



THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW



Recognizing False Teachers

Matthew 7:15–20



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¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”



1. Constant realities (7:15)

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets...”



1. Constant realities (7:15)

- ❖ Revealed truth is available



Romans 1:18–22

¹⁸ ...men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth...

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools...



1. Constant realities (7:15)

- ❖ Revealed truth is available
- ❖ False ideas are attractive



John 8:44

“When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”



2 Corinthians 11:13–15

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.



2. Clever disguises (7:15)

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”



Acts 20:29–31

²⁹ “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert...”



Acts 20:28

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock...”



1 Timothy 4:16

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.



Passage	False Leaders
Matthew 7:15	false prophets
2 Corinthians 11:13	false apostles
1 Peter 2:1	false teachers
Matthew 24:24	false christs
— John Stott	



The history of the Christian church has been a long and dreary story of controversy with false teachers. Their value, in the overruling providence of God, is that they have presented the church with a challenge to think out and define the truth, but they have caused much damage.

— John Stott



Ezekiel 34:2–4

² “...Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.”



1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.



3. Character tests (7:16–20)

¹⁶ “You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”



1 Timothy 3:10

And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.



Matthew 3:10 — “Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Matthew 7:19 — “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”



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