order to deceive. That was their whole approach.

In the case of the sheep's clothing, what you have here is not some guy crawling on all fours into the flock with a sheep's head hanging over his head. Shepherds, for the most part, wore cloaks made of the wool of the sheep.

The wool of the sheep, when it was sheared, was made into cloth for garments. The mark of a shepherd was he wore a wool cloak.

Israel the evenings are very cold, even in the summer it cools down, and they needed that. The idea is not that he comes dressed like a sheep.

The idea is that he comes dressed like a Shepherd, wearing the garment made from the sheep. Sheep's clothing is just another term for wool.

As the false prophet wore the garment of the prophet, the false shepherd wears the garment of the shepherd. It isn't that we are dealing with a sheep who's infiltrated.

We find out that though he looks to be a shepherd, but he is a wolf. Very subtle.

There are three kinds of false prophets in the Bible.

1. Heretic.
2. Apostate.
3. Deceiver.

Heretic.

This is somebody who comes along and says, “That’s not true, that’s a lie, I don’t believe the Bible,” and teaches heresy.

Or even says, “I believe the Bible,” but teaches a heretical doctrine by twisting it.

Somebody whose doctrine is obviously, openly heretical.

Apostate.

An apostate, who denies the faith, who denies Christianity, who apostatizes, departs from it.

The first two aren’t tough to spot; it’s easy to spot false doctrine, isn’t it? Just take your Bible and check it.

It’s easy to spot apostasy because they are denying it.

Both these are dealt with in **Matthew 7:6**, *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.*

They are the pigs and the dogs.

Deceiver

This is the one Jesus is referring to here.

This is the one you don’t see. This is the one who comes with the cloak of the shepherd.

This is the one who talks about Jesus,

- talks about the cross,

- talks about God,
- talks about the Bible,
- talks about the church,
- the Holy Spirit,
- hangs around with people that are true Christians,
- mingles within the framework of evangelicalism.

He is on the radio, TV, YouTube, social media and in the pulpit. He writes the books, and he always looks like a Christian. That's the one Jesus refers to.

Not heretics because they are obvious.

Apostates are obvious because they denied the faith.

But these are subtle.

The Lord is not warning us against heretics.

The Lord is not warning us against apostates.

Our Lord is warning us against people who sound like they teach the gospel, who sound like Christians, who use the speech of the Bible, the speech of the gospel, but it's only a pretence.

2 Corinthians 11:15, *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

Jesus is talking about the subtle deceiver who is in our midst.

Jude 1:4, *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.*

They are all over the place.

What the false prophets look like?

They are pleasant and nice.

They smile a lot.

They seem positive, they seem affirming, they seem Christian.

They hang around with Christians.

They appear to be thoroughly Christian.

They talk Christian talk.

They seem to say the right things.

It's what they don't ever say.

They talk about Jesus, and the cross, and heaven, and Christianity, not sin, and hell, and mourning, and meekness, and humility, and brokenness. They talk about how to be happy, and how to be healed. They are pleasant. They seem thoroughly Christian, they say the right things, and their lives even appear clean.

In **100 A.D.**, we have the earliest of the Christian writings that we know about, and it's called the **Didach**. By the year 100 the

church had been formed, and it was beginning to try to help itself to stay away from false prophets. The **Didach** there is a section where the church instructed itself as to how to deal with false prophets.

It uses a term to describe them as **Christemporos**, and that Greek word means Christ merchants.

They use Christ, they trade in Christ, they sell Christ for personal gain, they pad their pockets, they build their empires. They are using Jesus Christ as a product to pad their pockets, it's unbelievable.

But you know that the early church was so worried about this that they had in the **Didach** a few little rules to help them. Now, these are not written by God, but these are written by some people at that time who wanted to have some criteria to judge a true prophet.

“A true prophet is to be held in the highest honour. He is to be welcomed and his word must never be disregarded. His freedom must never be curtailed but He shall remain in your house one day, and, if necessary, another day also. But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet.”

“Fish and visitors smell in three days.”

“He must never ask for anything but bread. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.”

“False prophets claim to speak in the Spirit, but there’s one acid test: By their character a true and a false prophet shall be known.

Every prophet that teaches the truth, if he does not what he teaches, is a false prophet.”

Whosoever shall say in the Spirit: Give me money or any other things, don’t hear him but if he tells you to give in the matter of others who have need, then he’s a true prophet. If a wanderer comes to a congregation, and wants to settle there, and if he has a trade, let him work and eat. If he has no trade, consider in your wisdom how he may not live with you as a Christian in idleness. And if he will not do this, he is a trafficker in Christ. Beware of him.”

The false prophets have an end.