

A WOLF'S WARDROBE

Lesson 8

I. Introduction

- A. The title of this lesson comes from a very old phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing".
 - 1. The origin of this phrase is very, very old.
 - 2. It came from one of the multitude of stories known as "Aesop's Fables".
 - 3. These stories were created about 620 BC in Greece.
- B. The story of the "Wolf In Sheep's Clothing" is this:
 - 1. A certain wolf could not get enough to eat because of the watchfulness of the shepherds.
 - 2. But one night he found a sheep skin that had been cast aside and forgotten.
 - 3. The next day, dressed in the skin, the Wolf strolled into the pasture with the sheep.
 - 4. Soon a little lamb was following him about and was quickly led away to slaughter.
 - 5. Believing that he had discovered how he could continue to live among the sheep and eat them without being caught, that evening the wolf entered the fold with the flock for a night of rest.
 - 6. Unfortunately, that night the Shepherd took a fancy for mutton broth, so he went to the sheep fold and chose a sleeping lamb and killed it for his supper.
 - 7. He was very surprised to find that he had chosen the "wolf in sheep's clothing."
- C. Aesop's Fables were simple stories that had a "moral" or a lesson to be learned.
 - 1. The wolf was ruthless, resourceful and inconspicuous.
 - 2. The sheep were oblivious to the danger of this imposter, even when one of their little ones was lured away and devoured.
 - 3. The shepherd was fooled by his looks so much that he placed his whole flock in danger by allowing the wolf entrance into the safety of the fold.
 - 4. The wolf could convincingly "look like a sheep" and "act like a sheep" but he was unaware that there was mortal danger in "being a sheep".
 - 5. He imitated a sheep so well that it not only endangered the whole flock, but it caused his own destruction.

II. False Teachers Have Been A Serious Problem Ever Since God Created Mankind

- A. Satan was the first false teacher in the Garden of Eden.
 - 1. Remember Aesop's Fable showed a ravenous wolf that was "creative" in the method he used to trick the shepherd and the other sheep.

2. Satan was also creative. He didn't approach Adam and Eve together because they were too strong together.
 3. He selected the woman because it was easier to convince her when she was alone.
 4. Satan also understood that she had a great influence on the man so he could get her to do his dirty work of enticing the man to join her in eating the forbidden fruit.
 5. Satan did all of this damage while disguising himself as a "friend" who just wanted to help Adam and Eve to be wise like God.
- B. Some may think that Adam and Eve should not have been punished because they were "tricked" into disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit.
1. While they may not have thought of it on their own, they failed to keep the one and only command that God had given them.
 2. Adam and Eve had a special relationship with God in that they spoke to him personally and he walked with them in the garden.
 3. With every command from God there is an "or else" that follows – the consequences of disobedience are inevitable.
 4. Both the false teacher and the willing student must pay the consequences.
 5. Being gullible or simply ignorant of the Bible, so that you are fooled by charismatic false teachers are **not an acceptable excuses**.

III. False Prophets Were A Serious Danger To God's Chosen People In The Old Testament.

- A. The people of Israel were apparently incapable of consistently remaining faithful to God – they were so easily turned to worshipping the idols of the heathen nations around them.
1. Jeremiah, the prophet said: **Jeremiah 5:30-31** – ³⁰ *"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: ³¹ The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And **My people love to have it so.** But what will you do in the end?"*
 2. The false prophets were successful in leading the people away from God because the people not only allowed it but they loved to hear the false prophecies.
 3. Because the people approved of the false prophets and followed their false teaching, God held the whole nation accountable.
Jeremiah 6:13-15 – ¹³ *"Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. ¹⁴ They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace. ¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore **they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,**" says the LORD."*

- B. In Jeremiah 23, the false prophets are compared to bad shepherds who fail to take care of the sheep properly.
1. The false prophets are described as very bad shepherds who have neglected the needs of the sheep and placed them in danger.
Jeremiah 23:1-6 – "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD. ² Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the LORD.
 2. Beginning in verse 3, we find the prophecy of the "good shepherd" who will properly take care of the sheep.
³ "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. **I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them;** and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.
⁵ "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ⁶ In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

IV. When Jesus Came To Earth, Things Had Not Changed Much For The Chosen People Of God – They Were Still Captives Of A Foreign Government And Most Were Still NOT Faithful To God.

