

False Prophets

by Chuck Smith

The sermon warns against false prophets who prophesy lies in God's name and cause people to err with their lies, and encourages listeners to know God's Word and study the Bible for themselves to avoid being deceived.

Duration: 39:00

Scripture: Isaiah 5:20, Jeremiah 23:16, Matthew 7:15, John 14:6, 2 Peter 2:1

Topics: "False Prophets", "Discerning Truth"

Description

This sermon focuses on the dangers of false prophets and the importance of discerning the truth of God's Word. It highlights the consequences of following deceptive teachings, using examples from the book of Jeremiah where true and false prophets gave conflicting messages. The speaker emphasizes the need to rely on the genuine Word of God to avoid being misled by false prophets who distort the truth for personal gain or misguided beliefs.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 23. Our scripture reading will begin with verse 25 and I'll read the 25th and the odd-numbered verses and Pastor Brian will lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses to the end of the chapter 23 of the book of Jeremiah. Shall we stand to read the Word of God.

The Lord is speaking and he says, I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

What is the chap to the leaf, saith the Lord? Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words, every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, he saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their likeness.

Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them. Therefore, they shall not prophet this people at all, saith the Lord. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the Lord? Thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the Lord.

And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man in his house. Thus shall you say one to his neighbor, and to every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? And what hath the Lord spoken? And the burden of the Lord shall you mention no more, for every man's word shall be his burden. For ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God.

And thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the Lord answered? And what hath the Lord spoken? But since ye say, The burden of the Lord, therefore thus saith the Lord, Because ye say this word, The burden of the Lord, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the Lord. Therefore, behold, I am even, I will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you, and your fathers, and have cast you out of my presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You that Your burden is easy and is light. And those that go around professing the heavy burden of God upon them are really speaking lies, Lord, in Your name.

Help us, Lord, to walk in the joy of the salvation that You have given. Help us to walk around, Lord, with lightness of heart and mind, having been delivered from the powers of darkness and having been brought into the kingdom of Your Son. Lord, we do pray that today, as we talk about false prophets, that You will cause us, Lord, to be discerning as to the things that we hear and the things that we follow.

That we might walk, Lord, in Your truth and in the light of Your Word, that we would not stumble in darkness, but know, Lord, Your glorious light as it lightens the path that we walk. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. And you may be seated.

Skip will be taking us tonight through chapters 26 and 27 of Jeremiah, and so we encourage you to read them over this afternoon. Join with us at seven o'clock tonight as we gather to continue going through the Bible that we might learn what God has said. We'd like to draw your attention this morning to Jeremiah chapter 27, beginning with verse 12.

Jeremiah says, I spoke also to Zedekiah the king of Judah these words, Bring your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live. For why will you die, you and your people, by the sword and by the famine, by the pestilence that the Lord has declared would happen to the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? Therefore, do not listen to the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, You will not serve the king of Babylon, for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith the Lord, and yet they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out and that you might perish, you and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

As we go through the Bible, we will find that throughout the Bible there are those continual warnings against men who supposedly are speaking for God. Supposedly they are prophets, but God said they prophesy lies. I've not spoken unto them.

And they cause the people to err because of the lies that they speak. But how can you tell if a person is really a false prophet? Here are two groups that are speaking to King Zedekiah. Jeremiah is telling him,

Surrender to the Babylonian army and the city will be spared.

If you try to resist, you're going to bring famine and pestilence and sword upon the city, and the people are going to be destroyed. The city will be destroyed. You'll be taken as captives to Babylon.

So surrender, make peace with them when they come. The false prophets were saying to King Zedekiah, the Babylonians will never conquer this city. Resist the troops and fight against them, for the Lord will give you victory over the Babylonian army.

So here are contradictory messages coming to the king from Jeremiah and from the other prophets who supposedly are speaking to Zedekiah in the name of the Lord. One is saying, Surrender to Babylon and spare the city the complete destruction. The others are saying the Babylonians will never enter the city.

One is saying, God is going to punish you because of the sin of the nation. The others are saying, God won't punish you. He's a God of love.

God's going to deliver you from the Babylonian powers. God will not punish sin. And they are comforting the people in their sin.

