

# OpenTheo

## False Prophets



### Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In his talk, "False Prophets," Steve Gregg discusses the significance of false prophets in both the New and Old Testament. He notes how false prophets may lead individuals away from God by claiming to speak for Him while not speaking rightly. Gregg emphasizes the importance of examining the fruits or actions of these prophets to discern their authenticity. Overall, Gregg stresses the need for individuals to test prophecies and prophets to determine whether they are genuine or false.

### Transcript

We are getting close to the end of the Sermon on the Mount and we come to these verses near the end of Matthew 7 where Jesus warns about false prophets. So I thought I'd talk in some detail about the subject since it's a great concern of the New Testament and the Old. And that is that people sometimes speak for God but they don't speak rightly for God.

And they can be very harmful as they were in the Old Testament. They'd lead people away from God and in the New Testament there's strong warnings about it. In fact, the word false prophet which appears in the passage before us which is Matthew 7 verse 15 and following.

The term false prophet is not found in the Old Testament. Prophets are all referred to as prophets in the Old Testament but some of them are said to speak falsely. The New Testament freely uses the word false prophets.

But in the Old Testament sometimes especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel you'll read the word the prophets. And then you have to kind of decide from the context are these, is he talking about the real prophets or the false prophets? But you can always tell from the context. But false prophets are simply called prophets.

A friend of mine years ago once said if you call yourself a prophet you are one. You're either a true one or a false one. If you don't call yourself a prophet you're not a prophet.

You're not a false prophet or a true prophet. But if you claim to be speaking for God

prophetically then you are a prophet. You just may be a false prophet or a true prophet.

Now Jesus, I'm going to read the verses 15 through 23 in Matthew 7. Jesus said beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness.

Now, in this first section, verses 15 through 21, Jesus first of all says there will be false prophets who will come and they'll be in sheep's clothing but inwardly they'll be ravaging wolves. It's interesting this picture of a wolf in sheep's clothing is found in Jesus' teachings and is also found in Aesop's fables. In the book of Revelation, there is an evil entity that is referred to as the false prophet and he is described in Revelation 13 as having two horns like a lamb but a mouth like a dragon.

So, sort of the same kind of image. He's got the outward image of a lamb but what's inside him, what speaks out of his mouth is from the devil, in that case a dragon rather than a wolf. But the idea of something wearing the clothing of a sheep but which is really dangerous is the picture that Jesus is drawing.

Now, if somebody is dressed like a sheep, they seem harmless and they seem like a Christian. But if they are really a wolf, they are only there to do serious harm to the other sheep and to the flock in general. So, Jesus said you have to watch out for them because not everyone is what he looks like.

A lot of people look like Christians but they're not and you've got to know them by their fruit. Now, we're going to talk a little later about what the fruit is, how you do discern when somebody is a false prophet and what the fruit of a false prophet would look like and what the fruit of a true prophet would look like because that, Jesus said, is the basis of proper judgment. Now, we should judge prophets as a given.

In fact, Jesus even is implying it without using the word judge here. Earlier in the chapter, in Matthew 7, verse 1, he said, Judge not, that you be not judged. But it's obvious that that was never intended to be an absolute statement that you're not

supposed to judge in anything, in any way.

He goes on to describe what he does mean. If you have a beam in your own eye, don't be judging someone who has a speck in their eye. Get the beam out of your own eye first, then you can judge the person who has a speck.

He says you'll be judged by the same measure you use to judge others. That's what he says in the opening part of the chapter. He goes on from that point, early in the chapter, to talk about don't cast your pearls before swine or you'll put a hole into dogs.

Obviously, since swine and dogs are metaphors for certain kind of people, then if you're not going to cast your pearls before swine, you've got to ask yourself, are these people what Jesus is calling swine? Are these people what Jesus calls dogs? If so, then I shouldn't waste my efforts with them. If they are not what Jesus is calling swine or dog, then casting pearls to them is a safe thing to do. But obviously, that requires making a judgment.

So when Jesus said in verse 1, judge not that ye be not judged, he was not saying there's no circumstance in which you're to judge. There's many circumstances in which we must, and Jesus lays out some of them here. You've got to judge, is someone a swine or are they a dog or are they neither? Is someone a true prophet or a false prophet? Now, Jesus doesn't use the word judge, but he says you'll know them by their fruits, which means you'll have to inspect and judge the value or the quality of their fruit.

Now, Paul did use the word judge in 1 Corinthians 14, I think it's verse 29, he said, let the prophets, he means the true prophets in the church, let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge. So prophets are supposed to have their utterances judged because it's a serious thing to speak in the name of the Lord. It's amazing how freely some people do so and without fear.

But to speak in the name of God is a very awesome thing. You know, when people say, well, I'm a prophet, you shouldn't judge me. That's nonsense.

It's because you respect the word of God that you judge those who claim to be speaking the word of God because you respect God's word but not people's. God's word is not in the same category as anyone else's word. And if somebody is a false prophet and they're saying, thus says the Lord, well, it's your very respect for the word of the Lord that makes you say, well, I'm not going to just accept that as the word of the Lord just because you say so.

I respect, in fact, I live by, my life is governed by every word that comes out of his mouth. That's how men live by, not by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the Father's mouth. So if you're saying that what's coming out of your mouth is what's coming out of God's mouth, if I'm going to live on what he says, I need to make sure

you're not lying to me and that what you're giving me is really his word.

So Paul said that prophets should be judged. He said it more than once. He said it also in 1 Thessalonians 5. These are not in your notes, but they just came to my mind.

But in 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 20 and 21, Paul says, Do not despise prophesying, but prove all things and hold fast what is good. Prove all things means to test them, judge them, see if things that are being said in the name of the Lord to you in the form of prophesying, test them and see if they are. And if they are good, hold fast to them.

If they're not, then don't. Now, this idea of false prophets, Jesus said there would be many of them. It's not a rare thing, apparently, because in the passage we just read, he said, Many will say to me that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And he's describing them as people who whom he did not know.

He didn't know them, he says, but they prophesied in his name. And he says many will say that. So there's gonna be many who falsely prophesy.

In Matthew 24, in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus twice mentions many false prophets. It says in Matthew 24, 11, Jesus, then many false prophets will arise up and deceive many. And then in verse 24, Matthew 24, 24, Jesus said, For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

So these are prophets that will show signs and wonders. Now, it's interesting because Moses warned Israel about false prophets and mentioned that they would show signs and wonders. We'll look at that in just a moment.

But before we do, I just want to mention what John said in 1 John 4, verse 1. Again, he's telling us to test prophecies. 1 John 4, verse 1, he says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit. And by that, in this context, it means every utterance that professes to be from the Holy Spirit.

Every spiritual utterance, every prophecy. Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits. That's again, prove them, judge them, judge prophecies.

Test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Now, John says that many false prophets have gone out into the world, and that was in his own day, in the first century. So when Jesus said many false prophets will come, some people think Matthew 24 is necessarily talking about the end times, you know, future times, even maybe our own times or later.

But John makes it very clear that this many false prophets that Jesus said would come to deceive many, well, he says they're already here. Many false prophets have gone out already into the world. Have gone out apparently means gone out either from the devil, or maybe even gone out of the church, because later John says they went out from us,

but they were not of us.