- A. John the Baptizer was a prophet sent for the special purpose of introducing the Messiah to the Jews.
1. While many of the Jews sought him out to hear his message, many would not repent of their sins against God.
 2. He baptized those who did repent so that they would be ready to receive the Christ who would be able to offer forgiveness for their sins.
 3. John's message made many powerful enemies who sought to kill him.
 4. John was beheaded because of his message regarding the adulterous relationship between Herod and the woman he had taken for his wife.
- B. Jesus, himself still warned the people about the danger of listening to false prophets.
- Matthew 7:15** – "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."
1. This statement was made directly after the two verses that describe the path to heaven as the "narrow way" and there will be few that find it.
 2. On the other hand, the "broad way" leads to destruction and many will choose that path because it is easier.

3. It then makes sense that Jesus reminds us to beware of false prophets because following them down the “broad way” will certainly lead us to destruction as well.
- C. We learned in our last lesson on “John the Baptizer’s Garments” that the prophets did wear garments that identified them as such.
 1. They wore an outer garment (mantle) made of animal hair of some kind, as well as a leather belt around their waist.
 2. The only problem with this was that false prophets also wore those garments in their attempt to gain acceptance with their false messages.
- D. Jesus clarified the confusion over these false prophets by saying that it was possible to identify them (even in their disguises).
 1. **Matthew 7:16** – “*You will know them by their fruits.*”
 2. Every tree produces some kind of fruit:
 - some produce good fruit, juicy and sweet, great to eat
 - some produce bad fruit: the fruit may look good on the outside, but when you cut it, inside it is rotten – not fit to eat at all.
 3. The bad ones may look good on the surface, but they can fool you.
 4. Jesus followed the teaching about “judging a teacher by his fruit” with a warning to all of His followers:
 - a. **Matthew 7:21-23** – ²¹ *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.*** ²² *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?’*** ²³ *And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*
 - b. The fact of the matter is that a false prophet cannot lead others to heaven, nor can he enter heaven himself as long as he continues to spread false teaching. We may be fooled but God is not.
 - c. The problem with judging these false teachers by their fruit is that it could take a long while before their fruit is evident. By that time a lot of damage can be done in a congregation.
 5. Jesus also gave a very simple example of how everyone will be accountable for himself on the Day of Judgment. **Matthew 25:31-46**
 - a. All nations will be gathered before Jesus to be judged.
 - b. Jesus will separate them like a shepherd separates sheep from goats.
 - c. The sheep will be on His right hand, and the goats on his left.
 - d. Those on the right will be invited into receive their inheritance because they:
 - fed Him when He was hungry
 - gave Him drink when He was thirsty
 - provided clothing when He had none
 - visited Him when He was sick
 - came to Him when He was in prison

- e. The righteous asked, "When did we do all this for You?"
- f. Jesus said, "When you did it for one of my brethren, you have also done it for Me."
- g. Then Jesus will say to the goats on his left, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels since you didn't do any of those things for Me."
- h. The goats said, "When did we see You in need and not help You?"
- i. Jesus said, "Since you did not do it for any of My brethren, You did not do it for Me either."
- j. When it comes time for the final judgment, **no one will be able to sneak into Heaven by wearing a sheep's clothing.**

V. Paul Challenges A False Prophet In Paphos, On The Island Of Cyprus

A. The Apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus) and Barnabas were selected by the Holy Spirit to go to the island of Cyprus to continue spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Acts 13:6-12**

1. When they arrived in the city of Paphos, they found a sorcerer, a false prophet and a Jew, named Bar-Jesus.
2. The sorcerer was a companion to the Proconsul (governor of a Roman province).
3. The Proconsul was an intelligent man who called for Paul and Barnabas to come and tell him the word of God.
4. When the sorcerer (also called Elymas) heard Paul and Barnabas he interfered and tried to turn the Proconsul away from the faith.
5. Paul looked at him and said, "*You are filled with deceit and fraud; you are a son of the devil and an enemy of all righteousness. Will you never stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord? The hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.*"
6. Immediately a dark mist fell on Elymas and he was blind, needing someone to lead him by the hand.
7. When the Proconsul saw the power that Paul had through the Holy Spirit, he was astonished and believed the word of God.