You cannot always tell a false prophet by how he looks. Now if their hair is in a pompadour and they're wearing white Armenian shoes and a big diamond on their pinky, that might give you a hint. But as Jesus said, often they come in sheep's clothing, though inwardly they are ravaging wolves.

The true prophet of God will seek to feed the flock of God. The false prophet will seek to fleece the flock of God. Peter warned against the false prophets in his second letter.

He said, But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, who bring upon themselves swift destruction. Many shall follow their pernicious ways as they speak evil of the way of truth. And because of their covetousness, they with feigned words shall seek to make merchandise of you.

That is, they will seek to fleece you with feigned words. Anyone who tells you that you should give because God needs your money is a false prophet. You should give because of the privilege of giving and investing in the work of God's kingdom.

You should never give with the sense of getting more back for yourself. That seed faith concept is the brainchild of a false prophet. Anyone who suggests that by your giving you have a better chance of receiving healing or receiving a miracle or a better chance of God answering your prayers, they are a false prophet.

Anyone who suggests that a person's salvation, one that you're praying for, could possibly be linked to your giving, they are false prophets. Anyone who suggests that you can buy time out of purgatory for a loved one is a false prophet. These should be no-brainers.

Anyone who suggests that God will not punish evil is a false prophet. Anyone tells you that there are errors in the Bible that you can't really trust the Bible are false prophets. Anyone who says that they know better than God is a false prophet.

A few years back when the first Gulf War was initiated, there was a lot of talk in the press and so forth concerning the possibility of Armageddon. And it became quite an issue at the time. And a radio talk show

from Los Angeles, originating in Los Angeles, called and asked if I would be willing to be on a call-in talk show in which they were going to discuss the Bible and Bible prophecy in the last days.

They had also contacted Greg Laurie and so we both agreed that we would be on telephone to be on this particular talk show program in Los Angeles. So the day came for the show and the program director called and made sure that we had a good clear connection and tested voice levels and things of that nature and said, now just wait in one minute, you know, you're going to be on the air. And so we waited and then the show was introduced and the hostess of the show and she said, and we have today with us Pastor Chuck Smith from Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa and also Pastor Greg Laurie from the Harvest Fellowship in Riverside.

And we also have with us today the head of the religion department for the University of Southern California. And that was a curve that was being thrown at us. And so she said, we're going to talk first to the head of the religion department at University of Southern California.

And so he went on to state that there were not prophecies at all in the Bible. It was a mistake to think that the Bible ever predicted anything in advance. It just didn't happen.

It doesn't happen. That prophecy is just a joke, that it doesn't exist. I said, I beg your pardon, sir.

I said, in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would be the name of the king that would allow the children of Israel to go free from their captivity in Babylon. He called him by name 150 years before he was born. Surely that is prophecy, to name a man before he is ever born.

He said, oh, any fool knows there were two Isaiahs, one who wrote before the fact and the other who wrote after the fact. And the second Isaiah was written after the fact. It was written after Cyrus had allowed the children of Israel to go free from their captivity.

I said, I beg your pardon, sir. If you'll go to the New Testament, you'll find that Jesus spoke of the first part of Isaiah and attributed it to Isaiah. He also spoke of the second part of the book of Isaiah, quoted it, and attributed it to Isaiah the prophet.

He said, well, Jesus didn't have the research that's available to us today. I said, well, I beg your pardon, sir. Are you telling me that you are smarter than Jesus when it comes to the word of God? He said, well, unfortunately, he didn't have all of the research that's available for us today.

I hung up. I thought, no way. The phone rang and the lady said, I'm the program director and we lost contact with you.

I said, you sure did. It wasn't an accident. It was deliberate.

I said, I really don't know how to talk to a man who knows more about the Bible than Jesus. Unfortunately, Greg didn't know that I hung up and he hung on for a while, but any man who says that he knows more than Jesus, it's pretty simple. He's a false prophet.

There was a difference between the message that Jeremiah was giving to the king and the message that the false prophets were giving to the king. Jeremiah was saying their only hope of escape from the judgment was to repent and to change and to turn from their false gods and to worship the true and the living God. The false prophets were assuring them that they were okay.

They could go on as they were, that they had nothing to fear, that God would not bring judgment upon them. There was a tragic consequence to their listening to the false prophets, because rather than submitting to the Babylonian army, they sought to resist. They went through a terrible period of famine and pestilence within the city.