Or actually, earlier he had said that. So wherever they've gone out from, whether they were in the church and left the church as, you know, schismatics, or whether they are false prophets just out there in the world, John says there are many of them, and Jesus said there would be many of them. So ever since the first century, even to this time, there are many false prophets.

When we think of false prophets, we can easily think of some that don't belong to our religious tradition. Muhammad, for example, whom Islamic people consider to be the prophet, the greatest, well, they consider, actually, Muslims believe Jesus was the greatest prophet, but they believe that Muhammad being a later prophet than Jesus is the one who's most authoritative. They actually believe Jesus was greater than Muhammad, but they don't believe that we should follow Jesus as much as Muhammad, because Muhammad was a later prophet, the most recent prophet.

Mormons have the same idea about Joseph Smith. He was supposedly a prophet and gave them scripture and so forth. So in some respects, both Islam, which in no sense is a branch of Christianity, and Mormonism, which represents itself as a branch of Christianity, both are false religions that are based upon the claims of somebody to be a prophet of God, who, if one would test them, they could find out they're not.

But if you don't test them, then they will deceive many, even the elect, if possible. Now, that's prophets who are outside of our present Christian tradition. But, of course, even in the Christian church, especially in Charismatic and Pentecostal circles, the gift of prophecy is affirmed as a real gift today.

There are many churches that are what we call cessationists. They don't believe prophecy is a gift in the church today, so they believe anyone who prophesies today in the church is a false prophet. But I don't believe that.

The Bible does not say that the gift of prophecy has ceased from the church, and doesn't predict that it will prior to the coming of Jesus. But the point is that Charismatics and Pentecostals are going to be the people today who are most likely to experience in their meetings the phenomenon of someone speaking prophetically, which usually means saying, thus says the Lord. At least in the Bible it meant that.

They usually introduce it that way. And then they speak as if they are God, as if it is God's voice. This is different than a preacher or a teacher, generally, because a preacher or a teacher talks about God like the apostles did.

This is one difference between the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament was written by prophets. The New Testament was written by apostles.

The apostles don't speak as if they are God. They don't speak as if they are Jesus

speaking. They talk about Jesus in the third person.

They talk about God in the third person. They are preachers about Him. The prophets are His mouthpiece, where they always speak when they're speaking for God in the first person.

I, the Lord, have said it. I, the Lord, will do this. I, the Lord, declare.

And so forth. And that's, at least in the early church it would appear, the difference between a prophet and a teacher. Now, there are false teachers, too, and false apostles.

And we'll see that in a moment. But let me just show you that the phenomenon of false prophets goes way back to the time of Moses. Now, he was not a false prophet, nor do we have any false prophets in his lifetime identified for us, but he mentions that false prophets would come.

In Deuteronomy 13, verses 1 through 3, this is the first biblical warning about false prophets. Moses said, If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder. So remember, Jesus said there'd be false prophets doing great signs and wonders.

So signs and wonders can happen among false prophets. Even Jesus said, Many will say, Lord, we prophesied in your name. We cast out demons and did many wonders in your name.

And He said, I never knew you. So the fact that someone does miracles, there's no guarantee that you should trust them. There's other ways to determine if they're to be trusted.

He says, If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you saying, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul.

So just as we are to test prophecies, God, through prophets, even through false prophets, tests us. It's interesting, when Joseph had those dreams from God, they were prophetic dreams about his brothers eventually bowing down to him, and the image of the sheaves bowing down to his sheave, or the sun and moon started bowing down to him. This was God prophesying that his brothers, well, he actually bowed down to him, but when he was later sold into slavery, in one of the Psalms, I wish I could remember the one precisely at the moment, it's talking about Joseph.

One of the Psalms is recalling the story of Joseph, and it says, When he was imprisoned,

the word of God tested him. That is to say, he had a word from God, and he was being tested to see if he would have faith when there was seemingly no hope of that word being fulfilled. He had had a word from God when he was still a boy in his home, that his brother would serve him.

Now he's in a foreign land, a slave, and in prison. His brothers are hundreds of miles away. There's no feasible way in which that prophecy will ever come true, that his brothers would bow down to him.

And yet it did. And having that word from God at a time when there seemed to be no possibility of it being fulfilled, was testing Joseph. Joseph, excuse me.

Thank you. Psalm 105, 19. Psalm 105, 19.

The word of the Lord tested Joseph. But the false prophets, these test people too. That's what Deuteronomy 13 says.

If there's a false prophet, he may come and show you signs of wonder, and they may actually come to pass. Now what's interesting is that since this prophet is trying to lead them away from Yahweh, he's clearly not a prophet of Yahweh, he's a false prophet. But we would say, based on our New Testament knowledge of things, that if this false prophet is doing true signs and wonders, they must be from the devil.

They must not be, they're not from God, we would say. They're actually from the devil. Because these are false prophets, they're counterfeit miracles.

On the other hand, Moses doesn't say the devil is deceiving you, he says God is testing you. He says don't follow that prophet, for the Lord your God is testing you to see if you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You know, it's an interesting thing, because probably, in fact, it is the devil who is doing the deeds of the false prophets.

However, the devil's agency is not in the picture when Moses talks about it. It may be that without Moses mentioning it, he is describing works that demons work through the false prophets. But that's not the point he wants to get across.

He wants to get across the fact that there will be persuasive false messengers who God will allow to come, even if they are energized by the devil himself. God is allowing it, just like he allowed the devil to test Job and so forth. So God allows the devil to test God's people.

Jesus himself had to be tested by the devil, or tested by the devil in the wilderness, the Bible says. And the Holy Spirit led him into that test. So God led Israel into times where they would be tested to see if they loved God or not.

How would the test shape up? Well, they know what God said to do. A false prophet will come and tell them, let's not do that, let's go worship Baal, let's go worship Molech. They have a lot more fun over there in those churches where people are having orgies and sacrificing their babies and so forth, and they get drunk and stuff.

It's a big party over there. Let's go that way. And, you know, are you drawn there? Will you go there? Well, you fail the test if you do.

The point is that these false prophets are allowed to be there by God because he wants that test to take place. But he wants his people to pass the test so he gives them the right answer before the test comes. It's like if you're giving your students a test and you give them the answer to the test before they take the test.

That's what God did with Adam and Eve in the garden. There's only one question test they had. Will I eat that fruit? And God says the answer is no.

The answer you have to give is no and you'll pass. But they didn't. They foolishly gave the wrong answer.

And so also Israel was tested. They were tested by false prophets. And God gave them the right answer to the test beforehand.

Don't listen to those prophets. You are being tested. Recognize what's going on here.

And yet Israel did follow false prophets and they did worship Baal and Moloch. So you can see that it's not God's fault. He warned them.

But it is interesting that he does acknowledge that false prophets may do what appear to be supernatural things and probably by demonic power. But if so, it's God allowing it to be a test for his people of their loyalty to him. Deuteronomy 18 is the next passage where Moses also talks about prophets, true and false.

He says to them, When you come into the land which the Lord your God has given you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. Sorry about this. Occult practices of the Canaanites.

There shall not be found among you. This, by the way, Deuteronomy 18, 9 through 15 here. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire.

