

# Choices / Consequences 2 - Teachers & Trees

## Two Teachers

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Mt. 7:15-16*

Jesus and His apostles and prophets had much to say about these men. The problems faced by those who enter the narrow gate and seek to walk on the straitened path leading to eternal life center on these teachers. Good and genuine teachers are like good shepherds who care for the sheep. They themselves are also from among the sheep and seek to help others be the sheep of the Lord. But the group Jesus warns against is made up of “ravenous wolves” that only look like sheep. Both He and those sent forth to teach us to observe all that He commanded offer many different warnings about these same false teachers. The Scriptures below are only a sampling of the many passages warning against false teaching.

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as **there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.** 2 And **many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.** 3 By covetousness **they will exploit you** with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. 2Pet. 2:1-3*

*As I urged you when I went into Macedonia — remain in Ephesus that you may **charge some that they teach no other doctrine,** 4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. 1Tim. 1:3-5*

*For I know this, that **after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.** 30 Also from among yourselves **men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.** Acts 20:29-31*

*Now the Spirit expressly says that **in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,** 2 **speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,** 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 1Tim. 4:1-5*

*But **evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.** 2Tim. 3:13*

*For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;** 4 and they will **turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.** 2Tim. 4:3-5*

*that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the **trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,** Eph. 4:14-15*

*For such are **false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.** 14 And no wonder! For **Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.** 15 Therefore it is no great thing if **his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness,** whose end will be according to their works. 2Cor. 11:13-15*

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are **some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.** 8 But even **if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel** to you than what we have preached to you, **let him be accursed.** Gal. 1:6-9*

***Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.** 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 2Jn. 9-11*

*For certain persons have **crept in unnoticed,** those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who **turn the grace of our God into licentiousness** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. ... Jude 4, 11*

*He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you **hypocrites,** as it is written: ‘This people **honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**’ 8 For **laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men** — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” 9 He said to them, “All too well **you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.** Mk. 7:6-10*

*But He answered and said, “**Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up.** 14 “Let them alone; **they are blind guides of the blind.** And **if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.**” Mt. 15:13-14*

These descriptions make it clear there most certainly will be “among you also there shall be false teachers” whom “many shall follow.” (2Pet. 2:1). It will be through “the hypocrisy of men that speak lies,” and who are “branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron that this will occur. (1Tim. 4:1-2). They will use “the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” (Eph. 4:14(NKJ)). They will also use “power, signs, and lying wonders” (II Th 2:9), and “mislead if possible even the elect” (Mt. 24:24). They seek to “draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30), so “in their greed they might exploit them” (2Pet. 2:3). “Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.” (2Cor. 11:13-15).

With such cunning and deceit(wolves in sheep’s clothing). These people will be difficult to distinguish. But we must do so. For though “we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema,” Gal. 1:8-9 and “whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ, has not God.” 2Jn. 1:9 Remember Jesus own warning? “Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit.” (Mt. 15:14).

Jesus gives a clear method to unmask them. All we have to do is look at the fruits or the practical applications that result from their teaching.

## Two Trees/Fruits

*You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Mt 7:16-20*

This is a short, but powerful parable taking into consideration a very common idea. Very few people can identify a tree in the middle of winter. We just don’t take the time to familiarize ourselves with the shape of trees or color and texture of the bark. So only the greatest experts can identify and make distinctions between trees when there are no leaves and fruit. But during the harvest time everyone becomes an expert on the variety of a tree. Just by looking, it is easy to distinguish and apple from a pear, or an orange from a lemon. A walnut, almond, or apricot tree is easily distinguished during the time of the harvest, because just as Jesus revealed, a tree is known by its fruit. While an apple tree is a good tree, a thornbush is not. A grape vine always produces grapes and a thistle always produces thistles. Never will one find a grape and a thorn on the same vine. Good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit, so we don’t have to be an expert. We may not be able to tell at first the difference between the true preacher and the false one. But when the fruits are set forth, it is obvious.

Once we understand the parable, all we have to do is learn the types of fruits revealed in Scripture.

