

The Great Conspiracy:

Lesson 1



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

The Great Conspiracy

Lesson 1

Learn about Satan's desire to deceive religious people and how he is using false teachers to accomplish his mission today

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW73

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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The Great Conspiracy:

Lesson 1

What if I told you that Jesus Christ said there was something that you must “beware”? Would you be interested? Would I have your attention?

The word “beware” is a word of warning – telling you that there is something you must be aware of and exercise extreme caution regarding. You must exercise this kind of caution and awareness because of the danger that it poses. Specifically, Jesus wants you to be aware of and exercise extreme caution regarding a group of people who are extremely dangerous. He identifies these individuals as “false prophets” (false religious teachers) in Matthew 7:15. He said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Yes, Satan is using people with messages about God, Jesus, and the Bible to accomplish evil purposes! This is why Jesus identifies this clear and present danger. Take a moment to consider the fact that there are thousands upon thousands of different (so-called) “Christian” churches that all believe, teach, and practice their faiths differently from one another.

Yet, if there is only one Bible and if the Bible contains the perfect word of God, why are there so many different “Christian” churches that believe, teach, and practice their faiths substantively different from one another? Why isn't there just one faith (one system of religious belief, teaching, and practice that is acceptable to God) that is revealed in the pages of God's perfect word? Why isn't there just one church that is united in following that one message?

Historically speaking, there used to be only one faith and one church. When Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, he wrote that there was only “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5). He also said that there was

only “one body” (Ephesians 4:4). Since the body is the church (see Ephesians 1:22-23), there is only one church. In fact, Jesus only ever promised to establish one church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised, “I will build My church.”

However, both Jesus and the apostles warned about those who would pervert this one faith. Jesus warned about the work of false prophets (Matthew 7:15-20). The apostle Paul warned that a time would come when individuals would “depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...” (1 Timothy 4:1). As time progressed and as people departed from the one faith, new beliefs were introduced and new “churches” were established.

Today, we are left with a world that is deeply divided and confused about what the Bible actually teaches and how that faith should be practiced. This is a product of Satan's great conspiracy. He has convinced many to depart from the one faith and they (together) are working to deceive millions of religious people today! By working in this way, he can keep many people enslaved to sin – while they think that have found Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of their sins. Therefore, many of these individuals are not looking to escape their sins – because they don't believe they are still lost in their sins!

The purpose of these lessons is to present the Bible's teachings concerning the work of Satan, his work through false religious teachers, and some of the common false teachings Satan has used to deceive millions. As we prepare to study these lessons, please allow your mind to be open to what God's word teaches – and make the proper applications of these truths. You have a choice to make as we study these lessons. Will you allow your soul to be another trophy on Satan's victory shelf? Or, will you find and follow the truth that will set you free through Jesus Christ? Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Satan, The Father Of All Lies

Though we have not been given the answers to all of the questions we have about Satan, God has told us enough about Satan to know that he is the enemy of mankind. The Scriptures also help us to understand that Satan has exercised his own free will to rebel against God and become the enemy of God. 1 John 3:8, for instance, says that “the devil has sinned from the beginning.”

Satan’s objective

Satan has a very definite mission – as evident throughout the pages of Scripture (from the very first time he is introduced to us in Genesis 3). Genesis 3:1 says (as Satan had taken the form of a serpent on this occasion), “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’”

After the woman (Eve) informed Satan about the law God had given them (the law *not* to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), Satan responded, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5). It was at this point of deception that the woman now looked at the tree differently (in a more favorable way). Satan had directly conflicted the truth that God had revealed – and had made rejecting God look very appealing. Consequently, verse 6 says, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Satan’s objective can already been seen as working against God by trying to lure someone away from listening to and obeying God. Today, thousands of years after this event in the Garden of Eden, Satan’s objective has not changed. Consider the language of 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” He is

still prowling like a lion who is seeking to destroy his prey – and has his sights set on you!

Satan is a liar

Satan has many different weapons in his arsenal that he uses against you. For instance, Ephesians 6:11 makes reference to the need to be clothed with spiritual armor that God has provided in order that you can overcome “the wiles of the devil” (the tactics and schemes of the devil). Later, in verse 16, Paul makes reference to the “fiery darts” Satan hurls at us (figuratively speaking).

However, while there is a great deal that we could discuss relative to the way in which Satan tries to accomplish his objective, the central component of it all is his lies and deceptions! Remember, this is the primary way he lured Eve away from obeying God’s law. Satan directly contradicted what God had said (when Satan said, “You will not surely die”). Then, he continued to deceptively paint the rebellion against God as a pleasurable and beneficial thing!