B. Paul boldly warned the elders of the church in Ephesus to "guard the flock" against false teachers.

1. **Acts 20:27-30** – "²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ 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."
2. Elders in the church are spoken of as "shepherds" because that most closely explains the relationship the elders have with the congregation.
 - a. Shepherds are dedicated to the welfare of the flock:

<i>Shepherds</i>	<i>Elders, Overseers, Shepherds</i>
Provides fresh water and grass	Provide the "bread of life" by providing Bible Classes, Sermons, gospel meetings and private Bible studies when the need arises.
Cares for the sick or weak or wounded sheep	Looks out for the weak or spiritually sick or discouraged
Protects the sheep from predators	Always watchful in order to identify false teachers or those who cause division among the brethren.
Searches for the lost sheep because every single sheep is important.	Actively watch for those who seem to be drifting away from the fellowship of believers as well as those who suddenly stop attending worship services because every single soul is important.
The Shepherd leads his flock – he doesn't drive them like cattle.	Elders must be wise leaders who will choose a path that keeps the congregation on the "narrow path" according to the New Testament

- **While our elders are good leaders** and we can follow them in confidence that they are leading us toward heaven – unfortunately **not all elders are that conscientious.**
- The reason many congregations of the Churches of Christ have veered off the "narrow path" even to denying many of the doctrinal teachings on salvation that once united us with them.)
- **Isaiah 56:10** describes those who fail in their job to watch out for danger like this: *"His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."*
- The phrase "dumb dogs" does not mean that they are stupid. It means that the job of a watch dog is to BARK when danger approaches. But they are MUTE because they prefer to sleep rather than to remain watchful. In other words, **they are useless.**
- Paul confirmed the damage false teachers can cause in **Acts 20:30** – *"...from among yourselves (the Elders at Ephesus) men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."*

VI. Peter Spoke At Length In II Peter 2 About False Prophets And False Teachers

- A. Peter warns Christians that the Jews had to deal with false prophets and Christians will have to watch out for false teachers.
 1. Peter said the false teachers would be teaching their destructive heresies in SECRET. (vs. 1a)
 2. These people may even deny the Lord, who bought their salvation with his own blood. (vs. 1b)

3. NOTE: When you hear someone say today, "Baptism is NOT necessary for salvation" – they are denying the power of the symbolism of baptism which portrays the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as is found in Romans 6. How then do they access the blood of Jesus which is able to "wash away sins" if not through baptism???
 4. Many will follow their destructive ways and they will cause the "way of truth" (the church) to be blasphemed.
 5. They are covetous and will exploit many with deceptive words.
 6. They reap destruction for themselves and for those who follow them in ignorance.
- B. Peter took great pains to ensure that everyone understood the grave danger their souls were in IF they follow false teachers:
1. Vs. 4 – God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment.
 2. Vs 5 – God did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, while bringing the flood on the world of the ungodly.
 3. Vs 6 – God did not spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah but turned them into ashes, condemned to destruction to make them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly lives.
 4. Vs. 7 – The only ones spared from Sodom was Lot, who was a righteous man oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked people surrounding him.
 5. Vs. 9 – God still knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations while reserving the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.
- C. Peter also warns Christians that the time will come when scoffers will come, living according to their own lusts and taunting Christians by saying:
1. **II Peter 3:4** – *"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."*
 2. Vs. 5 – Peter said they have willfully forgotten that this creation came into existence at the word of God.
 3. Vs. 6-7 – They have forgotten that the whole world perished except Noah and his family and that the heavens and the earth are now preserved also by the word of God until the day of judgment when it will be destroyed by fire.
 4. Vs. 8 – Peter explains that time means nothing to God. One day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day with God.
 5. Vs. 9 – The only reason God has delayed the second coming of Jesus is that He is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

