



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:

## **BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS**

Matthew 7:15

Thoughtful hearers who listened to Christ giving this warning, ***“beware of false prophets”*** will immediately recognize its importance. Israel, as a nation, knew the great evil false prophets did to their kings and to the whole nation. The spiritual blindness on the whole nation was the result and the consequence of the blindness and hardness of heart of their prophets, teachers and leaders. The disobedience, rebellion, judgment, captivity and prolonged suffering of the nation was caused by the false prophets. While they were out of the right way, walking in the way of the heathen, the false prophets assured them that they were still in the right way. When faithful prophets rose up to call them back to the narrow way, to the way of righteousness and life, false prophets hardened their hearts to continue in the broad way of sin and iniquity, ***“saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace.”*** The false prophets strengthened them in doing evil, promising life to those who had chosen the way of death.

***“Beware of false prophets”*** could have been written on the sky above the nation of Israel for all to read and remember constantly. They had lost the blessing of Abraham, the covenant benefits were no longer theirs, they were under the brutal rule of a foreign nation, there was spiritual blindness among their leadership. The past glory of Israel had departed with no hope of restoration in view, the nation had been trodden down under the feet of Gentiles, they were slaves and captives in their own land - all because of the sustained influence of false prophets. Now Christ had come in fulfillment of the long-awaited promise: ***“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee; unto Him ye shall hearken. I will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him”*** (Deuteronomy 18:15,18; Acts 3:22,23). This was the last chance for Israel of that generation. If they gave in to the false prophets again, they would miss a great restoration and remain in spiritual blindness and captivity for thousands of years. They needed the warning, ***“beware of false prophets”***. We need this warning too.

### **THE HISTORY OF FALSE PROPHETS**

Matthew 7:15; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 1 Kings 22:6,10-14, 20-23; Isaiah 28:7; Jeremiah 2:8; 5:30,31; 6:13-17; Lamentations 2:14-17; Zephaniah 3:1-7.

The Lord, Jesus Christ, had described the way into the Kingdom very clearly. From the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, He had spoken as the Prophet who ***“the LORD your God [shall] raise up unto you”*** (Deuteronomy 18:15,18; Acts 3:22-26; 7:37). History often repeats itself. There were true and faithful prophets in the Old Testament but they were out-numbered by the false prophets. Christ, the Saviour, Lord, Priest, Prophet and King, now spoke to everyone and to the whole nation. He declared the whole truth concerning the only way to God. What would their response and decision be? Would they enter through the strait gate and persevere in the narrow way until the end or would they allow themselves to be deceived by the false prophets and be lost forever? As it was in the Old Testament, so it was at the time of Christ and so shall it be till the end of time! The false prophets out-numbered the faithful prophets and their influence was great and almost irresistible.

***“Beware of false prophets.”*** The false prophets of the Old Testament had easy access to the kings and they wielded national influence. They spoke their lies with much confidence and deceived many people. They never suffered persecution and were even granted resources from kings and princes to propagate their error. The widely accepted ministry of the false prophets encouraged multitudes to continue on the broad way that leads to destruction.

## THE HYPOCRISY OF FALSE PROPHETS

Matthew 7:15; Isaiah 9:13-16; Jeremiah 14:13-15; 23:30-32; Ezekiel 13:3-6; Jeremiah 29:8,9; 28:1-16; Hosea 9:7-9; Micah 3:11,12.

Hypocrisy and deception were the common marks of the false prophets in ancient times. The average man who saw the appearance of the false prophet to be similar to that of the true prophet looked no farther and was easily deceived. The false prophets wore “**sheep’s clothing**” as if they were true prophets of God and their followers did not know that “**inwardly they [were] ravening wolves.**” In the Old Testament, the hypocritical prophets used to “**wear a rough garment to deceive**” (Zechariah 13:4).

Deception is always dangerous but it is most dangerous and damning when the way to hell is mistaken for the way to heaven. The messages of the false prophets were fatally deceptive. “**The prophets prophesy falsely. From the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. The prophets prophesy lies in My Name. The prophets walk in lies. Let not your prophets deceive you, for they prophesy falsely unto you in My Name**” (Jeremiah 5:31; 6:13; 14:14; 23:14; 29:8,9). The effect of the deception and hypocrisy of the false prophets was terrible and devastating on every individual, and all the families in the whole nation for many centuries even until this generation. The false prophets “**walked after things that do not profit**” (Jeremiah 2:8), they “**erred and [were] out of the way**” (Isaiah 28:7), they were “**light and treacherous**” and did “**violence to the law**” (Zephaniah 3:4), they “**corrupted all their doings**” (Zephaniah 3:7). Because the false prophets “[taught] **lies**” (Isaiah 9:15) and even “**taught rebellion against the Lord**” (Jeremiah 28:16; 29:32), with their lies they “**strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life**” (Ezekiel 13:22). False prophets were a major factor in the backsliding and apostasy of God’s covenant people in the past. May the Hand that wrote on the wall of the king’s palace write this warning on our hearts: “**Beware of false prophets**”.

## THE HEARTLESSNESS OF FALSE PROPHETS

Matthew 7:15; Jeremiah 4:9,10; 23:9-11; Lamentations 4:12-15; Jeremiah 27:15,16; 32:32-34; Ezekiel 22:25-27; Zechariah 13:2-5; 1 Kings 13:1-10,11-24.

Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the “**Teacher come from God**” referred to the false prophets as “**ravening wolves.**” God, through His servants in the Old Testament had also referred to those prophets, princes and leaders as wolves. “**Her prophets in the midst thereof, like a ROARING LION ravening the prey ... have DEVoured SOULS**”. “**Her priests have VIOLATED MY LAW.**” “**Her princes in the midst thereof are like WOLVES RAVENING the prey ... to DESTROY SOULS, to get dishonest gain**” (Ezekiel 22:25-27). “**Her princes within her are ROARING LIONS; her judges are evening WOLVES. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have DONE VIOLENCE TO THE LAW**” (Zephaniah 3:3,4). Faithful prophets, like the good Shepherd are committed to feeding God’s people with the truth (Jeremiah 3:15). False prophets, like ravening wolves, only come to devour and destroy, “**Beware of false prophets**”.

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