That was offering children to Molech. Or one who practices witchcraft, a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, like looking at the gizzards of slain animals and so forth to predict the future. Or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these



abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God for these nations which you will dispossess, listened to the soothsayers and diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.

Now in verse 18 through 22. I will raise up for them a prophet like you, that is like Moses. God is speaking to Moses.

From among their brethren, I will put my words in his mouth. He shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall be that whoever shall not hear my words, which he speaks in my name, I will require it of him.

By the way, this promise about this prophet is quoted both by Peter in Acts 3 and by Stephen in his sermon in Acts 7. And they both apply this prophet to the Messiah, to Jesus. This was not made real clear in the Old Testament that the prophet Moses spoke of is the same as the Messiah. And some of the rabbis believed it was and some believed it was a different person, but the apostles clearly understood this prophecy is about Jesus.

Going on though, it says in verse 19, and it shall be that whoever will not hear the words which he speaks in my name, I will require it of him. Verse 20, but the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken.

The prophet has spoken presumptuously and you shall not be afraid of him. So the test, one test of the prophet that Moses gives is if he predicts something that doesn't come true, then he's not a true prophet. But he also said in chapter 13, even if he predicts something and it does come true, he's a false prophet if he's leading you away from Yahweh.

If he says, let's go worship other gods. So these two passages both refer to beware of false prophets. If someone predicts it and it doesn't come true, that's a sure sign he's not a prophet of God.

If he predicts something and it does come true, but he still is trying to draw you with Yahweh, he's still a false prophet. Now, in the time of the Babylonian exile, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had run-ins with false prophets in Israel because in their day, some of the Jews had been taken captive into Babylon. Not all initially, it happened in three waves.

Some were taken away in 605, some were taken away in 597, some were taken away in 586. So after the first wave had been taken away to Babylon, there were prophets both

in Babylon among the Jews and in Jerusalem, among the Jews who were still there, saying, this is not permanent. God is going to cause Babylon to fall very quickly.

The Jews who were taken to Babylon, they're going to come back home soon. This city, Jerusalem, is not going to fall. This is the place where God's house is, and therefore... And they were speaking falsely.

They were speaking words of comfort, but they were false words of comfort because God had truly, through Ezekiel and Jeremiah, spoken words of judgment and horror. And so these true prophets were up against these false prophets, and Jeremiah several times mentions them. In Jeremiah 5, 31, he says, the prophets prophesy falsely.

So in the Old Testament, we don't have the expression false prophet, but we can see that this could be said to be false prophets. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power, and my people love to have it so. That last line there is really significant because he's saying, my people don't want to hear the real words from God.

They want to hear smooth words. They want to hear comforting words. They want to hear flattering words.

They love to have the prophets tell them these lies. Tell me lies, tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies. You know, that's what these prophets were doing, and the people love to have it so.

Also in Jeremiah 14, 14, it says, and the Lord said to me, the prophets prophesy lies in my name. I have not sent them, commanded them, or spoken to them. They prophesy to you a false vision, divination, and worthless thing, and the deceit of their own heart.

Now it says the deceit of their own heart. It almost sounds like he's saying they themselves are deceived, and what's coming out of their heart is the deceit that already resides in their heart. Either that, or he's saying their hearts are set on deceiving other people.

But you know, a false prophet could be either way. A false prophet could be a wolf in sheep's clothing on purpose. He knows he's a wolf, but he's there to bring trouble to the church.

Or he could even be somebody who's not, you know, he himself is deceived. Deceived enough to go against God, and to speak falsely in his name. Now when God says, I didn't speak to these people, I didn't command them, I didn't tell them what to say, I often think of modern cases of charismatic and Pentecostal prophets saying, Thus saith the Lord.

And, you know, as the Bible says, whenever I hear such prophets, I always want to judge

them. And I always want it to be true. You know, I always want to really feel like I've heard from God.

God spoke to us. I remember when I first started going to Calvary Chapel, which is the first church that believed in charismatic gifts that I ever attended, there were meetings there every night. And Lonnie Frisbee had a Wednesday night meeting there, and he was the most charismatic of everyone who preached at Calvary Chapel.

In fact, it became a problem so that he and Chuck Smith parted company over that very fact. But Lonnie was way into the gifts of the Spirit. And I remember when I first started going to Calvary Chapel, I went as many nights of the week as I could, but one Wednesday I missed it.

And my friends at school had been there the night before, and at lunchtime the next day they said, Oh, you missed it. Lonnie prophesied. And I remember thinking, Wow.

It was just so awesome that while God speaks like through Isaiah or through Elijah today, through somebody, I believed it. I mean, I didn't think it was weird at all. And I still believe it.

I still believe in prophecy. I didn't hear that particular prophecy, so I don't know if it was true or false. But the truth is, I remember the awe with which my heart was struck when I thought, there was a prophecy last night? I wasn't there to hear it.

You know, like God spoke and I missed it. I mean, to hear from God just always to me was such an awesome thing. And I'm not a prophet myself, so I can't testify to a lot of times that, you know, I've spoken for God with certainty.

But teachers have some of the different gifts and prophets. But nonetheless, you know, when I later read Jeremiah and said, you know, these people spoke and I didn't speak to them, I wasn't applying it to any particular persons I knew who prophesied. I just remember thinking, wow, you know, there's people who would actually claim that they're speaking for God, and they're not.

I can't believe it. But, you know, how devoid of the fear of God. God must be so angry at people deceiving people by this.

And that's what was going on in Jeremiah. And frankly, you know, I have to say, in some charismatic type churches I've been in in modern times, people speak the word Lord supposedly very freely, very confidently, and very wrongly in many cases. And I think, don't these people have any fear of God? Now, I've sometimes been in meetings where I thought maybe, maybe a prophetic word was coming.

I wasn't sure, you know, but I didn't speak it out because I just thought, I'm just not sure. I'm not sure how a real prophet is sure. Although in the Bible, the prophets had dreams

and visions and heard words from the Lord and things like that.

We do too, perhaps, sometimes. Some people do, but I don't very often. And I've never really felt comfortable speaking a word of the Lord, even when sometimes I felt like, wow, I feel like I might have something to say that is what God is saying.

When I've been in a congregation, not when I'm preaching. And I just wouldn't speak it out because I thought, eh, but if it's not of God, I don't want to be a false prophet. I don't want to speak and be one of those that God says, I didn't send you, I didn't speak through you, you didn't have a vision from me, I didn't show you anything.

So I think that a person who's a real prophet must have some way of knowing for sure when it's really God speaking. Although maybe not always, because that's why Paul said, let the prophets in the church speak two or three and let the others judge. No, he's not talking about false prophets there.

He's talking about people who are, at least think themselves to be respected people in the church. But they might make a mistake and think they're prophesying when they're not. Apparently, that would appear to be what Paul's implying.

In Jeremiah 23, 16, Jeremiah says, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless. They speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord.

And this shows that, of course, in many cases, a person's own heart may be quite contrary to what is in God's heart. In fact, Jeremiah is the one who said, The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Describing the apostasy of Israel in his day.

They're speaking out their own deceived and wicked hearts. What they want to say, what they want God to be saying. And we can certainly see that to be true among many preachers today.

Some may not claim to be prophets, But they're certainly speaking sweet little lies. In Ezekiel 13, and Ezekiel is contemporary with Jeremiah. The same things were going on in his days in Jeremiah.

