

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

58- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 38
Jesus Warns about False Teachers

Church June 25, 2023

Matthew 7:15-23

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

I would like to take a Poll this morning to see how many of you would agree with these Statements:

- Our Culture is becoming more pagan every day
- People need to return to the Word of God
- There is a great Need to teach God's Word to the people
- We're losing our Country

- Godless people are in Charge of the Nation
- The Nation's Rulers are promoting Wickedness and encouraging God's people to forget His Word and sin against God
- We need to return to the "proven Paths" of our Fathers
- God's people should be "Holy"

Now if you agreed with most of these Statements- Congratulations! You are of the "same Mind" as the Jewish religious Leaders of the 1st Century. Because the Items I just went over with you are *exactly* why the Jewish religious Leaders were saying what they were saying; and doing what they were doing.

By the Time the Roman occupiers replaced the Greeks back in 63BC¹, the Jews had been under the thumb of a pagan Culture- that did NOT love their God; and which did NOT honor the Commands imposed on them by God- for a *longer* period of time than the United States has been a Nation!

And during the 259 years of Greek domination- the Jews did things and were exposed to things that many Jews believed was drawing them further and further *away* from what God gave to Moses. For example, during the Greek occupation- the Jews gradually dropped the Hebrew Language- *which God Himself gave them-* and they began to speak, read, and write in the pagan Greek language.² So, around the beginning of the 3rd Century, BC - the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ptolemy II Philadelphus 283-246) commissioned a group of 70-72 scribes³ to re-write the Jewish Old Testament into the Greek language. Now supposedly, those 70 scholars finished their Task in 70 days; and produced 70 copies that became known as the "*Translation of the Seventy*"- or the "*Septuagint*".⁴ This is the Old Testament that Jesus used during His earthly Ministry.

And even though many scholars of that Era considered the Septuagint as a literary Masterpiece- many conservative Jews were outraged that the Hebrew language was being ignored by the Gentile pagan Greeks. And this was yet another Insult that many of the Jews thought had to be "corrected" when Messiah came.

So, during the "*Period of Silence*"- the 400 years between the "*Burden*" of Malachi and the angel Gabriel's Visitation with Zacharias (**Luke 1:11-20**), to announce the birth of John the Baptist- there was no Sound from Heaven. During those 4 Centuries- there was no Voice from God; no Miracle; No Sign; No Wonder; No Angel; and No Prophet. Nothing but cold, hard, deafening Silence.

¹ The Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered Palestine (as Israel was called back then) in 322BC. They ruled over the Jews until the Hasmonean Dynasty conquered most of Palestine in the late 2nd Century BC. Rome then annexed Palestine in 63BC.

² Koine Greek

³ Legend says that the Pharaoh chose 6 men from each of the twelve Tribes of Israel. However, the ten northern Tribes of Jews had been carried away 500 years earlier, so it is doubtful that this is true.

⁴ <https://www.bl.uk/greek-manuscripts/articles/manuscripts-of-the-greek-old-testament#:~:text=It%20was%20probably%20the%20increasing,in%20the%203rd%20century%20BCE.>

And many Jews believed that God had died. Others believed that they had “*sinned away their Day of Visitation*”- and that God was no longer going to deal with them. But there were others who believed that, yes, they had sinned; and, yes, God was surely angry with them. But these people also believed that if the Jew would return to what Moses had taught; and rid their Nation of the pagan Gentile occupiers- that God would restore them back to what they had under their beloved King, David.

And this Group of Jews began to grow until around 160 years before Jesus was born- they officially and formally came together as “*Pharisees*”- a name that was derived from a combination of ancient Greek and Aramaic words that meant, “*Separated*”. And the Pharisees quickly rose to Prominence as a serious and dedicated religious Group- determined to bring the Messiah to Power and restore Israel to her God-given Roots.

Now during the Maccabean Revolt (167-160 BC)- the other three “Sects” or “Groups” of Jews rose up- which were called, the “*Sadducees*”; the “*Essenes*”; and a violent Group of Jewish Terrorists known as the “*Zealots*” or the “*Sicarii*”.

The main Distinctions between the four Groups was this:

The Pharisees	The religious Conservatives
The Sadducees	The religious Elitists (Sanhedrin) and Liberals
The Essenes	The religious Mystics
The Zealots	The religious Terrorists

So, by the dawn of the 1st Century- the Sadducees *dominated* the political Class of Jews and sat on the Sanhedrin Court. Their Passion was to gradually allow the Messiah to rise up- using *political* Means. So, the Sadducees were the ones who would compromise quickly with the Roman Occupiers- thinking that “*half a loaf was better than none*”. While the Essenes *abandoned* the cities and went out into the deserts and caves (Monasteries) to fast and pray and wait for the Messiah.