Finally, the Babylonian army had torn down the wall, poured into the city, and there was tremendous bloodshed. The king himself, Zedekiah, sought to escape by a secret tunnel, but was pursued by the Babylonian army, and when they caught up with him, they mutilated his body, and then they took him as a captive to Babylon. But by listening to the false prophets, thousands of innocent lives were destroyed, because they chose to listen to the false prophets rather than the true prophet of God, Jeremiah.

But they would rather hear the comforting lies that were being told, that God doesn't really care that you are serving false gods. It doesn't really concern Him. You can go on in your evil, and God will smile at it.

And they wanted to hear that, and thus in listening to the false prophets, they were destroyed. Once the Babylonian army had conquered the city, and there were all of these corpses around, and Zedekiah had his eyes put out. His sons were killed before him, and after he watched them kill his sons, then they put out his eyes, gouged them out, and took him as a captive to Babylon.

It was too late then. I'm sure that in his mind he thought, why did I listen to those false prophets? But it was too late. You can't reverse the judgment that has already taken place.

I understand that on 9-11, when the Twin Towers were destroyed in New York, that at the beginning, as some of the people were escaping from the building, there were those that were standing there, and they were encouraging the people to go back into the building. That it was going to be all right. They would be safe, and to return back into the building.

And many of the people then returned and went back into the building. You say, well what a tragedy. Who would be so foolish as to tell them to go back into the building when they had escaped out of the building? That person was responsible for the death of many people.

How could they do that? But you think of the false prophets. You see, they are comforting people in their sin. And one day God is going to bring judgment.

Now those that lost their lives by returning into the building, if they were Christians, if they were saved, they're with the Lord in heaven. But we're talking about eternal destiny, not just a temporary loss of life. But we're talking about lost forever, eternal punishment upon the wicked.

And if you are listening to a false prophet and saying, well God is a God of love. He's too loving to have ever really punish people for their sins. And you're being comforted, and you think, I can go on and live in sin.

I can go on in these sinful practices that they told me that God is not going to judge. That it's going to be all right in the end. God is going to be merciful and gracious, and I can live as I please, and it doesn't really matter.

They are guilty of giving you false information that could cost you your eternal destiny. Whether you are with the Lord or apart from the Lord. What a terrible thing it is to give false assurance to people that cost them their lives.

How much worse when it costs them their eternal destiny. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man can come to the Father but by me. Thus if a person says, well all religions are good.

All roads lead to heaven. It doesn't really matter what road you take. You can believe what you wish, and all roads will ultimately lead to heaven.

They are false prophets. They are saying something that is totally contradicting what Jesus said when he said, no man can come to the Father but by me. Now there are those that say, well that's too narrow.

You can't believe that God is that narrow, can you? And they try to assure you that you can just get to heaven by any old kind of belief that you might have. I wonder how many people at death who are expecting to enter into heaven only to awake in hell. At that point they will realize I listened to a false prophet who comforted me and assured me in my sin, and forever ruling the fact that you didn't listen to what God said, but to what man said.

How can I avoid being deceived by a false prophet? The best way is to become acquainted personally with the genuine, with the Word of God. Begin to study the Bible. Find out directly what God has to say.

That's been our purpose here at Calvary Chapel, to encourage people to read the Bible. That's why we go through the Bible, chapter by chapter, so that you can read through the Bible and discover what God has said. When you become well acquainted with the genuine, the counterfeit becomes quite obvious.

Know God's Word. Know what Jesus has said, and know what the Bible says concerning who Jesus is, and you will never be deceived by the cults and the false prophets who preach another Jesus, who will try to tell you that Jesus is Michael, the archangel, or that Jesus is a half-brother to Lucifer. Know that God will never say anything that contradicts what He has already said.

So anyone who tells you something that is contradictory to the plain teaching of the Scriptures is a false prophet. The problem is, of course, is that so many people do not know what the Bible teaches. And there are so many people who say, well, the Bible says, and the Bible didn't say it.

The Bible says God helps those that help themselves. Where? I've never found that Scripture, and I've read the Bible through several times. I'll pay you handsomely if you can show me that in the Scriptures.

