

Identifying False Teachers Matthew 7:15-23

Matthew 7:15-20

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

I. How Do False Teachers Deceive Us?

A. False teachers look the part. (15)

(15) “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Matthew 23:25-28, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but, on the inside, you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”

B. False teachers act the part. (16,20)

(16) By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?

(20) Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

C. False teachers speak the part. (21)

(21) “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

D. False teachers can have supernatural abilities. (22)

(22) Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?’

Matthew 24:23-25, “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.”

E. False teachers can come across sincere. (22-23)

(22-23) “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

II. How Do We Recognize False Teachers?

A. We look for deception. (15)

(15) “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

B. We look at their fruit. (16)

(16) By their fruit you will recognize them.

5 common areas that many false teachers will deviate from the word of God.

- a. They promote a man or an organization over Christ.
- b. They usually have extra Biblical writings or a strange interpretation of the Bible.
- c. They pervert the teachings of the trinity or its members.
- d. They teach another salvation
- e. They don’t align morally with the Word of God.

C. We analyze their character. (20-21)

(20-21) “Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

D. We look at their relationship with Christ. (23).

(23) “Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”