But the Zealots wanted things to change- NOW! They were tired of waiting; and by taking bits and pieces of the Old Testament (always out of Context)- they justified their barbaric Violence against the Roman Occupiers (and Jews who didn’t support them or agree with them) like Blackmail; Extortion; Kidnapping; Murder; Torture; and Execution. The Zealots put great Pressure on other Jews to join in with them; or at least financially support them; and they utterly despised the other three Groups as being “*Compromisers*”. These Terrorists honestly believed that they alone were the “true Jews” and that when Messiah came- He would *automatically* side with them and lead them.

Now as we examine this- it is very important for us to realize that Jesus was NOT the first person whom people thought was the Messiah. The political and

religious Climate of the early 1st Century was ripe for various people- to periodically rise up- and claim to be the Messiah; and have some temporary Success. For example, in **The Acts 5:33-42**, Dr. Luke infallibly wrote this,

33 But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.

34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.

35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men.

36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.

38 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;

39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

... so, here we see that both Theudas and Judas of Galilee laid claim to be the Messiah; and attracted some followers; and tried to overthrow the Romans- militarily. And before them- people looked to the Maccabean Brothers as perhaps being the fulfillment of the Prophecies concerning the Messiah.

But one-by-one- all these men failed to fulfill the Prophecies; or to overthrow the Romans. And they were all captured and executed. And this caused many Jews to become cynical and to doubt that the Messiah was ever going to come.

Yet false Messiahs became even MORE prevalent during the Time- frame immediately AFTER Jesus rose from the Dead and ascended into Heaven. And that is why in **Matthew 24: 5**, Jesus said,

For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

Now the word, “*Christ*” here, is an anglicized *transliteration* of the Greek word, “*Khristos*”- which means: “*Anointed*”; or “*Anointed One*”. So, yes, “*Christ*” is simply the English word for “*Messiah*”. They mean the same thing.

But we must remember that Jesus did NOT speak in the Hebrew nor in the Greek languages. So, Jesus NEVER used the word, “*Christ*”. Jesus spoke in Aramaic the entire time He was here on earth. And the Aramaic word for “*Messiah*” was, “*Mesiha*”.

But we also have to remember that Matthew didn’t write this Gospel Record originally in Greek, either. Matthew wrote this Gospel Account originally in Hebrew. And the Hebrew word for “*Messiah*” was NOT “*Christ*”- it was, “*Masiah*”. And whoever translated the Gospel of Matthew from Hebrew to Koine Greek- used the Greek word, “*Khristos*” in this verse.

Now the reason I am saying this- is because, many times, when people read **Matthew 24:5** today- they take it literally- and completely out of Context- as though Jesus actually used the word, “*Christ*”, rather than “*Messiah*”. And even though these words supposedly mean the *same thing*- the word, “*Messiah*” has an almost *exclusive* Jewish connotation.

So, when people take what Jesus said here to teach that Jesus was warning His people about false Christ’s- like Jim Jones or Rev, Sun Yung Moon, and others, who have laid claim to be “*Jesus*”- they are *mis-reading* this verse and *changing* what Jesus said.

So, in Context- Jesus was warning His followers about other Jewish men, who would rise up right after He ascended into Heaven- during the Time when God used the Roman army to judge unbelieving Israel; tear the Temple down; abolish the Levitical Priesthood; and there would be mass Hysteria; great Confusion; along with both political and social Upheaval throughout the Region of Palestine- back in the 1st Century! Because Jesus Himself set the correct Time-frame for when all that would happen when He said this in **Matthew 24:34**:

... this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

... so, the correct Context for the Statement,

... many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ [Messiah],' and will mislead many. (Matthew 24:5)

... and ...

24 "For false Christs [Messiahs] and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

25 "Behold, I have told you in advance.

26 "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. (Matthew 24:24-26)

... is during the Time-frame that the "Generation" of people, who literally heard Jesus say those words on that day, would still be alive and on the earth!

And this Prophecy came to pass in 70AD. when the Roman army came thundering down from the "*North Country*"; surrounded Jerusalem; destroyed the Temple; and ended the entire Jewish way of Life- *including* their entire Way of Worship!

