

Beware of Fakes, Phonies and Impersonators

Several years ago, a couple I had never met before came to our office. The gentleman and his wife were old friends of several people in our company and had stopped by for a quick visit and to update the staff on what they are currently doing for a living.

They traveled with two very well-dressed young men who stood near them in the background and maintained full attention. Except for their youth, these men looked very much like the Secret Service men who guard the president of the United States.

That afternoon, one of the editorial assistants in our magazine division had warned me that she was bringing visitors to our office, but that they were not who they *appeared* to be. Although I was prepared to greet the guests, I was taken aback when the gentleman extended his hand with a warm smile.

Not only did he look exactly like former President Bush, but he had also mastered the president's voice inflections, body language, gestures and laughter. His wife exuded the grace and poise of Laura Bush. It was an *amazing* likeness, and although we knew he was simply an entertainer impersonating the president, he was so convincing we had to remind ourselves that *he was not who he appeared to be*.

Yes, he looked like the president, talked like the president, laughed like the president and moved like the president, but he was NOT the president. He was an actor who was skilled in his craft and had studied the president carefully so that he could flawlessly mimic him.

Just as our visitor was not what he appeared to be, there are some ministers being held up as leaders in the body of Christ

who are *not* what they appear to be. They appear to be true men and women of God serving as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. But the reality is that they are merely entertainers impersonating the real thing.

Jesus cautioned us to beware of those who appear to be sheep but who are actually wolves in sheep's clothing and told us that we would recognize them by their fruit (Matt. 7:15-20).

Today we see many standing in pulpits across the land who are preaching what they claim is the gospel and saying that they follow Jesus but who are really serving themselves and not the true Jesus of the Bible.

The apostle Paul warned us about being beguiled by the serpent as Eve was and following preachers who preach about "another Jesus" or "a different gospel," causing us to move away "from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

How can we tell the difference between the sheep and the wolves? Jesus said that we "will know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). Signs and wonders, as great as these are, are not the signs of *authentic* Christianity. Satan can also perform signs and wonders! Remember that Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate some of the signs God did through Moses (Ex. 7:8-12). Jesus told those who had performed great works in His Name, but who did not know Him intimately, to depart from Him because they were workers of iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

Signs and wonders *will* follow those who believe; however, the mark of authentic Christianity is not the signs, but the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of changed lives. The apostle Paul contrasts this fruit with that which comes from carnality (Gal. 5). In essence, those who belong to Christ will reflect Christ and live holy, selfless and pious lives void of sin and depravity. They will not build their own kingdoms for their own glory while practicing hidden sin, but will put to death

their own vain ambition, greed and idolatry for the glory and purposes of God.

Though we pray for the godly leaders our heavenly Father has placed over us in the body of Christ, we must guard our wallets and our hearts from those who would prey on us for their own glorification while they dishonor God. Beware of the impersonators. Save your allegiance for God. Let HIS kingdom come, and HIS name be praised above all others. {eo}

Prayer Power for the Week of June 5, 2016

This week as you draw closer to the Lord, pray that He will burn His Truth into your heart so that you will be able to discern any imposter preaching a false gospel about a false Christ. Pray for revival at home and abroad so that the fire of the Holy Spirit would burn out dross and all impurities from our lives and create a burning desire to see people saved, healed, delivered from bondage and free to worship God in spirit and truth. When you pray for our nation, remember Israel and ask God to give us wisdom regarding our dealings with other countries. Continue to pray for discernment when voting in the upcoming elections (John 4:23; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; Gal. 5).