Whenever someone comes to me, and they have some strange, weird pitch concerning the Bible, some weird interpretation of a Scripture, I will say, where in the world did you ever get that? And their usual answer is, well, I've been just reading the Bible, and I saw the Scripture. I said, no, no, no, not so. You're never come to that understanding just reading that Scripture.

Someone told you that that's what it meant. Because you would never get that by the plain reading of the Scripture. God hasn't hid His truth, and the Bible isn't designed to hide the truth of God.

It's designed to reveal the truth of God. Read the plain Word of God, and it will speak to you. We encourage you to read the Bible for yourself.

God said what He meant, and He meant what He said. You can read it with that kind of confidence. Beware of any new truth.

There are always those that are coming along with some new revelation that God has given to them, and it's something that everybody should know. And usually their eyes are wide and, you know, sort of glassy.

But they've got this new concept, and, you know, God has shown it to them, and now they need to reveal it to the world, you know.

We don't need new truth. What we need is new experiences in the old truths of the Word of God. You see, if I say, well, God's given me a revelation.

It's new. It's something for this age, and generation, and all, and this will help you, you know, and you need. It's saying that God hid these wonderful truths from the early church, and from the believers through the centuries.

But now He has used me as a special instrument, and for so many bucks, I'll be glad to share you with you these truths, you know. The Apostle Peter in his second letter said, grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. For by His divine power, He has given to us all things that are necessary to live a life of godliness through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue.

For He has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Peter's saying God's given us all that we need. It's there in the Word.

Everything that you need to walk a life of godliness, and to live for the Lord, it's right here in the Word of God for you. How can we have fellowship with God, and what is necessary for us to spend eternity with Him in heaven? It's all right here. It tells you how you can have fellowship, and it assures you of God's promise to live with Him forever, everlasting life.

It's interesting that when Jesus warned them to beware of false prophets, He made that warning in an interesting context. He was talking to them about two paths of life. One is a narrow path.

It is a straight gate that leads to the narrow path that leads to everlasting life. He said there are few that find it, but there is a broad path, and there is a broad way that leads to destruction, and there are many that are going into that broad gate. Beware, He said, of false prophets.

You see, they stand at the broad gate, and they say, this is the way, this is the way, and they're pointing people to the broad way. Then Jesus went on to say, again in context, not all who say unto me, Lord, Lord, are going to enter the kingdom of heaven. He said, many will come to me in that day, and they will say, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name we've cast out devils, and in Thy name we've done many wonderful works.

And Jesus said, I will profess to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity. Many are being deceived today into believing that God will accept your good works, God will accept your good intentions, that God will receive you because you're an American.

The Bible plainly teaches that a person must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is the only way by which we will ever enter the kingdom of heaven. No man, Jesus said, can come to the Father but by me.

When it is your eternal destiny that is at stake, you don't want to be mistaken. You don't want to wake up and find yourself forever separated from God. You need to know and you need to be certain that you're walking on the right path.

You say, well, you can't know that. Well, the Bible says you can. The Bible says, make your calling and election sure.

Be sure of your eternal destiny. John said, we know that we have passed from death unto life, and you can know that. And you should know that.

I've talked to many Mormons who said, well, it's presumptive to say, I know I'm saved. You won't really know until you die. I said, oh, help.

That's a horrible time to discover, isn't it? I want to know. I want to know for sure that I'm on the right path. And if I'm following Jesus Christ, if I've submitted my life to Him, I have received Him as my Savior and as my Lord, I know that He will lead me and He will bring me into the presence of God.

And as Jude closes his little book, now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. Beware, Jesus said, of false prophets.

They will assure you that you can get there any old way. But Jesus said, it's a straight path. It's a narrow gate that leads to eternal life.

Father, we thank You that You have not left us in darkness to grope concerning our eternal destiny. But we can know, we can be assured that we are on the right path because we're following You, the way, the truth, the life. Lord, there are so many people throughout the world that are being deceived, who are trusting in the lies of the false prophets and are thus on the path to destruction.

And even as Zedekiah made the mistake and listened to the false prophets and did not pay attention to Jeremiah's word that had come from You, and he suffered the disastrous consequences. Lord, we pray that You will help us to listen to what Your word has to say, and that we will surrender and submit our lives fully to Jesus Christ, trusting in Him and Him alone for our salvation. We ask this, Father, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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