6. Just as in the days of Noah, when God waited 125 years while Noah built the ark, God gave the wicked people on earth that much time to turn from their wicked ways and be saved – but they would not.
7. God is now showing the same patience toward the disobedient today – in the hopes that as many as possible may come to a knowledge of the truth and receive salvation before the final day of judgment when all will be destroyed by fire.
8. **II Peter 3:17-18** – "¹⁷*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;* ¹⁸*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

VII. These Warnings About Guarding Against False Teachers Is Still Very Relevant To The Church Today.

- A. We must remember that the very idea of a "wolf in sheep's clothing" is to allow one who means to do harm to enter the fold inconspicuously.
 1. Unfortunately we cannot tell a false teacher by his/her clothing. After all, they are trying to fit in so that trust can be built in order for false teaching to be slowly introduced over time.
 2. It is urgent that we become so familiar with these New Testament teachings that no perversion of the gospel message or the pattern for the church will slip in unnoticed in our midst.
- B. There is a term used in the church over the past fifteen years that should be heard as an "alarm bell" announcing imminent danger – that term is "change agent".
 1. Just as Peter predicted, "scoffers" or "change agents" are everywhere attempting to make our faith in the simple truth of God's word seem foolish.
 - Today we are described as "too strict", "too old fashioned", "unwilling to accept modern ideas" by those who seek permission to add to the instructions we have received in the New Testament.
 - **New is not always better** – sometimes is it a cheap imitation of the original. This does not condemn everything new – it simply demands that all new methods **MUST** be in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament regarding issues of salvation, worship and fellowship.
 - We are called "intolerant" because we refuse to accept the confusing and incorrect teachings of many denominations.
 - Our worship service is described as "boring". Many are looking for a worship service to be more exciting and entertaining.
 - Perhaps they have forgotten that the audience in worship is God and we are the performers.
 - Our worship is not designed to entertain mankind – it is designed to glorify and praise God, our Heavenly Father.

- If we conduct our worship according to the pattern HE gave us, then our worship is successful and should be uplifting to each one participating.
 - Worshiping is not a “spectator sport”. We are not there to watch the worship – that is God’s job. We are there to participate in worship.
- C. Paul scolded the Christians in Galatia because in such a short time they were already being led astray from the truth of the gospel by false teachers.
1. **Galatians 1:6-9** – *“⁶ 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. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*
 2. I don’t think that there is any scripture in the Bible that is as clear as this passage!
 - Paul was amazed that these Christians were so easily deceived.
 - Paul said that they turned to a “different gospel” which in reality is NOT a gospel in at all.
 - Paul affirms that we must not listen to ANYONE who comes to us with a gospel different from that which Paul had preached to them.
 - Not even an angel from heaven had the authority to make a single change to the gospel message.
 - Those who preach this perverted gospel were declared to be accursed.
 - This point was so very important that Paul repeated it immediately – ANYONE who preaches any other gospel than what Paul preached would be accursed.
 - Vs. 11-12 – Paul confirmed that the gospel he preached was not devised by man, but it was given by revelation to him from Jesus Christ himself. That is what makes his gospel totally truth.
- D. **Revelation 20:10** describes the final ending of the false prophets:
*“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the **false prophet** are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*
1. The origin of all false teaching is “the devil” according to Revelation 20:10.
 2. God created the place of eternal punishment for the Devil and his angels, he did not create it for mankind.
 3. However, when mankind chooses to follow the Devil rather than God, then their end will be the same as his.

4. The Devil is also a leader of a flock. He is a Pied Piper who leads willing people into his place of eternal punishment with a tempting melody that sounds so pretty. But when they get there and see how they were deceived – it will be too late to do anything about it.

E. Satan Disguises Himself As An Angel Of Light To Be More Convincing To Christians.

1. **II Corinthians 11:13-15** – ^{v13} *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.”*
2. These are very difficult to identify because they look just like us.
3. We must learn to look beneath the outer layer to recognize the spirit inside by listening very carefully to those who are eager to express their beliefs and opinions. If they are speaking as the New Testament speaks, we will recognize it – but if they proclaim questionable doctrine or if they are working as “change agents”, we might need to examine their teaching very closely.