Jesus teaches us the same thing about Satan in John 8:44. “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Therefore, no matter what Satan says and whatever he is involved in, you need to know that it is not based in the complete truth. Then, since it is not based in the complete truth, you need to know that it is incapable of setting you free from your sin. Remember, Jesus said that it is the truth that will set you free from sin (John 8:32)! Following the deceptions of Satan will keep you enslaved to your sins – which is exactly what he is desiring to do.

Satan authors and promotes religious lies

Certainly, Satan will utilize every weapon in his arsenal to keep people from finding the way of truth. He wants you to believe his lies about finding physical happiness through worldly possessions, wealth, pleasure, etc. He wants you to be focused on your own desires and not give any consideration to God or spiritual things. However, he also recognizes

that some people will choose to believe in God - despite his best efforts. Does this mean that he will give up from trying to capture their souls? Absolutely not! He has many deceptive tactics that capture many religious people - while they believe that they are "Christians."

So, what are these religious lies Satan perpetuates to capture those who choose to believe in God? How could Satan possibly operate in the realm of "Christianity" so that he will deceive millions of people who sit in "churches" every Sunday? This is the focus of this study. We will be exploring some of the popular lies Satan tells religious people every day (and how he uses religious people to spread his lies) - all in the "name of Jesus Christ!"

First, let's observe how Satan has spread religious lies in the past. For this, just go back to Genesis 3. Consider verses 1-6 again. Adam and Eve believed in God. They had talked with Him. There was no convincing Adam and Eve that God did not really exist. But, that did not mean Satan was out of ways to lure them away from God. Rather, he chose to spread a lie about God's motivation and about what God had actually said. Satan wanted Eve to believe that God simply wanted to hold them back from becoming like God in knowing good and evil. In fact, according to Satan, God was lying when He said that they would die for eating the forbidden fruit! These lies, from the beginning, demonstrate how Satan uses lies about God and God's word to pull people away from God!

In addition, whenever Jesus Christ lived on the earth, Satan tempted Him. Matthew 4:1-11 is one example of when this occurred. Particularly, I want you to think about the temptation that is recorded in Matthew 4:5-7. "Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'""

What is Satan doing here? He is quoting Scripture! He is drawing a false conclusion from an Old Testament passage (Psalm 91:11-12) by twisting

its meaning and application. Now, think about the significance of Satan's ability to even use the Scriptures to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ! However, unlike Eve, Jesus overcame the devil's temptation by knowing and applying the true teachings of the Scriptures! Still, this teaches us a great lesson about how Satan even knows the Scriptures and can manipulate them to accomplish his purposes.

Now, as you think about what all of this means, hear the words of the apostle Paul concerning the work of Satan to deceive in the name of "Christianity" and "righteousness." "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 in ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Satan has worked to create religious error

Does Satan ever transform himself into an "angel of light" today in order to accomplish his purposes? Does he ever use religion (and even "Christianity") for his purposes? Absolutely!

Again, I want you to consider the teachings of the Bible in contrast with the state of the world today. We have already seen that God only revealed one faith and only established one church (Ephesians 4:4-6). Furthermore, we can observe that God wanted for all His people to be united in that one faith (see John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27). Yet, there are tens of thousands of different "Christian" churches and faiths today.

Where did they all come from? Did they all originate with God? Clearly, they did not. He did not charter their existence. He only gave one faith and established one church. He is "not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Then, since they did not originate with God, you need to understand their danger. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord build the house, They labor in vain who build it...." In Matthew 15:13, Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted."

How, then, did all of these “Christian” churches and faiths come into being – if not by God? Remember, in 1 Timothy 4:1-3, Paul said that there would be a departing from the faith (apostasy) that would take place. This apostasy has happened – and continues to happen. Satan (the father of all lies – even religious lies) has been working fervently in this world to deceive the hearts of many.

As he works to deceive, Satan employs many people to help him accomplish his great deception. Consider three examples as proof. Now, as you consider these three passages, understand that they do not mean that Satan takes control of people in order to accomplish his purposes. Rather, Satan simply uses them to accomplish his purposes by deceiving them and using them to deceive others.

(1) In Matthew 16:21-23, Jesus began to show His disciples that He would “go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’” Jesus recognized that Satan was tempting him through Peter. Satan wanted Jesus to rebel against fulfilling the will of the Father. Therefore, recognize that Satan used one of Jesus’ own apostles against Jesus!

(2) Luke 22:3-6 says that “Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.” Once again, Satan used an apostle against Jesus. Satan had successfully influenced Judas to conspire with the Jewish leaders and deliver Jesus to them.