But Jeremiah was in Jerusalem. Ezekiel was in Babylon. But there were the false prophets among the Jews in Babylon also.

In Ezekiel 13, verses three through nine, Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. Oh, Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the desert. You have not gone up in, speaking to them, You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord.

They have envisaged or envisioned futility and false divination, Saying thus says the Lord, but the Lord has not sent them. Yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. Have you not seen a futile vision? And have you not spoken false divination? You say, the Lord says, but I have not spoken.

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies. Therefore, I am indeed against you, says the Lord God. My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies.

So obviously those who prophesy falsely in God's name, He sets himself against them and promises to destroy them. Now in the New Testament, in 2 Peter 2, verses 1 and 2, The chapter division is a bit unnecessary. The last part of chapter 1 of 2 Peter, he talks about the prophets of the Old Testament.

He says, no, the prophets, the word of the Lord didn't come by the will of man, But holy men of God were moved as they were, or spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. And so he talks about the true prophets in the Old Testament. But he also says there were false prophets in the Old Testament.

He says the church in 2 Peter 2, 1 and 2, But there were also false prophets among the people, Even as there will be false teachers among you. Now you find that false prophets are somewhat equated here with false teachers. Now I think that in the New Testament, the word prophet begins to morph a little bit.

Although there is still the office of the prophet enlisted by Paul. There is still the gift of prophecy. Yet the spirit of the prophets is in all believers, Which was not true in the Old Testament.

Remember in Numbers when Moses said, Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that he would put his spirit upon them. Well, in the Old Testament, God did not put his spirit on everybody in Israel. And there were only a few who were prophets that God had put his spirit upon.

But Joel said, in the last days, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, And your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions, And of my servants and my handmaidens I will pour out my spirit, and they will prophesy. So this idea of God pouring out his spirit on all his people and then prophesying, Suggests that whereas in the Old Testament only a few people had the spirit of God come upon them and they prophesied, In the New Testament all Christians have the same spirit of prophecy come upon them. That does not mean they are all prophets in the sense of holding the office of a prophet.

Because Paul says at the end of 1 Corinthians 12, He says, Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? He says, No, not all are. There are offices of apostles and

prophets and teachers and so forth, But not all are in those offices. But all Christians do have the same spirit that was in the prophets in the Old Testament.

And therefore Paul says, You may all prophesy one by one. In 1 Corinthians 14. Anyone might speak for God.

Now I think that with this broadening of the function of prophecy in the New Testament, The word doesn't only refer to people who say, Thus saith the Lord, in that Old Testament sense. Although there were and are, or at least I'll just say there were in the New Testament times, People who occupied the office of a prophet and they apparently did speak Exactly the same kind of phraseology as the Old Testament prophets did. But every Christian who spoke, whether he's a teacher or an apostle or evangelist or whatever, Had the spirit of God and should be speaking like a prophet.

In fact, Peter said in 1 Peter 4.11, which is not in your notes. In 1 Peter 4.11 said, If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. Anyone who speaks in the church should speak like a prophet, like an oracle, Like someone who receives a prophetic word.

Now he's not saying that everyone is a prophet and everyone who speaks in the church is going to say, Thus saith the Lord. But rather, everyone should speak, whether they're given an exhortation, a teaching, Whatever it is they're doing, they may not be a prophet per se, But they should speak with the mind of saying, I believe this is what the spirit of God would have me say. And I know that I mentioned I don't prophesy.

I never have prophesied in any meeting or anything like that. But when I teach, I do pray in advance that I will be able to speak as the oracles of God. I don't claim the same kind of inspiration that a prophet has, Because a teacher, by definition, has a different kind of truth claims that he's making.

A prophet is actually claiming that this is the word of the Lord coming out of his mouth. A teacher is saying, this is what I understand to be true. But we know in part, we prophesy in part, you know, I don't know everything.

But even though I don't know everything, I should, and everyone should, when they speak in the church say, I really feel this is what the Holy Spirit would say. Now you can judge it. You should prove all things and hope that's good.

But whether I'm giving a prophecy, which I don't generally do, Whether I teach, which I sometimes do, whether somebody gives an exhortation, Or anyone who speaks, let them speak like an oracle of God, Peter said. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit, and the meetings of Christians should not be, I think what Peter says, you shouldn't waste the time in the meeting, Having someone just speak out of his own mind, if he could be speaking like an oracle of God. People need to hear from God, they don't need to hear all your opinions.

And so, Peter kind of speaks to the church and says, There were false prophets among them, as there will be false teachers among you. And we're going to find that Paul said there's also false pastors, Or he used the word elders, and false apostles. So all of those gifted people in the early church that God gave for the edification of the church, There can be false ones too.

And they all seem to fall under the same kind of condemnation as the false prophets. And so, a person being a false teacher is not exactly the same thing as a false prophet, But he's kind of in the same boat. Because he has the Spirit of God too, he should be speaking as much as his conscience knows to do, As an oracle of God.

Same thing when you exhort or encourage or basically say anything. Whoever speaks should do it as the oracles of God. So, Peter said there will be false teachers among you, And Jesus had said there will be many false prophets.

And Peter seems to kind of link them together. There were false prophets in the Old Testament, there's false teachers among you. And he describes them this way, Who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, Even denying the Lord who bought them, And bring on themselves swift destruction.

And many will follow their destructive ways, Because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. I suspect that when he says denying the Lord who bought them, It doesn't mean that they're saying, I deny Jesus. Because if they did that, they'd be recognized immediately as not Christian.

They wouldn't be mistaken for Christian prophets. But Jude also, who says a lot of the same things Peter does in 2 Peter, Jude also has something about that in Jude verse 4. I don't have it in the notes here, but I do want to read it to you, Because it's perhaps talking about the same heretical trend that Peter's talking about. Those who bring great destruction, And denying the Lord that bought them, In Jude verse 4, Jude is also talking about false teachers, he says, For certain men have crept in unnoticed, That is, into the church, 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.

So Peter says they deny the Lord who bought them, Jude says they deny the Lord, but what do they do? They turn the grace of God into lewdness. I think what he's saying is, they're the ones who make grace cheap. They're the ones who say, we're under grace, So live as carnally as you want to.

They turn the grace of God into lewdness, Into license to sin. And that is denying the Lordship of Christ. And there are, by the way, teachers who teach that it doesn't matter, If you obey God, because you're under grace.

And they'd look at the true gospel, And they'd denounce that as Lordship salvation. Lordship salvation is a term that really describes the true gospel, As it's taught by Jesus and the apostles. But there's a heresy, a hyper-grace heresy, Sometimes people call it, that makes grace mean, You don't have to be obedient.

Anyone who says you have to be obedient is legalistic. Anyone who says you have to have a Lord, Has got a worse righteousness, they would say. Oh, we're saved by grace.

Jesus is your personal Savior. Not necessarily always your Lord. That's kind of a separate negotiation you can work out if you want to.

But you just get saved by grace when you accept Jesus as your Savior. That's what they teach. And they believe that no matter what you do, You're okay with it.

That's the false teaching that Jude talked about, Turning the grace of God into permission to sin. And denying the Lord, that is denying the Lordship of Jesus. If you affirm the Lordship of Jesus, You're affirming that you have to obey Him, Because He's the Lord.

