

4. Counterfeits of Christianity

August 28, 2008

One of the most lucrative businesses is piracy. I am not talking about raiding another ship in ocean with a parrot sitting on your shoulder with one eye patch on your eye and waving a hook from the end of your arm. I am talking none other than illegal copying and selling of DVDs, CDs and video games.

The people who are in this business steal the original master copies from their inside sources and duplicate them and sell them through their connections at the normal prices. They didn't have to spend millions dollars to create movies, songs and games except blank CDs, printed covers and cases. Billions of dollars end up in their pockets. It is no wonder why so many want to be in that business.

In spiritual realm, there also are plenty of counterfeit teachers and doctrines now. We call them cults and cult leaders. Whenever and wherever there are works of God, there are false teachers with their false doctrines to confuse people, to rob their joy, to steal their peace and to kill their Christian witnesses. Jesus predicted this in Matthew 24.

At any give time, there are 5000 cults in the United States alone and 1100 self-claimed messiahs.

Since the devil could not destroy Christianity with persecutions, he used an old but proven method – if you cannot beat them, join them. Like the mixed multitude during the time of the Exodus, he makes his false teachers to mingle in the ranks of Christianity to corrupt it from within.

Satan is the great imitator, and he has been hard at work ever since he deceived Eve in the Garden. He has false Christians, a false gospel and even a false righteousness. One day, he will present to the world a false Christ, a.k.a. the antichrist.

The nation Israel was constantly being led astray by false prophets during the OT time. Elijah had to contend with the prophets of Baal, but they promoted a pagan religion. It was the Jewish false prophets who did the most damage, because they claimed to speak for Jehovah God.

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel exposed this counterfeit ministry, but the people followed the pseudo-prophets just the same. Why? Because the religion of the false prophets was easy, comfortable and popular. The fact that the false prophets preached a false peace did not worry the people. That was the message the Israel people wanted to hear.

But here is what the Lord said about those false prophets:

Jeremiah 23:32 "Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," says the Lord, "and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all," says the Lord.

Tonight we are going to study about false teachers, what they do, what kind of future they are going to face. Next Thursday night, we are going to go over an indepth study of the emergent church and its ugly truth.

A. FALSE TEACHERS AMONG US, NO DUH!

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

1) Their messages

False teachers bring in heresies to the people who do not know the Bible by their own choice. Since they are not knowledgeable in the Word, they become easy preys by false teachers.

The word 'heresy' is 'haireisis' in Greek. It means 'to make a choice'. In other words, the false teachers bring in their false teachings that are heresies for people to make bad choices to follow them.

False teachers are better known for what they deny than what they affirm. They deny the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the sinfulness of man, the repentance from our sins, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, salvation by faith alone, and even the reality of eternal judgment in hell. They especially deny the deity of Jesus Christ, because they know that if they can do away with His deity they can destroy the entire doctrines of Christian truth. If He is not what He claims to be, there is no Christian faith.

Here is one interesting portion we must examine closely before we move forward: "*denying the Lord who bought them.*" What does it mean? Does it mean that these false teachers were saved? We have to remember two very important things:

- Jesus' sacrifice was done for every single human being in human history. He purchased their freedom from satan with His own blood.
- But our Lord's atonement is limited to those who believe.

2) Their methods

These false teachers would not throw out the truth right away. They simply lay their false teachings alongside the truth and give the impression that they also believe the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Before long, they remove the true doctrine and leave their false doctrine in its place.

A seeker-sensitive church, such as Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church is a great example of that. Osteen doesn't teach about repentance from sins, rather he talks about self-esteem garbage to make the hearers feel good about themselves. Oh yes, he claims to have Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, but it stops there.

When a seeker-sensitive church can not find anything more to entertain people, they have to invent something new to excite people, to hold people's attendance in their church, they make their move to emergent church area. And you already know how bad emergent church is.

3) Their future

False teachers are promised swift destruction, even though they aren't judged fast enough for many people's opinion.

B. THE POPULARITY OF FALSE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

We cannot put the entire blame on false teachers, because as we see here in v2, “many will follow their destructive ways”. In other words, many people choose to follow false teachers rather than being obedient to the Lord’s calling.

There won’t be any lack of followers for these false teachers.

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

The fact that many follow the evil example of their conduct is proof that people would rather follow the false than the true, the sensual rather than the spiritual. These false teachers are very successful in their ministry. They have glowing statistics to report and crowds gather to hear them. But statistics are not proof of authenticity. The broad way that leads to destruction is filled with people.

I am not saying that all the big churches are wrong. Many of them are right on the Word of God, but at the same time, many are not.

What happens to their followers? For the most important thing, they bring disgrace to the name of Christ. The Christian faith gets a bad name because of their filthy lives.

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

The bottom line is that the majority of people would like to have a sense of security of religion, but in their own ways so that they don’t have to change their ungodly lifestyles. To make this happen, they have to redefine God’s standard righteousness and grace. To them, grace is twisted to mean freedom to do as one pleases.

They replace God’s holiness with compassion for others. It sounds very nice and humane. Under their umbrella doctrine of compassion, they choose to ignore ungodly and perverse lifestyle like homosexuality and embrace everything and anything. However, they single out that the orthodox Christian faith is bigotry and intolerant.

C. THE REAL REASON FOR FALSE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

One common denominator of some of the TV evangelists who are false teachers is that they talk about money a lot. I wouldn’t be surprised that if you take out all the begging and nagging about money from their programs, they would lose between 1/3 or 1/2 of their air time.

They promise that God would bless the people who send money to their ministries ten folds and hundred folds. They read off testimonials from others how true they are. They are con-artists to skim other people’s money.

In Greek, the word ‘exploit’ is ‘pleonexia’. ‘Pleon’ means “more,” and ‘exia’ comes from the verb which means “to have.” It’s a covetous desire for money, lust for another person, or an unholy ambition for honor, prestige or power. These are the motives behind the false teachers and their teachings.

Here apostle Peter pointed out that the false teachers used “deceptive words.” The Greek word is ‘plastos’, from which we get our English word ‘plastic’. Plastic words! Words that can be twisted to mean anything you want them to mean.

Religion can be a tremendous tool for exploiting weak people, and these false teachers use religion just to get what they can. They are not ministers. They are con-artists. But the true minister of Jesus Christ has nothing to hide: his life and ministry are an open book. He preaches the truth in love and does not twist the Scriptures to support his own selfish ideas. He does not flatter the rich or minister only to make money.

For these false teachers, they knew and understood the truth of God and still deny the Lord and His sacrifice, so their condemnation is even greater.

I don’t want to be them when it is the time for the White Throne Judgment by the Lord. They will be more judged than others because they lead others astray.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Refuse to blindly accept someone else’s teaching just because others have been “blessed” by it.

Stop long enough to make a serious study, comparing what is being taught with what the Scriptures teach.

2) Take a careful look at the life of the main spokesperson.

Are the fruit of the Spirit evident – humility, love, self-control? Or is what you’re seeing more the marks of a counterfeit– greed, sensuality, and dissension? Don’t be wowed because someone sounds intelligent or wooed because of someone’s charisma.

3) Pay attention to the terms a person uses and how they’re defined. Also listen to what’s not being said.

Don’t judge truth just by how you feel, but think and make your judgments according to what the Scriptures teach.