And this cataclysmic Judgment from God was so *powerful*; so *incontrovertible*; so *biblical*; so *impossible to ignore*- that even the pagans knew that God had judged the Jews for *rejecting* their Messiah while He was in their midst!

So, when Jesus said this in **Matthew 7:15:**

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

... He was talking about the Scribes; the Pharisees; the Essenes; and the Zealots- the four Groups or Sects of Jewish religious Leaders- who *dominated* religious Life in 1st Century Palestine. That is the correct Context of what Jesus was talking about here at the End of this Sermon that we call, the "*Sermon on the Mount*".

Now until we get to verse 15- Jesus has been teaching about the Characteristics and the Attributes of the new "*people of God*"; who would be a part of the new "*Kingdom of Heaven*"; who would *abandon* the Old Covenant and flourish under the new Covenant.

And the new people of God would NOT be God's people by Birthright; or Nationality; or Ethnicity- but because they BELIEVE! And these new people would not be identified by the Circumcision of their Flesh- but by having God the Holy Spirit circumcise their hearts by being born again and given new, spiritual Life! And that means that those who would inherit the new Kingdom of Heaven would be both natural Jews and Gentiles- who would become "true, spiritual Jews".

But in their Effort to re-discover and then *maintain* what Moses had given to them- the religious Leaders not only fought against the Romans and their inherent

Paganism- but they also fought against Jesus and those who followed Him! Because they saw Jesus as being an Imposter and a Usurper and they saw the Apostles as Threats against what they called, the “*Customs of Moses*”. And Dr. Luke faithfully and infallibly recorded this for us in **The Acts 6:8-15**, that says,

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.

13 They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

So, in one of the greatest Ironies of all Time- the people, who believed that God wanted to use them to restore the Jews back into what God had given Moses, were the very ones who fought against Jesus so forcefully. And by their waging War against Jesus and the Church- they were proving beyond any doubt that the Old Covenant was completely *incompatible* with the New.

Now it is true that without the Old Covenant laying the groundwork- there never would have been a New Covenant. So, the Old Covenant was OF God and FROM God. But it is also true that once the New Covenant appeared on the earth- for anyone to try to hold on the Old- was to fight against what God was doing. The unknown writer put it this Way in **Hebrews 8:13**:

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

.. and those who, by God's Grace, could understand this- were blessed. But those, who could NOT fathom why God would ever do away with the Old Covenant- were found to be at odds with the Owner and Creator of the Universe and were

severely judged by God! Because in order to keep holding on to the Old Covenant as Jesus was alive and fulfilling every part of God's Law right before them- these blind Unbelievers had to declare War against Jesus; and Who He was and What He was doing!

But before we take too much Pity on them- we need to realize two important Factors that these religious Leaders simply ignored:

1. God had been faithful to clearly and repeatedly promise the New Covenant while the Old Covenant was in force.
2. Neither Moses nor Abraham would have responded to the Advent of the New Covenant the Way the Jewish religious Leaders did.

... and that meant that the biggest Factor as to why these men could *categorically* condemn the incarnate God; call him, "Beelzebul"; harden their hearts against Him; and finally have Him murdered- was because underneath all their outward Religiosity- they were simply pagan Unbelievers- who really didn't believe in the Old Covenant either.

And that means that all their Effort to supposedly "restore Israel" back to what God had given Moses was actually a huge Self-centered Charade. Because as they *repeatedly* confronted Jesus to try to discredit Him- they were proving that they were NOT lovers of God at all; they were NOT children of Abraham at all; and they were not honoring Moses at all- but were, in fact, children of satan; and followers of their own Man-made religion- that could not forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. And that is why Jesus never said anything Good about them!

Now that is the correct Context as to what Jesus meant by what He said in this Passage. His immediate Concern was for what was going to happen to the Apostles as His Divine Judgment against unbelieving Israel was unfolded in the decades immediately after His Resurrection.

But having said all of that about the Correct Context of what Jesus said here- we must now APPLY this Truth to our Day as well. And it is correct to APPLY what Jesus said here to our Condition today. Because the very SAME internal, demonic Forces are at work today that were at work back then- as there is today another Man-made religious "System"- that holds itself out as being the Authority about God and Salvation and Truth- which has completely become *apostatized!* And so, they neither represent God to the people nor do they speak for God.

And the great Irony is that a religious "System"- with all of its outward Religiosity- that *supposedly* dates back to the 1st Century has nothing in common with the Essence; or the Teaching; or the Doctrine; or the Substance; of the Apostles- because it believes and teaches a Doctrine that is entirely Man-made and Unbiblical!