Jesus said, why do you call me Lord, Lord? And you don't do what I say. So these false teachers that Peter and Jude refer to, Are what we would call antinomian. This is something that was developed in Gnosticism.

And some people mistakenly thought Paul taught it. Paul didn't teach it. In Romans chapter 3, it says, Some people slanderously say that we teach, Let us do evil that good may come.

But Paul didn't teach that. But there are false teachers that do. And Peter says, these are people who do this, And many will follow their destructive ways, And because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

There was a teacher in Texas in the 70s, Who was an ex-military officer. And he was really a stern kind of teacher. But he had a lot of people who followed him.

Hal Lindsay mentioned this man. He dedicated the book, Late Earth, to this man. And he referred to this man as his mentor.

But this man taught what he called super grace. And there were Bible studies all around the country set up, Home studies, led by people who listened to his tapes. This guy's tapes.

And then they would hold meetings and teach his doctrine. And I ran into people from his movement In several different places in the 70s. I never ran into him anymore.

I don't know what ever came of his movement. But every single time I met a Christian who was in his movement, Just be around them. They'd use profanity.



They'd use coarse language. They were always smoking. They were always drinking alcohol.

They were always being very libertine. And this was their way of showing that they had They'd gotten the message from this guy That we're under a super grace. It's like, if you know you're under grace, You know you're not under the law of Moses.

But if you understand super grace, You realize it doesn't matter what you do at all. This is the very heresy of antinomianism. Which was part of Gnosticism.

And it's what Peter and Jude seem to be warning against. And apparently the warning is timely in our own time too. I mentioned there's things other than false prophets and false teachers.

There's also false elders. Now, an elder in the Bible is what we call a pastor. The difference being that churches have multiple elders.

And many churches have only one pastor. But some churches have multiple pastors. Associate pastors and so forth.

The elders were the ones who were commanded by God To shepherd or to pastor the churches. And Paul was talking to the elders of the church of Ephesus In Acts chapter 20. In Acts 20 verses 28 through 35.

He calls the true elders of the church. And he warns them about false elders. Tells them how to be good elders.

And reminds them about how he was as a leader among them. And he says, therefore, in Acts 20, 28. Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock Among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

They are shepherds. To shepherd the church of God. Which means pastor, the church of God.

Which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departure, Savage wolves will come in among you, Not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves, men will rise up.

So even from the eldership itself, Some men will be corrupted. Some of the elders. Speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone, night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God And to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up And give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.

Yes, you yourselves know that these hands Have provided for my necessities and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way by laboring like this That you must support the weak And remember the words of the Lord Jesus That he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Now, one reason Paul pointed out in his own example How he didn't covet their money and he didn't He supported himself and he was more a giver and not a receiver Is because that was the opposite of what the false teachers were.

The false teachers came in on the take. They came in hoping to bilk people for money. As we shall see in some scriptures we'll get a little later.

But then, so we see there's been false prophets False teachers and false pastors or elders. There's also false apostles. In Revelation chapter 2 and verse 2 Jesus commends the church of Ephesus this way.

He says, I know your works, your labor, your patience And that you cannot bear those who are evil And you have tested those who say they are apostles And are not and have found them liars. So, there are false apostles and this church was commended for testing them. Now, by the way, when churches today claim That they have apostles among them They're usually part of what's called the restoration movement.

It's a big movement among some charismatics, not all of them. And they believe in the restoration of the five-fold ministry From Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11 So that the church should in the last days have apostles and prophets And evangelists and pastors and teachers. And they figure, okay, they think the ideal church will have all five.

Now, most churches don't have anything like a real apostle. And frankly most of them don't have anything like a real prophet either. But they often want to think they do So they lower the bar for defining a prophet.

And they lower the bar for defining an apostle. I happened to be in a church like that at one time Not knowing until I'd been there a while that this is what they were into. And the pastor was regarded as an apostle.

And I challenged him on it more than once. I said, why do you think you're an apostle? He didn't have a good reason. He just felt like they needed to have all five-fold ministry.

He's the pastor, he might as well be the apostle. And I told him, I don't think he's an apostle. When you say that to these people, they usually say, Touch not God's anointed or something like that.

They usually say, you know, who are you? You're a rebel, you know, you're rebelling against the man of God or whatever. But actually to test people's claims to apostleship is commendable. Jesus commended the Ephesian church because they tested those who said they were apostles and were not.

And found them liars. There are liars out there who claim they're apostles. And testing them is something Jesus likes you to do.

He doesn't want you to follow false apostles. Or to be naive. In 2 Corinthians 11, 2 Corinthians 11, 13 through 15, Paul wrote, For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

And no wonder, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness whose end will be according to their works. So he says false apostles are the messengers of Satan.

Satan impersonates an angel of light. These false apostles impersonate apostles of Christ. They're false apostles though.

And their end will be according to their works, which is ominous because their works are, of course, supposed to be very bad. So, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount when we first started this, that we would know them by their fruit. Talks about how good trees don't produce bad fruit and bad trees don't produce good fruit.

I guess we should ask, well, what is fruit then? Obviously it's a metaphor because these people are not trees. Though it's very common in the Old Testament prophets and even in the Psalms to refer to people as certain kinds of trees. The righteous are like a tree planted by rivers of water whose leaf does not wither and its fruit is produced in due season.

Or in Isaiah it says, we will be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. And, you know, when someone told Jesus that he had offended the Pharisees, he said, every plant that my father has not planted will be plucked up by the roots. People are like trees in the metaphor of Scripture because, and in particular, it's talking about fruit trees, because people produce something.

Now, fruit is not the tree. Fruit is what the tree produces. You can gather the fruit off the tree and put the fruit in a bowl.

You didn't put the tree in the bowl. The fruit is created as something that's a product of the tree. The tree is what it is, a tree.

But people produce fruit too, which is independent of themselves in a sense. Once it's gone out from them, it exists as something to be examined. And if you examine the fruit, you can know something about the tree or the person from whom the fruit came.

I often have repeated, because I think it's great, an illustration given by Juan Carlos Ortiz, who was an Assembly of God pastor at one time in Argentina. I don't know if he's still living, but he came to America and was pastoring in California. But he wrote a great book

in the 70s called Disciple.

And he was talking about the difference between an orange tree and a Christmas tree. He said, you know, in Argentina, in Buenos Aires, he says, we don't have very many pine trees. And so at Christmas time, everyone wants to have a Christmas tree, so they buy a real cheap fake tree.

He said these are made of wire and cellophane and things like that. But he says they're real cheap. You can buy one for \$2 or \$3.

But he says as Christmas approaches, you see all kinds of gifts hanging on the trees. A tree that costs \$2 might have, he said, an Omega watch hanging on it or a diamond ring. And he says, but the tree has no value even though it has valuable gifts upon it because it didn't produce the gifts.

He says, after Christmas morning, the gifts are all gone and the tree's out on the curb waiting for the garbage collector to pick it up because the tree had no intrinsic value even though it was bedecked with valuable gifts. But he said, if you have an orange tree and it produces good oranges, you know you've got a good tree. You can't tell if a tree is good by Omega watches and rings hanging on it because it didn't produce them.