*“For **a good tree does not bear bad fruit**, nor does **a bad tree bear good fruit**. 44 For **every tree is known by its own fruit**. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. Lk. 6:43-45*

*being filled with **the fruits of righteousness** which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Phil. 1:11*

*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable **fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it. Heb. 12:11*

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, **full of mercy and good fruits**, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now **the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace** by those who make peace. Jas. 3:17-18*

The good fruit and bad fruit are clearly identified. The fruit of righteousness is based upon full submission to all that is revealed in Scripture. Righteousness is keeping all the commands of God in humble submission and full devotion to the Lord. All preaching that produces this fruit is good fruit. All preaching that upholds the traditions of men and sets aside God’s commands to follow after one’s own wisdom and pleasure is bad fruit. No matter what is being preached, if it produces the fruits of righteousness in submission and faith, it is good fruit. But again, no matter what is preached, if it produces skepticism, lack of faith, rebellion or ignoring of God’s commands it is bad fruit. How could it be otherwise?

As we read through the list of Scriptures on the previous page, we get a composite of the fruit of good preaching.

*there will be false teachers among you, the way of truth will be blasphemed. men speak perverse things to draw away disciples give heed to deceiving spirits/ doctrines of demons forbid to marry and command to abstain from foods own desires will heap up for themselves teachers turn ears away from truth and turned aside to fables transgresses and does not abide in doctrine of Christ honors Me with their lips But their heart is far from Me in vain they worship teach as doctrines men's commands reject the commands of God, to keep your tradition.*

*secretly bring in destructive heresies, teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables speaking lies in hypocrisy, deceiving and being deceived. they will not endure sound doctrine, we/angel preach any other gospel are accursed turn the grace of our God into licentiousness abide in Christ's doctrine has both Father and Son lay aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men*

There are three passages that help us inspect all the fruit and know if it is good or bad.

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32*

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Tim 4:1-3*

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15*

The most important indicator of good fruit is the attitude they hold toward the word of God. If they respect it highly and seek to always follow it explicitly, then they are manifesting good fruit. Any indication that there is a lack of respect for God's word or any traditions they are keeping that are not found in the Scriptures is a clear indication of evil fruit.

If we are unsure of exactly how to do this, consider how the apostles and prophets did it. As John dealt with false teachers late in the first century, he first warned the disciples "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" He then went on to speak of their fruits at that time: "*Hereby you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not Jesus is not of God:*"

Hence in this passage the fruits would be their stand on Jesus coming in the flesh. If they refused to confess this truth, then they were not of God! Later he made it even clearer: "*We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he who is not of God hears us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*" 1 Jn 4:1-3, 6

All who listen carefully to every word of Jesus' apostles and prophets bears the fruit of a good tree. But those who do not listen to the apostles and prophets bear the bad fruit of being not of God. So today when some say they will listen to Jesus words, but reject things in the writings of the apostles or prophets they are not of God.

Paul made that very clear to the Corinthians. "*If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.*" (1 Cor 14:37) No matter what the claims if they are not listening to the apostles and prophets then they are rejecting the commands of the Lord.

Hence the most important fruit to always look for is adherence to the commands of the Scriptures. Those who today claim that the Bible has been corrupted to one degree or another and who set aside some or much of their writings are not of God. They are bearing an evil fruit and are thus a bad tree! Those who claim that Paul or Peter did not have the same authority as Jesus are also manifesting an evil fruit. Jesus made that clear: "*He that hears you hears me; and he that rejects you rejects me; and he that rejects me rejects him that sent me.*" (Luke 10:16).

There are multitudes of such fruits listed in the Scriptures. Those who forbid marriage or command to abstain from meats are part of the falling away (1 Tim 4:1-4). Even those who creep in unnoticed can be clearly identified by the fruits of false teachers or false servants of God who lived before us.

*For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. Jude 1:4, 11*

Jude revealed that when someone acts like Cain who set aside God's instructions on worship to do as he pleased, or Balaam who in covetousness made merchandise of God's people, or Korah

who selected the weakest link, God's human spokesman(Moses) to undermine God's authority. We could also use Nadab & Abihu, Uzzah, Saul, Solomon, Jeroboam, and others in exactly the same way. They reveal evil fruits and thus can be used to reveal them today.

By looking at the fruits of their teaching and the lives of those who preach and those who follow we are following the Lord's command. The real story of their doctrines is in the fruits. If the fruits of a group are evil, then the teachers are by Jesus own words, ravenous wolves. This may seem unpleasant or harsh, but it is true and the Lord and Savior is the one who said it. There is a great difference between the produce of a thorn bush and a grape vine. Men may wonder what they are when they are small or have no fruit, but when they have produced their fruit there is no longer any doubt. This same thing must be done with those who teach the gospel. If those who follow a teaching begin exhibiting fruits out of harmony with the gospel, then they are false. Christians must therefore become expert fruit inspectors.

*And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. John 12:47-50*