These religious Frauds lay claim to be the God's given and anointed Leaders of the "true Church", when, in fact, they are not even saved. And their supposed "hallowed halls" have become, **"a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird."** (The Revelation 18:2)

Now the Reason that false Prophets and Teachers are so terrible- is because Christianity is a Religion that is made applicable to every soul because of what it teaches and what we believe. So, Christianity is a "*Revealed Religion*". What we know about God that is true- has been revealed to us by God and has been infallibly written down for us in the Bible.

And as I have taught you many times- if it is true that we are justified and adopted and sanctified by what we believe and what we trust in and what we confess- then what we believe; what we trust in; and what we confess- matters. So, we must believe what is true. We must trust what is true. And we must confess what is true about God; and ourselves; and Salvation; and Heaven; and Hell.

And so, most people say, we need to believe what the Bible says. And that is true- but I would add one more component to that Statements and say,

"We must believe what the Bible says- as it is rightly and fully interpreted."

... because make no mistake about it- the Bible MUST be interpreted.

So, it isn't enough to read the Bible. And it isn't enough to even study the Bible. We MUST go one step further and we MUST *interpret* the Bible correctly. Because HOW you interpret the Bible determines what you believe.

Now, many times, interpreting the Bible is NOT as hard as it might seem. But the Business of biblical Interpretation is ALWAYS very serious- because anything to do with God and our Salvation is ALWAYS eternal.

So, there are four main Tests that I would suggest we should all go by- that will help us to identify false Prophets and false Teachers:

1. The Test of Godly Fruit
2. The Test of Sound Doctrine
3. The Test of Adherence to Scripture
4. The Test of "*Getting the Gospel Right*"

... but before we get into these four Tests- I want to say something.

It seems to me that it is very easy for some to label other people as being a false Teacher. In fact, there is an entire cottage Industry out there that seems to

exist for no other reason other than to label people as being false Teachers. And they seem to get great Joy in doing so.

But there is a Caution we must be aware of- as we correctly try to discern who is “False” and who is “Genuine”. And that is because of the 9th Commandment that says:

Exodus 20:16

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

... which is just as Serious; and just as Eternal; and just as Important; to the well-being of our soul- as somebody teaching falsely.

Here in **Exodus 20:16**- we are commanded by God Himself to NOT spread Rumors; nor to engage in Gossip; nor to falsely label someone. So, what is left is that if you did not personally hear them say something yourself; or you didn't personally see them do something yourself- you must NOT repeat what somebody else told you about that person! And anything other than that- is Sin!

But if there is a credible Accusation against a Teacher or Church Leader- you should go to that person- yourself- and ask them about it- BEFORE you label them as being “False”.

And one of the things that troubles me about these so-called “Discernment Ministries” that label people as being “Good” or “Bad” is the degree to which they don't allow for what is called, the “Benefit of the Doubt.” And that is that many of these “Ministries” don't even contact the people they are judging- to give them the opportunity to explain where they are coming from; or what they meant when they said something; or what the Context was behind why they said something- before they label them as being heretical. And that is not only NOT being “Fair”- it isn't being Christian either.

For example, a person can be wrong or inconsistent about certain Subjects that the Bible teaches are very important and very Serious- and yet that person is sincerely trying to “get it Right”. But because of a number of Reasons- how he explains that Subject; or the depth at which he can teach on a certain Subject; may NOT be as Good as it *should* be. Now that isn't okay- it is never okay to wrong about anything. But there is a world of Difference in somebody simply being wrong or inconsistent or unhelpful about a Subject and them purposefully trying to deceive others. So, I would be very cautious about labeling a person like that- as being a false Teacher.

And yet there are real, genuine “bad guys” out there who are deceiving people on purpose. And so, we need to pay close attention to what the Bible actually says are ways we can determine who we should listen to and follow.

So, “How can I identify if someone I listen to on the Internet is a false Teacher?” A number of people have been accused of being false Teachers- but how can we discern this? What should we be looking for?”

1. The Test of Godly Fruit

Look again at what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15-20**:

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

When Jesus discusses “*Fruit*”- He is referring to the Results of correct Believing- which is a godly Life. We need to understand that “*Orthopraxy*”- which is “*Correct*” or “*Right Living*” always flows from “*Orthodoxy*” or “*Correct*” or “*Right Believing*”. Now that doesn’t mean that an unsaved person; or even a false Teacher can’t teach some things that are true. They can. There are Muslims that believe certain elements of Christian Doctrine- yet they are NOT saved at all.