But the orange tree produces the fruit. And he says, so you can tell the value of a person, a Christian, by the fruit, not by the gifts that are upon them. Because many people who've been scoundrels have had magnificent spiritual gifts that they've exhibited.

Even those people that Jesus said, many will say, Lord, we, you know, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we did many wonders in your name and I'll say I never knew you. He said, if you go to your orange tree and you say, why don't you have any Omega watches on you? He said, the orange tree has a very good excuse. The orange tree can say, nobody has hung any Omega watches on me.

I'm not a watch tree, I'm an orange tree. I produce oranges and that tells you what kind of tree I am. The quality of the oranges I produce tells you what quality of a tree I am.

But Omega watches don't tell anything about the tree that they're found on. And he was, of course, making the point that gifts of the Holy Spirit are not at all an indicator of spirituality but fruit of the Spirit is. You don't know the true prophets by their giftedness.

You know them by the fruit. But what is the fruit? Changing the metaphor from a tree producing fruit to a human being producing something analogous to fruit, what is the fruit? Well, there's three things in the Bible that are referred to as fruit and all of them are apparently intended. We could simply say, generically, fruit is what is produced from your life, what comes forth from your life.

But there's different categories of fruit in the Bible that come forth from someone's life. One of them is what people speak. Hebrews 13 talks about us offering up the fruit of our lips in praise and thanksgiving to God.

But Jesus also speaks about the words that come out of a person's mouth being like fruit because your heart produces your speech and therefore reveals your character. In Matthew 12 verses 33 through 37. Matthew 12, 33 Jesus said, A tree is known by its fruit.

Brute of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things. And an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it on the day of judgment. For by your words you'll be justified and by your words you'll be condemned. Now notice he first says you'll be known by your fruit and then he changes it to your words.

You'll be recognized as a good tree or a bad tree by your fruit. That is, you'll be justified or condemned by what you speak. What comes out of your mouth is the fruit that your heart produces.

And out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. If you got bad stuff coming out of your mouth, you got a bad heart. That's why God says every idle word you speak, that is every careless word you speak, will be judged on the day of judgment.

Why? Because careless words reveal what's in your heart. What about words that aren't careless? Well, you can be very careful about not letting out with your mouth what's in your heart. Lots of people have very wicked hearts and yet they're very disciplined not to reveal that in their speech.

They talk a good religious game. They talk a very righteous game. They talk love to someone they're trying to seduce.

They speak Christianese fluently even though they're trying to deceive with their doctrines. A person who's careful about his words, the words he's careful about speaking are not necessarily going to reveal what's really in his heart. It's the careless words.

Every careless word a man speaks, that's revealing what's coming out of his heart. When he slams his finger in the door, when he's surprised by somebody doing something wrong to him and just something comes out, it's an unguarded word. That reveals what's in the heart.

Now, false prophets, the fruit that they produce is false teaching. It comes out of their mouth. What they teach is false.

According to Deuteronomy 18, we saw, we looked at this already, Deuteronomy 18, 21 and 22 says, if they predict something and it doesn't come true, a false prediction is a proof of, is fruit of a false prophet. Another thing we saw, well, we didn't see this, we could have looked there, but in 1 Corinthians 12, 2 and 3, this is nothing about what comes out of the mouth to determine whether something's true or false prophet. This is right at the very beginning of Paul's first discussion, chronologically, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And he's just introducing the idea of the gifts of the Spirit for the first time in any of his epistles in this passage. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, he introduces the subject this way, in verse 2, you know that you were Gentiles carried away to these dumb idols. Now, Gentiles were pagans, and the idols they worshiped were dumb.

Now, he's not being verbally abusive, calling them dumb. He's saying they don't speak, they're mute. The gods you used to worship as a pagan were not alive, so they didn't talk.

You never had to worry about whether a word was coming from them or not, they didn't speak anything. But the god you serve now, as a Christian, does speak. And he says, therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

Now, what he's saying is, as Christians, you now serve a god who actually does speak. You served dumb idols before, they didn't speak, and therefore you never had to know whether it was them or not. It never was them.

But our god does speak, sometimes. But sometimes people pretend that they're speaking for him. So here's one thing you need to know.

If anyone says Jesus is accursed, that's not the Holy Spirit. If someone says Jesus is Lord, that is the Holy Spirit. Now, some people take this too rigidly and don't get Paul's point.

They almost say, well, if you can get someone to say Jesus is Lord, well, that means they have the Holy Spirit. Not so. I've heard demon-possessed people say Jesus is Lord in mockery.

What he's saying is this. When a prophetic word comes forth, because that's what he's about to describe, is prophetic words, is gifts of the Spirit where God is speaking to the church. If the word belittles Jesus, if it is demeaning of Jesus, then it's not the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit will never demean Jesus.

But if it's affirming his Lordship, if it is encouraging people to embrace him in obedience as their Lord, well, then that's what the Holy Spirit would do. But he's saying there will be people who think they're speaking from the Spirit, or at least they want you to think they are, and they're not. And the way you know it, if a prophetic word in any sense belittles

Jesus or obscures Jesus in any way, if something else is risen in value in the prophetic word above Jesus or anything like that, well, then that's not what the Holy Spirit would do.

But if the Holy Spirit, if the word is, in fact, encouraging people to embrace Christ's Lordship, to be obedient to him and so forth, then that is what the Holy Spirit would do. That's one way to judge prophecy. The fruit of the prophet's mouth, whether it exalts Jesus or puts Jesus down, would be some of the fruit by which you'd know a false prophet, is what Paul's saying.

And then there's one other thing we could observe, what comes out of the mouth of the false prophet, is that they deny that Jesus was truly incarnate. That is that he has come in the flesh. In 1 John 4, we already saw verse 1, but the verses that follow are what I'm interested in here now.

1 John 4, 1 through 3, it says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God. Every spirit that says that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not of God. And that is that spirit of Antichrist, for of you have heard that it was incoming, and even now already is in the world. So he says, the false prophets, they'll be denying that Jesus has come in the flesh.

Now there's a very particular doctrine John has in mind here, which arose later among the Gnostics. It was incipient in some religious communities at this time. It became full-blown Gnosticism in the next century.

But it was the idea that Jesus was not really fully human. He wasn't really physical. The Docetists, which was one branch of Gnosticism, taught that Jesus was just a phantom.

When he walked, he didn't leave footprints. You couldn't touch him. He looked like he was physical, but he wasn't.

Now that's a heresy. Jesus made it very clear that he was a man, and it's very important that we know he was a man. But the false doctrine that he didn't come in the flesh was later well-known among the Gnostics.

But I'm frankly to just say, if you deny that Jesus came in the flesh, John's earlier writing, the Gospel of John, said in the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. So John's particular doctrine is not just that Jesus was human in flesh, but he was the Word that was made flesh.

That Jesus Christ, the Word of God, has come in the flesh. That's the incarnation of Christ. And he's basically saying false prophets will deny that.

Okay, so I said the fruit of the prophet could be the words he speaks. If he speaks things that are false predictions, if he says things that are demeaning of Christ, if he says things that deny the incarnation, these are some of the fruit of his lips that may prove him to be a false prophet. There's also the fruit of actions, though, and this is also mentioned in Scripture as the fruit by which one would be judged.

