

False Prophets and False Professions

Matthew 7:15-23

Introduction – Christ is proclaiming a narrow way, and Himself as the exclusive Gatekeeper. False teachers are all around, trying to widen this narrow gate, claiming to be faithful guides and they tickle itching ears for there is a natural aversion to the narrow gate. What a gracious Savior to warn us now with these terrifying words that *will* be spoken in the Day of Judgment.

Beware of False Prophets (v 15)– Compare this with the teaching on “judge not” at the beginning of the chapter. We are prohibited from judging in one way, and commanded to do so in another. False prophets do not advertise themselves as such, nor are they only those freaky and fringy cults and sects outside the accepted ‘Christian circle’.

Sheep’s Clothing – They may speak truth – at least partial truth. “God is love”. “You are saved by grace”. Some declare that they will no longer speak of ‘sin and judgment’ because they ‘love and accept people – like Jesus did’. “*They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.*”(1 John 4:5) Carnal natures love the teaching of error (Jer 5:30-31). Their profession makes them look like the real thing, and their message is like lamb’s wool. But it’s dead lamb’s wool, and it’s growling underneath. We must learn to look closely.

The Function of Fruit (v 16) – Fruit reveals the nature of the tree. We are to judge based upon fruit, not upon profession. We can do this because of a certain relationship between hearts, which we cannot see, and fruit, which we can. Scripture determines godly fruit.

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

Godly fruit does not ‘trickle out’ - Phil 1:11 “*...being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*”

This fruit is the work of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), and fully expected by Christ (John 15:16).

Fruit and the Nature of “Free Will” (vv 17-20) – How many apple trees do you know that can produce pears? “A good tree CANNOT bear bad fruit”. The will does not determine the contents of the heart. The contents of the heart determine the choices of the will. Men always choose the strongest desire of their heart. This is the nature of free will. A man who does not choose what he ultimately wants has no will. He is insane. This means that unless God has mercy upon sinners, they will continue to bear fruit according to their nature. And Christ promises judgment for all who bear such fruit.

You Want Fruit, I Got Fruit (vv21-22) – Some men ‘know’ a lot about our “Lord, Lord” who in fact are not saved. What we believe is very important, but it is not everything – “*Even the demons believe – and tremble*” (James 2:19). The ground of our justification is not our faith. The ground of our justification is Christ’s righteousness.

Incredible Works – Christ is not exaggerating. Balaam really prophesied for the Lord (2 Pet 2:15-16), and so did Caiaphas (John 11:51). Even more interesting is to consider Judas, one of the twelve (Matt 10:1-4). No amount of good works, done without faith, will ever save you. We are not saved by our good works. We are saved to good works. The difference is the distance between Heaven and Hell.

I Never Knew You (v23) – The breezy, lighthearted attitude of recent generations does not know how to deal with this verse. There is a seriousness and urgency here that Jesus wants *His disciples* to note carefully. This “knowing” is the knowledge of approval, love and delight. Has God the Father set His mercy upon you in Christ? How would you know? Like a great sermon, the answer lies at both ends – the fruit is in the Beatitudes. Have you entered in by the narrow gate? Only then will you avoid the chilling words – “Depart from Me!”