(3) 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 makes reference to the apostasy (the falling away from the one faith) that would take place. As Paul makes reference to this, he speaks concerning a “man of sin” (or, “son of perdition”) who would be revealed. Though Paul

does not specifically identify who this man was, he would be involved in the apostasy. Then, please notice that the “coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (verses 9-10).

Therefore, as you consider these examples, please understand that Satan not only has worked to bring about the great apostasy that has already occurred; but He continues to work (and work through people) to lure people away from God.

The Dangerous Reality Of False Teachers

As you consider how Satan conspires to accomplish his purposes through “Christianity,” you need to consider the Bible’s teachings about false prophets and false teachers. Satan is actively using these individuals to deceive people who are interested in following Jesus Christ! Remember, these are the people Jesus Christ said you must “beware” (Matthew 7:15). Therefore, consider how the Bible answers some very important questions about false religious teachers.

Who are they?

A prophet was an individual who revealed God’s will to others. Many times, this involved the foretelling of future events (as God would reveal them to the prophets beforehand). Other times, the prophet’s work was to teach others the will of God and warn them about the consequences of violating God’s law and encourage repentance. Generally speaking, the prophet took God’s message to the people – regardless of what the specific message was.

A false prophet was an individual who claimed to speak God’s message; but, who actually spoke on his own behalf. Ezekiel 13 records an example of the kind of deceptive work accomplished by false prophets. Specifically, in this text, God

instructs the prophet Ezekiel to prophesy against the false prophets.

Look at verses 3-7: “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. 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 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.’”

Instead of speaking the things that were truly from God, God says that they had “spoken nonsense and envisioned lies,” says that He is against them, and says that his hand would be “against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies” (Ezekiel 13:8-9). God said that they had “seduced” His people, making His people believe that there would be peace and safety – when they should have been preparing themselves for the attack of the enemy (Ezekiel 13:10). Therefore, not only would God be against those who seduced His people; but, those who listened to their false words would also experience destruction!

Today, false teachers accomplish the same sort of work that false prophets were engaged in. They speak a message that they claim originates with God; but, one that actually originates with men! Notice the connection between false prophets and false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1. “But there were false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you....”

Do they exist today?

Throughout history, there have been deceitful individuals who have claimed to speak a message from God that does not actually originate with Him. As you study the Scriptures, you should observe the fact that there are numerous references and warnings about false religious teachers in both the old and the new testaments. There is absolutely no indication in the Scriptures that this kind of deception would stop. In fact, passages like 1 Timothy 4:1-3 (as considered

earlier) indicate that it would continue – as it points to the apostasy that would take place.

Consider Galatians 1:6-9. As Paul wrote to those who had become Christians, he indicates that they had been influenced to leave Jesus Christ by those who had perverted (manipulated) the gospel of Jesus Christ. He said, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. 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.”

Revelation 22:18-19 demonstrates that God does not approve of *any* kind of manipulation of the Scriptures – either by adding to or taking away from them. Now, ask yourself, “Does anyone change the teachings of God’s word today either by adding to what God has said or by taking away from it?”

Certainly, there are many examples of false religious teachings in the world today (even in “Christianity”)! Remember, God only revealed one message that contains one faith and He established only one church. However, there are tens of thousands of different ways the “Christian” faith is expressed today and tens of thousands of different “Christian” churches. This warning about false teachers, then, must be taken as seriously as ever. Consider some additional passages from the New Testament which demonstrate the reality of false teachers today.

In Acts 20:28-31, Paul encouraged the elders of the Ephesian church to “take heed” to themselves and to the flock (the church of God) because he realized that after his departure, “savage wolves” would come in among them and would not spare the flock. Also, he said, men would rise up from among themselves “speaking perverse things” (twisted things) that would “draw away the disciples after themselves.”

In Romans 16:17-18, Paul told the Roman Christians, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the

doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”

Then, consider 2 Peter 2:1-3. “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. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 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.”

Every one of these passages (as well as some others) demonstrate that there is a continual need to “beware” of those who speak false religious messages – just as Jesus said in Matthew 7:15!

Why do they exist?

Ultimately, as we have already discussed, these false religious teachers spread false messages (while claiming to speak messages of truth) because they have been influenced by Satan. Remember, he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He spreads many different types of lies in order to lure people away from following the Lord, including religious lies (go back and review Genesis 3:1-6, Matthew 4:5-7, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). These religious lies entrap individuals who desire a form of religion and godliness; but, who are not diligent in searching out the way of truth. Therefore, as you consider why there are false religious teachers in this world, you can know that this is all a work of the father of lies! Satan is behind their false claims.