I'm sure we're all familiar with Paul's list in Galatians 5, 22 and 23, of the fruit of the Spirit. He says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. This is behavioral stuff.

This is character. You can judge a person by the fruit of their character, not just if they're saying right or wrong things, if they're living right or wrong, because that's as important as what they say. They have to live their message, too.

In Ephesians 5, 9, it says the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. So if the Spirit is producing His fruit in you, and certainly a prophet professes to be filled with the Spirit, then the fruit that the Spirit produces will be love, joy, peace, gentleness, self-control, patience, and it'll be in all goodness and righteousness and truth. In Philippians 1, 11, Paul encouraged the Philippians to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

So the fruit of your life is righteousness, and your life is bringing glory to Christ and to God and praise to God. That's your behavior. Knowing the prophets by their fruits, you've got to look at their life as well as their utterances.

And there are several things that come up repeatedly as descriptions of a false prophet's life and his character. One of them is covetousness. Now, covetousness is greed or love of money.

And by the way, you will find that the false prophets you encounter today almost always have this as one of their motivations. And Paul made it very clear. He wasn't.

Remember when he said, I didn't covet anyone's silver or gold. I didn't covet it. I worked with my hands.

I provided for me and my team. I exhibited what Jesus said, you know, we're blessed to give and receive. That was Paul, a true messenger of God.

But the false messengers, 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 3, it says after he's already mentioned the false teachers earlier, 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. Now, when he says they will just exploit you through covetousness, it



means that they're going to fool you into supporting them because they want your money, basically.

They do it through covetousness. Now, it also might have something to do with the fact that they are trying to teach you something that appeals to your covetousness because, I mean, covetous teachers often teach covetousness as a motivation to others too. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

And we know that prosperity teachers today do that. They appeal to people's love of money to get them to believe their doctrines. And in 1 Timothy 6 1 Timothy 6 beginning at verse 3 through 5 Paul said, If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords to godliness, he is proud knowing nothing but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which some come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain from which withdraw yourself.

Teachers who suppose that godliness or Christianity is a means of getting rich. People teach that. Withdraw yourself from them.

They are worthless. They know nothing. They're only proud, Paul says.

So, this idea that they are after the money, and Paul made it very clear when he spoke to the elders of that, I didn't want your money. You'll hardly ever find a false teacher or a cult leader who isn't covetous. He wants and takes the money of his followers.

He sees religion as a means of getting gain. And that's bad character. That's really bad character.

To love money. It's the root of all kinds of evil. Another feature of the false teachers and their character that Peter mentions in 2 Peter 2 is their sensuality.

Including their drunkenness and their fornication and just living a sensuous and hedonistic life. In 2 Peter 2 verses 12-14, as he describes the false teachers he's mentioned earlier. He says, but these, like natural brute beasts, made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of things they do not understand, will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.

They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you. So these people are, instead of having a holy fellowship with the saints at the fellowship, they're carousing and to them it's just a big party. In Jude, I mentioned Jude has lots of parallels with 2 Peter, talking about the false teachers, Jude verses 16-19 says, These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts, and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.

But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who'd walk according to their own ungodly lusts. They're sensual persons who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. These are false teachers claiming to speak for God's Spirit, but they don't have the Spirit, because they're obviously sensual persons.

They might speak very spiritually, but their lives are sensual, so their character proves them wrong. There was one other verse I should have mentioned in 2 Peter while we were there. Oh, yeah, it's verse 14.

It says, Having eyes full of adultery, and they cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. So, they subvert and seduce unstable souls.

Paul mentions these people who do this also in 2 Timothy 3.6. He says, For of this sort are those who creep into the households and make captives of gullible women, loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts. So, these are teachers that seduce women. I've heard in the 50 years I've been in this, I've heard so many stories about, especially traveling preachers.

A lot of times traveling preachers feel they can get away with it, because they leave before the scandal can catch up with them. A pastor who's involved in this kind of stuff, it catches up with them while he's still there, usually. And many of us know of cases, a little church.

We used to go to a Temecula, pastors in prison, for molesting a young girl. A church I used to go to, a charismatic Mennonite church in Oregon I used to go to, had one of the elders, one of the most respected elders in the church got busted for having affairs, he's a married man, he had affairs with two other married women in the church for eight years before he was caught. This sensuality, this covetousness, these are character traits.

Also, they are said to be rebellious. In 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 10. We won't look at all these verses, because there's just too many verses to cover, we're coming to the end here, but 2 Peter 2 10 says, Therefore brethren, and especially those who walk according to the flesh and the lusts of uncleanness and despise authority, they are presumptuous, self-willed, they're not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, which probably refers to honorable church leadership.

We know from 3 John 9 and 10 that there was this man named Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence who would not receive John or those that John sent. This is obviously a false leader. And so we see that those who will not submit to authority, usually false teachers, false pastors, false prophets, they usually are characterized by not being subject to anybody, even criticism.

I mean, not only are they failing to answer to somebody in some kind of accountability situation, which isn't always possible to do. Paul, for example, when he traveled throughout the world, didn't have some accountability group he was answering to somewhere miles away, but it's not always easy to do, but when you do have the power, when you speak evil of those who advise you, who have authority over you, who even criticize you, and you're willful, and you have to have your own way, that's usually almost all the false teachers I know are like that. They just are uncorrectable.

They don't, they feel like they're a law unto themselves. They're rebellious against authority, even scriptural authority as it turns out. So, we've talked about two different kinds of fruit you can know the false prophets from, the fruit of their lips, the fruit of their actions, and then there's the fruit of their impact.

What is the result of their ministry once they've gone by? Once they've come and gone, what's left behind? What kind of damage have they done? What kind of holiness has been instilled in the church? How much carnality? The fruit of somebody's life is the impact they've had. Paul talked about himself in Romans 1.13 He said, Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, how that I have often planned to come to you, but was hindered until now, that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. That is, I want to have an impact on your church.

I want to have some good fruit for God in that town. Philippians 1.22 He's still speaking about himself. He says, But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor.

Yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. He says, I'm thinking I'd like to die and go be with the Lord, but if I stay, I'll have more fruit, more impact. The fruit of his ministry is not talking about his character or his words.

He's talking about the impact he has on the church. James 3.18 says, Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. That's a hard sentence to understand, but notice he's talking about sowing and bearing fruit.

You sow in righteousness, or you sow in peace, and you produce righteousness. The fruit of righteousness is the impact of a peacemaker. Jesus said, Blessed are peacemakers, they shall be called the sons of God.

James said, If you're a peacemaker, in that peace you are sowing seeds that will produce fruit of righteousness. And that's an impact statement. Now the impact of false teachers, what's it say in Deuteronomy 13 1-3 says, They draw you after other gods.

If a person is teaching what sounds like a good message, and living what looks like a good life, but the impact you're having is drawing people to be interested in something other than God himself. They're getting fascinated with something that draws their attention away from Jesus. There's lots of those kinds of things.

I personally believe that, I think the Hebrew roots movement is in some of its manifestations, it gets people really interested in the Torah and less so in Jesus. I think that there are fascinating little doctrines like full preterism that people get really wrapped up in, and they get all about it. And it takes their heart away from serving Jesus in the same way, because they're focused on convincing people of this little strange doctrine they've got.

