

The Final End

At the end of Jesus' Sermon on the mount He gave a series of mini-messages.

1). A narrow gate and path that leads to life

A wide gate and path that leads to destruction

2). A warning against false prophets

Illustrations: Wolves Vs. Sheep- good fruit and bad fruit,
good tree and an evil tree.

3). Then a view of the final judgment showing the ultimate end.

The false prophets are shown to be false primarily because they did not do the will of God, but did evil, though they hid behind religious service.

God's Prophet: "Come with me if you want to live!"

Theologian, Walter Bruggeman gives this definition and purpose of prophets:

"The role of the prophet is to nurture, to nourish and to evoke a consciousness and perception that is alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."

Oswald Chamber says, "God never threatens, the devil never warns."

False prophet would tell us a false message and lead us the wrong way, which would result in destruction. At the time of the writing of the New Testament two major false teachers stalked the church:

The Judaizers and the Gnostics.

Galatians was written against the Judaizers,
(return to Jewish laws and customs for salvation).

Several of the epistles addressed Gnostic heresies, including licentiousness
(Since salvation is by grace then live any way you want).

Jesus warned,

¹⁵Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰So then you will know them by their fruits."

(Matt. 7:15-20)

I. The Danger of False Prophets.

False prophets are as dangerous to us as wolves are to sheep. That's why Jesus warns us of the danger of men who pretend to speak for God, but are really of the devil and bring a message of destruction.

Jesus warns of their destructive nature – ravenous wolves

Deceptive – They are wolves in sheep's clothing, concealing their identity, until it's too late.

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock... savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock;”
(Acts 20:28, 29)

II. Deception of False Prophets

There are different kinds of false prophets.

Heretics, apostates, and deceivers.

Heretics openly reject the Word of God and teach that which is contrary to divine truth.

Apostate teachers are those who once followed the true faith but have turned away from it, rejected it, and are trying to lead others away.

Those two have a certain virtue in that they are at least honest about their views, rejecting orthodox Christianity.

A **False shepherd** on the other hand is a deceiver, who gives the appearance of orthodoxy. He says the right things, speaking favorably of Christ, the cross, the Bible, the Holy Spirit and Christian beliefs and practices. In every way he appears to be fundamental, and evangelical. He seems to be the genuine article but he is a fake and a deceiver. He has the speech of orthodoxy, but is a living lie.¹

Paul wrote,

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

¹ John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1985), p. 465.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders of what would come after he left them,
 “Be on guard for yourselves and for 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. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert...” (Acts 20:28-31a)

How can we recognize a false Prophet?

1. A false prophet is identified by his attitude toward the people of God.

He is a “*Ferocious wolf*” – His nature is expressed by the way he devours the flock. He uses the sheep to serve his own interests, not like the Lord Jesus. *We must be alert to those who “use” the church.*

Speaking of true shepherds, Peter wrote,

“...nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3).

2. The false prophet is identified by the fruit of his teaching.

Jesus said, “Good trees bear good fruit; bad trees bear bad fruit” (Matt. 7:18). The identity of both good and bad prophets is in their own character, and in the fruit of the teaching in the character of others.

Are they Christlike?

John said,

“I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.” (3 John 9-11).

3. The false prophet is identified by his priorities.²

It is clear that false prophets placed success before obedience to Jesus. Their emphasis on preaching, miracles, and driving out demons instead of a pure life.

Ferguson writes,

“They put their own position before their service.
Most obviously, they substituted gifts for grace.”³

It seems that people will be able to do miraculous works in Jesus’ Name, even though He will have never known them.

This is a call for us to gain spiritual discernment.

A true prophet makes Christlike fruit a priority in his own life and the lives of his followers.

James writes,

“...and the wise are peacemakers who quietly sow for a harvest of righteousness in other people and in themselves.” (James 3:17 Phillips)

1 Timothy 6:3-5 (J. B. Phillips version)

False prophets are dangerous, deceptive, and destined.

III. Destiny of False Prophets

What is their destiny, along with those who follow them?

Their followers take the wide path and gate, which misses Christ and ends in destruction. The letters of Jude and 2 Peter contain much information on the destiny of false prophets.

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2Peter 2:1).

“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

Notice that in each case there is mention of the end game of false prophets:

² Sinclair B Ferguson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), pp. 267-269. [Ferguson’s work on the influence of a false prophet covers three ways of identifying them, which I found insightful and very helpful in studying our text.]

³ Ferguson, p. 169.

Swift destruction... condemnation...

Jesus ends this section on false prophets:

“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt. 7:19).

Entrance to Costco is through a narrow doorway with an ID card. Then after going through a great store everyone goes through the judgment line where they pay for what they purchased and then exit through another judgment exit line.

The text of the final end judgment is connected to those who take the wide road and gate, ending in destruction, along with the final destiny of the false prophets, who lead the way down the road to destruction.

“²¹Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

²²Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

(Matt. 7:21-23)

The criteria for entering heaven, Jesus says, is obedience to the Father’s will, which is the resulting works from knowing Him.

...he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

False prophets and their followers are disobedient to the will of God.

Jesus warns that they will face His rejection on the judgment day.

They will hear Him say,

“Depart from Me you who practice deeds of lawlessness.”

Jesus asked, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

(Lk. 6:46)

❖ Their Confession

‘Lord’ was a divine title, a rendering in the Greek Old Testament of the Hebrew for ‘Jehovah’.⁴

They made the right confession but were without moral obedience.
Their behavior betrayed their lack of faith.

❖ Their Claims

They had public ministries of prophecy, exorcism and miracles.

Jesus said,

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.”

Matt. 24:24

Jesus’ **confession**: “...I never knew you; depart from Me...evildoers”

The final judgment isn’t us claiming to know Christ, it’s Him knowing us!
They used His name freely, but their name was unknown to Him!

Paul wrote to Titus,

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:11-14)

Obedience affects every area of our lives, as we apply what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and as we live in anticipation of His Second Coming, our faith in Christ changes our behavior and attitudes. Christ living in us produces a zeal to behave in a godly way.

Paul wrote to Timothy:

“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands,

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity Press, 1978), p. 206.

having this seal,

‘The Lord knows those who are His,’

and

‘Everyone who names the name of the Lord
is to abstain from wickedness’”

(2 Tim. 2:19).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:10-11a)