

How False Prophets Pollute the Church With Their Deception

Note: This the second of a two-part series. Read part 1 [here](#).

Similarities abound between the times of Jeremiah and our present circumstances. False prophets within Christianity flourish too.

False prophets thrive with their deceitful messages. They permeate all levels of Christian communities:

- pastors.
- denominational leaders.
- authors.
- seminaries and “Christian” colleges and training schools.
- TV personalities.
- Sunday school teachers.

They disseminate unbiblical theories that conform to the culture about us, not the Bible. They reject the authority and truths of the Bible, proclaiming false doctrines and “positive” messages instead. Biblical truth is not popular.

Sadly, the subtle yet significant spiritual decline of Christian congregations, perhaps even a description of your spiritual life, develops under the evil influences of these false prophets.

How to Spot False Prophets

They declare a false message.

False prophets abound today with their deceitful messages. They void previously sacred, biblical doctrines:

–of salvation.

–of sinful humanity.

–of biblical authority.

–of God's nature.

These represent only a short list of the doctrines they avoid in order to please people. Their disregard for truth has made their preaching a sham.

Pastors and church leaders today defend their erroneous beliefs for financial gain. They gain authority by the influence of human effort. As in Jeremiah's day, the church seems to approve and applaud them.

Scores of people find satisfaction and security in these fallacies. Countless church members cannot discern the difference between the true and the false.

Many who call themselves followers of Christ do not want to hear the truth. They would rather hear stories and problem-solving techniques than messages on sin and the great doctrinal truths of Scripture. They have an aversion to sermons on the Lord Jesus, the holiness of God and His demands upon them.

To satisfy their desires, they look for teachers who will make them feel good. These erroneous endorsements further encourage the deceptive prophets to continue their sinful ways (2 Tim.)

They deride God's Word. We reflect the same attitude as Jeremiah's day, but in a different fashion. We have replaced reliance upon God's word with cheap imitations to instruct and guide us in our lives:

–books.

–retreats.

–seminars.

The mere writings of man cannot replace the Bible, God's self-revelation and His Word to humanity. He provided all we need for life and godliness in its pages. Further, His words are alive. The writings of godly men and women can help us, but nothing can replace God's Word.

God has not promised to authenticate man's writings, but He has given the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds to understand His Word and its role in our lives.

As disciples of Christ, we must return to God's Word and let the Holy Spirit instruct and edify us that we may grow in Christ.

They desire possessions. This characteristic helps identify false prophets today, too. No doubt, you observe distinctive and well-known preachers on television and hear them on the radio. Have you noticed how many of them, almost without exception, urge you to prove your devotion to God by sending them money?

It is interesting that they insist on money; no other demonstration of devotion to God will suffice. Further, these teachers entreat people to give money to *them*, not your local congregation, as proof of your devotion to God.

Then, they "prove" God's goodness to them with their lavish lifestyles, bought and paid for with your "gifts to God." Such practices have become common in the church today.

They disregard their duties. A legitimate spiritual leader or prophet of God demonstrates to God's people how to cleanse their hearts, eradicate sin and set straight their errors in order for the church to be healthy and strong.

The spiritual ills of God's people require attention. No simple message suffices. Too often, pastors in our day view their "ministry" only to preach, mostly one sermon a week. They relegate to others the attention that the hurting lambs in their congregation require, shirking their duties as pastors.

As inexcusable as this sounds, it describes how the false prophets in Jeremiah's era treated the spiritual ills of Israel. They made no attempt to apply God's word to the people, which would bring healing to the spiritually suffering. Instead, they pronounced false messages to them.

This same sad example repeats in our day.

They declare a false peace. Today, many pastors and teachers proclaim the same message: "Peace, peace. Everything is successful. There are no problems here."

By avoiding the emphasis upon sound doctrine, God's people have become spiritually sick and malformed. Seldom do you hear a pastor or preacher over television or radio point out sin and call for repentance and reformation of life in conformity to God's demands.

They heal the wounds of God's people only slightly, providing false help and hope. This deceit fails to minister to the real hurts of God's people.

They defy God's ways. This characteristic helps to identify corrupt leadership today. They indulge their appetites for money and possessions as if they deserve them. They defend their practices by misusing Scripture.

When their sin finds them out, they make mournful excuses for their behavior and strike repentant poses while continuing their lifestyles. They reveal a disinterest in correction and repentance.

Many defend themselves with the mantra, “The ends justify the means,” as if stated spiritual aims can justify evil practices. They can’t and don’t.

They deny God’s ways. In our day, pastors and popular television and radio teachers often prefer the world’s methods to God’s ways. In their quest for crowds, they adopt worldly schemes that contradict God’s word.

They teach that “our new times” demand conformity to the mores of our culture in order to reach the current populace. They reject the old ways of God and replace them with tactics from business and politics. Calls for reform from godly leaders who preach a return to biblical teaching go unheeded.

Jeremiah pointed out how the priests, prophets and kings:

–failed to seek God.

–led the people astray.

–set up idols to worship.

God has not changed. He observes the same failures present today. The abundance of false prophets today and the masses who follow them describe the woeful spiritual condition of God’s people.

We take God’s mercy and longsuffering as approval, to our loss. God does not approve of our wickedness any more than He did in Jeremiah’s day.

Application

God will judge false prophets. Although this prophecy pertains specifically to a time in the history of Israel, it gives us a glimpse into the heart and mind of God. He will judge the false prophets and church leaders of our day just as He did then.

–He will not long endure the foolishness going on presently in the church.

–He is not smiling and patting the heads of the pastors and teachers of our day who abuse the sheep.

–He is the same today as He was back then.

God will hold accountable the false teachers, pastors and spiritual leaders of our day for their sins. They have led people astray and refused to repent of their sinful behavior. They have not healed the hurts of God's people, and He will judge them.

God will replace them. As this story from Jeremiah unfolds, it describes the present condition of the church of Jesus Christ, too. The church today desperately needs spiritual revival.

The day will come when God will remove the false prophets from the church. He will raise up shepherds who will feed the sheep and not themselves, who will fully heal the hurts of people. They will take care of believers and seek after the lost, too.

I yearn for the day when He will install true shepherds in their places. It will mark a day of revival. {eo}

Thomas P. Hill *has a Master of Arts in ministry, Luther Rice Seminary, and is the author of three books: Wolves in Sheep's Clothing; Homosexuality, Christians and the Church and Keys To A Revolutionary Life (all available online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Tom's website). To invite Tom to speak at your college, church or group, contact him by email at hill_tom@. Visit .*