

The Story of Jesus: Beware of False Prophets  
(Lesson 64)

Introduction:

1. Growing in the knowledge of Christ is an important spiritual activity (2 Peter 3:18).
2. To achieve this growth we must *"Search the scriptures"* (John 5:39).
3. In this lesson we are studying the warning given by Christ in Matthew 7:15-20.
4. We need to pay close attention to the Lord's words because there are many teachers and preachers today presenting things that are not true.

Discussion:

I. (vs.15) JESUS SAID, *"BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS"*

A. We know what "Beware" means.

1. Illustration: "Beware of Dog" sign
2. When we see this sign on a fence we understand that a dog is in the yard.
3. This is a warning -- we need to stay out of the yard.
4. Those who do not heed this warning may be bitten.

B. We are to beware of "false prophets."

1. False prophets are those who claim to be speaking the Word of God.
2. However, in reality they present things that are false.
3. In Matthew 24 Jesus warned against such prophets regarding the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (vs.4-5, 11, 23-26).
4. A similar warning against false prophets is given in 2 Peter 2:1-3.

C. It seems that Jesus wants us to beware of a particular kind of false teacher.

1. He warned against those who come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
2. They have a wonderful outward appearance, but something else is inside (Matthew 23:28; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).
3. Certain false teachers can be very appealing because of their personalities and the attention they give.
4. We must remember what Jesus said in John 7:24.

D. How can false prophets be identified?

II. (vs.16,20) JESUS SAID, *"YE SHALL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS"*

A. Jesus talked about plants and the fruit they bear.

1. Is it possible to pick:
  - a. grapes from thorn bushes? (only a grapevine produces grapes)
  - b. figs from thistles? (only a fig bush produces figs)
2. Jesus further discussed the relationship between a tree and its fruit in vs.17-18.

B. In putting teachers to the test,:

1. their manner of life must be examined
2. their teaching must be examined (1 John 4:1).

C. The Lord tells us to beware of false prophets and how to identify them.

III. JESUS REVEALED THE DESTINY OF FALSE PROPHETS IN VS.19

A. They will be *"cast into the fire."*

B. Unfortunately, those who follow their teachings will suffer the same fate.

IV. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

A. We must know the truth ourselves (John 8:31-32).

B. We must examine the things we are taught (Acts 17:11).

C. If one is determined to be a false teacher we are to have no fellowship with him.

1. Romans 16:17-18
2. 2 John 9-11

D. After studying the Lord's warning, does He want us to listen to denominational preachers, whether in person, in print, on TV, on radio, or on the internet?