Sometimes there's a teacher who's got a little new wrinkle on a doctrine and he thinks it's all important, or he wants other people to think it is, because it's what distinguishes him from others. And it's a divisive thing, and the fruit of it is division. I'll tell you, when you have people in your church who are teaching Hebrew roots, we have people in church who are trying to persuade people of full preterism, that's divisive.

Because, first of all, both of them are teaching heresies that the early church and no church throughout history ever taught, and they're also disrupting the norm, the normal Christianity. People are trying to focus on Jesus, these people want to get their focus off of Jesus, onto 70 A.D. or onto the Torah or onto some other thing. There's so many different things people get focused on.

And they draw the fruit of their ministry is to draw attention away from Christ and devotion away from Christ, although they may not say they're doing that. That's the effect it really has. Another thing is that false teachers, often their ministries will encourage loose living, so that the impact of their life is that people are less holy.

They're just living more compromised than they were before. We mentioned that Jude, verse 4, says that these people are turning the grace of God into license. And the result is that, let me get it here, Jude, verse 4, says, for certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the way they preach grace, it turns it into lewdness. And that means that the result is that people are behaving more lewd. In Revelation chapter 2, two of the churches have false teachers that are producing this very effect.

In Revelation 2, the church of Pergamos, verse 14, says, But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. So, there's these antinomian teachers actually saying, hey, it's okay to commit sexual immorality. You're saved by grace.

It's really what's going on there. It's antinomianism. Also, the church of Thyatira, in verse 20 of the same chapter, they have a false prophet there, who's actually a female in this case.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols. If you find that the effects of somebody's teaching is that people are more carnal, then you've got a false teaching. And, by the way, carnality, partying, fornication, stuff like that, is much more commonplace in the American churches today than it was a generation ago.

And I have to think it's because it has something to do with the teaching they're receiving. Because if people teach like Jesus taught, or like the apostles taught, then that kind of loose living would simply not be permitted in the church. And most people know better than to do it.

They'd know better than to live that way and come to church. They might want to live that way still, but they wouldn't call themselves Christians, because they'd know better. But the false teachers are telling them, you're a Christian even when you're living that way.

Which, of course, is contrary to what Jesus said, or what the apostles said. And that is bad fruit. The bad fruit of their ministry.

So you can discern false prophets and false teachers by the fruit. What they speak, the way they live, and the impact they have on the church. Those are all fruits of their ministries, and Jesus said you'll know them by their fruit.

On these notes, on the last page, I just have an extract from the Didache. And I'll close with this, because it's kind of, it's colorful. The Didache is an old document written right around the end of the first century.

The apostles had died, but not long earlier. This was written by leaders in the church in the second generation after the apostles. And it's a book that tells the church how to do things.

How to take communion, how to baptize, and things like that. It's a, sort of a manual of service for the churches. It is not written by the apostles, but it was so respected in the early church that many thought it should be in the canon of the New Testament.

It's a very good book. I mean, even if it's statements or not, they don't have the authority of scripture. They do describe the mentality of the church.

Who, of the very people who were evangelized by the apostles. Because it's the second generation, these are the people who were evangelized and disciplined by the apostles, and how they did things. So there's a section in there about prophets and ministers.

And let me just read some parts of the Dedicated right here from the notes they've given you. It says, Listen to anyone who comes to teach you such things as these. But if a

teacher has led astray, and teaches a different doctrine that undermines what you have been told, do not hear him.

However, if he comes to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as you would the Lord. Now, I want to point this out. He says, if he teaches you something different than what you've been told.

Remember, he's not talking to 21st century Christians. If someone teaches different than what you were told by some preacher in the 21st century, different than these people were told by the apostles. In other words, if someone had come and taught Calvinism, or had taught Dispensationalism to these people, they'd be teaching something these people had not been told, because neither of those doctrines existed until centuries later.

Calvinism didn't exist until the 4th century, and Dispensationalism didn't exist until the 19th century. So, when those doctrines were taught, if the early Christians who were trained by the Didache had heard them, they'd say, that's false. That's not what we were told by the apostles.

That's not what we were taught by Jesus. But going on, it specifically addresses prophets. It says, you should treat apostles and prophets as the gospel commands.

Receive every apostle that comes to you as you would the Lord, but he must not stay more than one day or two, if necessary, but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. It goes on like this. When an apostle leaves you, give him nothing except bread until he finds shelter.

So, just give him enough food to get him to the next place he's going to preach. Don't send him off with a lot of money. If he asks for money, he's a false prophet.

So, if a minister came through and asked for money, he was a false prophet, as far as the early church was concerned. Do not test or evaluate any prophet speaking in the Spirit. This is one unforgivable sin.

The one unforgivable sin. Not everyone that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet. Only those who live in the way of the Lord.

So, there's confirming our second thing. The first thing it says, if they speak different doctrine. We've said that's one way you know a false prophet is by the fruit of what he speaks.

But it also says, if he lives in the way of the Lord. That's the second thing. His character and his conduct.

It says here, Not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet. Only those who live in

the way of the Lord. Thus, it is by their conduct that you can tell false prophets from truth.

So, that's that fruit that we mentioned second earlier. Similarly, no prophet shall eat while he is in the Spirit. If he does, he's a false prophet.

Now, apparently, in the Spirit meant when he kind of goes into a trance or something like that. When he's in a trance or prophesying, he can't say, bring me food. You know, he doesn't have an appetite when he's in a trance.

So, he's faking it. If he eats while he's in a trance or while he's in the Spirit, he's a false prophet. Even if a prophet teaches the truth, if he does not do what he teaches, he's a false prophet.

So, the guy has to live it as well as teach it. However, if a prophet that has been approved and found true and lives out the cosmic mystery of the Church, does not teach you to do all that he does himself, you should not judge such a prophet. I guess what he means is that he may be doing more than he requires you to do.

That a man may live by stricter rules for himself than he teaches others to live by. That's okay. Paul did, for example.

Paul said that he had the right to be paid for the mystery, but he chose not to do so. He said Peter did and the other apostles did, but he and Barnabas chose not to do so. So, Paul lived by a stricter code than that which he enforced in his teaching.

I think that's what this must mean when it says, if he does not teach you to do all that he does himself, you should not judge such a prophet. His judgment must be left to God, for the prophets in the past also did such things. But anyone who says in the Spirit, give me silver, or asks for anything else, do not listen to him.

But if he tells you to give to others that are in want, let no one judge him. So, it's interesting how the Didache had this section for the church to recognize true prophets and false prophets. And he kind of equated them with false and true apostles.

If an apostle comes to you and asks for money, he's a false prophet. You'd think he'd say he's a false apostle. But apparently the word false prophet or prophet is being used more generically of anyone who speaks to the church.

An apostle, a teacher, an exhorter, a prophet, anyone who searches to speak like the oracles of God, and therefore would be judged as a prophet. And, it's noticed that asking for food, asking for money, staying too long at the church's expense, all these things were signs of a false prophet. And apparently there must have been a lot of people traveling around in the early church who thought themselves prophets and called themselves prophets, so they had to have some way of judging who was and who was

not.

Anyway, Jesus said we'll know them by their fruits, and we've examined quite a few scriptures about what that looks like, and we're pretty much out of time, so we'll stop there.