Then, I want you to consider two reasons why Satan is able to find individuals who will conspire with him to spread his religious lies. (1) Some false teachers are motivated by selfish desires. Go back and look at the passages we’ve just been considering. Acts 20:29-30 says that there would be some who were desiring to draw a following for themselves. Romans 16:17-18 says that some individuals work contrary to the doctrine of Christ because they serve their own desires (i.e. their own bellies). For this

reason, the passage says they deceive the hearts of the simple. Then, 2 Peter 2 describes the work of false teachers who exploit others because of covetousness and look to gratify their own desires. Certainly, there are many who continue to be motivated by their own selfish desires (i.e. for wealth, fame, etc.) and preach false doctrines to accomplish their goals.

(2) Some false teachers have been deceived themselves. Not all false teachers have sinister motives. In fact, I believe that a very large percentage of false teachers are good and sincere people who have been deceived themselves. These individuals may be sincere – and may not have any ill-intent in their hearts that cause their false teaching (unlike the ones described previously). In fact, these individuals may even sacrifice themselves in order to accomplish the “good” they believe they are accomplishing. Even still, an individual’s good motives does not make false teaching any less harmful to himself or to others! These individuals need to be diligent to accurately interpret God’s word so that they can escape the religious error they are in – and so that they can help others do the same.

Why are they so dangerous?

False religious teachers are extremely dangerous. Consider three reasons why they are dangerous.

(1) They are deceptive. It is only fitting that those who are being used by Satan would be deceptive. Therefore, these false teachers are deceptive both in their appearance and in their persuasiveness.

They are deceptive in their appearance because they do not come advertising themselves as being false teachers. In fact, Jesus warns of them coming in sheep’s clothing, while they are actually ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15). Similarly, Peter also warns that these individuals will “secretly bring in destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1). So, you can conclude that these false teachers are *not* going to identify themselves as false teachers. Rather, they will almost certainly identify themselves as teachers of God’s word. Furthermore, they are also (typically) going to “look the part” of what you think a true

Bible teacher should look like. Perhaps they will carry a Bible, wear a cross, or some other kind of clothing that appears “religious.” Then, they are likely going to “talk the language” you think Bible teachers will talk. You’ll likely hear them talk of salvation through Jesus, quote Bible verses, etc.

However, their deceptiveness is not *only* in their appearance. But, their deceptiveness is also in their persuasiveness. They often have a message that is more appealing than the truth. For instance, in Ezekiel 13 (referenced earlier), the Israelites would certainly rather have heard a message of peace instead of a message of impending destruction. However, the true message they needed to hear was the message warning about impending destruction. Yet, they were receiving and following the more appealing message of peace. Today, there are many people who reject the true message of the gospel because of its requirements. But, they still want a form of religion. So, they find someone who will promise them the same things promised by the gospel, but not teach the requirements as strict. However, true gospel preachers will refuse to change the message based on whether it is being well received or not!

An example of this can be seen in 2 Timothy 4:2-4. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 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; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

Sometimes, the persuasiveness of these false teachers is in the deceptive ways their messages are presented. Recall that Romans 16:17-18 speaks of some who were not focused on serving Jesus (who were only interested in serving their own desires), so they were using “smooth words and flattering speech” to “deceive the hearts of the simple.” 2 Peter 3:16 also describes a situation in which some were twisting (manipulating) what the Scriptures say. Similarly, false teachers are often guilty of speaking messages and teaching doctrines that may sound Biblical on the surface, but are really based on perversions to the Bible text (i.e. taking a passage out

of its original context). Or, they may teach things that are based only on applying part of what the Bible says about a particular subject. Or, they may teach messages and doctrines that make an individual feel good about himself/herself – regardless of whether that individual is actually right with God.

(2) They lead others into error. False teaching is deadly to the soul! Recall that 2 Peter 2:1-3 warned that these false teachers would secretly promote “destructive heresies,” bring on themselves “swift destruction,” and many would “follow their destructive ways.”

Now, what is the outcome if an individual is deceived into following a way of error rather than the way of truth? Remember, John 8:32 teaches that it is the one who knows (and follows) the way of truth who will be set free from sin. By implication, then, the one who does not come to a knowledge of the truth cannot take the appropriate actions to be set free from sin. That individual, then, will be lost in his/her sin. Consider what 2 John 1:9-11 says about the importance of abiding in the doctrine of Christ: “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

Therefore, many are being led to eternal destruction – and don’t know it! They think they are being led down the right path. They think they are Christians. They think they are doing what God wants them to do. However, they are being deceived.

In fact, the Bible teaches us that not all who profess Jesus Christ as Lord will be saved. Consider Matthew 7:21-23 very, very seriously. “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!’”