What it means is that the natural and normal Results of Believing correctly- is living the Life that you claim to believe. And that is why Jesus condemned Hypocrisy so strongly. Because Hypocrisy- *religious* Hypocrisy *causes* people to think that someone IS living a godly Life simply because he speaks well about Truth- when all the while- they are living a Lie.

But the Logic is this: If the Word of God; or the Gospel; or the Truth; or Divine Revelation is as Wonderful; and as Good; and as Powerful; and as Glorious as we say it is- then why would a person- who believes in it- not apply it to his own Life? And the **Epistle of Jude** is *especially* helpful to answer that Question- because, sadly, there are people out there that talk a real good talk- but they have never experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and they have never beheld the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.

Now **Jude** is the ONLY Book in the entire Bible that exists for no other Reason than to give us the Characteristics and Attributes of genuine Heretics. And Jude begins his Epistle by saying this:

Jude 3

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

In other words, Jude began to write this Book and talk about the “Common Salvation” of all Believers- meaning that everybody is saved the SAME WAY: “BY” the Grace of God; and “THROUGH” the Gift of saving Faith- in Jesus personally and IN His finished Work. That is what Jude was going to write this Epistle about. But as he began to write- God the Holy Spirit “moved” on him and *changed* the Purpose of this Epistle.

So, instead of writing about the “Common Salvation”- Jude said,

... I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

... but WHY did Jude see the Need to write about that? In verse 4- the half-brother of Jesus said,

For [Because] certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

... and THAT is why Jude wrote this Epistle!

So, Jude and God the Holy Spirit- through this Book encourages us today to:

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

But what is the “Faith” that Jude is talking about? What is the “Once for all handed down to the saints- Faith”?

Biblical Christianity

... and ALL godly Church Leaders agree with Jude and they spend a great deal of time every day- making sure that what they Believe and what they Teach is in accord with the “**Apostle’s Teaching (Doctrine)**”.

And the **Book of Jude** teaches that there are basically two areas of ungodliness that corrupt people in the Church- who are genuine Heretics- engage in:

1. Sexual Immorality
2. Money

... and that is why both Jesus and the Apostles put such a Premium on people- who say they are saved- living a godly Life- *especially* as it pertains to Church Leaders.

For example, the Apostle Paul put a huge premium on this Principle of Holiness and Righteousness in his own Life-giving Credibility to the Gospel he preached. And I saw this recently in my own personal Bible Study- as I have been working through both **1&2 Thessalonians**. And Paul really made a big deal about this in two Chapters. For example, here is what Paul said in **1Thessalonians 1:5**:

for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

... and then he unpacked that for two full Chapters.

So, Paul was basically saying,

“You know what men we proved to be- so judge us by our Lives.”

Now, of course, it’s not always easy to see the behavioral fruit of a Teacher- especially Internet Teachers. So, that is why you need to look carefully and take the time to belong to a local Church- a real, live, human-being, flesh-and-blood, in-person Church- that has a real, live, Preacher- whose Life you can examine. Because Jesus didn’t say that a real godly Leader “*shouldn’t*” bear bad Fruit- He said they “*couldn’t*”.

A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Another thing that Jude helped me to understand- is that real Heretics CANNOT be saved. Jude said,

Jude 4

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

.. and look closely at the phrase Jude infallibly used:

... those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation ...

So, even as we have been predestined for Salvation and, ultimately, great Glory- Heretics have been predestined for Condemnation. And Jesus agreed with this when He said,

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

... and genuinely saved people will NEVER go to Hell!

So, real Heretics are NOT people who mean well- but who are simply a little bit off on their Theology. No, Heretics have never been saved and cannot be saved. Heretics exist for one Reason: to purify the Church! Because when Heretics begin to teach terrible things- it forces the Leaders of the Church to “*get the Gospel Right*”- and make sure that what they teach is actually what the Bible says.

But that also means two other things:

1. There are very FEW genuine Heretics
2. A genuinely saved person who is wrong about Divine Truth may repent and get it right

So, real, godly Leaders don't want to believe or teach anything that is Wrong. And so, they labor, unendingly, to make sure that they are in “Right Standing” with God and His Word.

But even at that- they are human and they can still err. And so, a real, godly Leader will surround himself with other real, godly men- who guard his soul; and who help to keep him on the Straight Path. And for that- we can be grateful.

Amen. Let's Pray.

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