Notice that these words come immediately after Jesus’ warning about false prophets (in verses

15-20). Clearly, Jesus warns that there would be those who professed to follow Him and had even been involved in many good things. However, they would be condemned to eternal punishment rather than rewarded in the way they had anticipated. This was because they were not living according to the will of the Heavenly Father! Perhaps they had even been influenced by some false religious teachers in their lives.

(3) They cause the way of truth to be blasphemed. Not only are false teachers dangerous because they are deceptive and because they lead others into error; but, they are dangerous because they cause the way of truth to be blasphemed. 2 Peter 2:2 (again) says, “And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

What does it mean for the way of truth to be blasphemed? It will be spoken of in evil ways and negatively portrayed. So, not only do false teachers deceive people with their own false doctrines; but, they also deceive others about the truth of the gospel! Therefore, this develops negative attitudes toward those who actually teach and follow the message of truth!

But, why would anyone blaspheme the truth? For false teachers, the truth threatens what they believe and what they hope to accomplish. Furthermore, if people will believe the truth, they will be exposed as false teachers and lose some of their followers. Therefore, as individuals accept the truth, it will cost the false teacher in numbers, financially, in prestige, etc.

The bottom line is that you can absolutely know false teachers will not help you make it to Heaven. They will use their abilities to deceive you, cause you to follow lies, and cause you to despise the truth. Therefore, you need to heed Jesus’ words in Matthew 15:13-14. “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

How can you identify them?

Since false teachers are destructive, I hope that you have the desire to identify and disassociate

yourself from them. After all, Romans 16:17-18 instructs that you “note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” – because they serve their own desires and are seeking to deceive the hearts of the simple. Fortunately, you are not helpless to know who is and who is not a false teacher. You **can** identify them!

(1) You can know them by their fruits. Perhaps you are thinking that God should not hold you responsible if you follow false teaching because someone else has deceived you. However, Jesus gives you the responsibility to test everyone who teaches you in order to see whether the message is truth or not.

Look at Matthew 7:15-20. “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 thornbushes 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.”

Jesus said that knowing whether someone is teaching you the true words of God is much like knowing the difference between bushes. You have to examine what each one produces! You can know what kind of a tree or bush something is by examining the fruit that it produces. And, you can know whether a teacher is true or false by comparing his/her teachings with the teachings of truth (by using the standard of the Bible).

(2) You must be a truth-seeker. You can find great comfort in the fact that God has made His word available to you so that you can evaluate whether someone is a false teacher or a teacher of the truth. However, with this great blessing is also great responsibility. You must be actively and diligently searching for the truth! Again, look at Romans 16:17-18 and observe the fact that false teachers are successful in deceiving the “hearts of the simple.” Therefore, you must choose not to remain “simple” or unlearned in the Bible! Instead, you must choose

to search the Scriptures diligently so that you can know whether you are being taught the truth or error.

Acts 17:11 records an example of this. “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” These Bereans desired to know the truth so much that they did not just accept anything as truth. Instead, they searched the Scriptures in order to see whether they were being taught the truth or not. Certainly, you should imitate this example and search the Scriptures so that you will know what is truth. You must not just take the things people tell you to be truth (not even the things I say). Go back and consider Galatians 1:6-9 to see that even the apostles or an angel from Heaven should not be believed if they say something that is contrary to the truth! However, you will not know whether you are being taught the truth or whether you are being taught error if you are not diligently studying your Bible! Your motivation must simply be to know the truth so that you can be set free from your sins.

Conclusion

Are you treating Jesus’ warning in Matthew 7:15 seriously? Are you exercising extreme caution regarding those who are false religious teachers? Are you being diligent to examine what you are being taught according to the teachings of the Bible? Or, have you been deceived?

Have you considered the possibility that you have been deceived (that you have believed a lie)? Perhaps you are religious. Perhaps you consider yourself to be a Christian. Perhaps you know the Bible pretty well. Still, it is possible that you have believed a lie. Please open your heart and your mind to that possibility. Always be evaluating what you believe and practice in the name of Christianity – evaluating it by God’s word. Always be a truth-seeker and be willing to make whatever changes God requires you to make in your life.

Study Questions

What does the word “beware” mean?

Why is religious division present in the world today?

1. Satan, The Father Of All Lies

What is Satan’s objective?

What is Satan’s main weapon?

Does Satan promote religious lies?

How has Satan worked to create religious error?

2. The Dangerous Reality Of False Teachers

Who are they?

Do they exist today?

Why do they exist?

Why are they so dangerous?

How can you identify them?