

## L 4 ... Three Things Everyone Should Know About False Teachers

2 Peter 2:1-10a

Have you noticed the abundance of “prophets for profit” currently on TV and radio? They distort God’s Word to promote their “prosperity gospel” and false doctrine. In this passage, Peter describes the characteristics and fate of false teachers. This passage reveals **three** things we should know about false teachers.

### 1. Their Motivation (2:1-3a)

Having discussed the inspiration of Scripture ([1:19-21](#)), Peter now describes the uninspired words of *false prophets*. He begins, *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you* ([2:1a](#)). There have always been and will always be *false teachers*.

In [Jeremiah 23:25b](#), how does God describe the *false* preachers of Jeremiah’s day, *that prophesy*, or preach, *lies* in His *name*?

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When you hear someone on TV, or anywhere else, say, “I had a dream, or vision, and God told me thus and so,” beware! Everything God wants a preacher to tell you is in His inspired, written Word—the Bible. I don’t know of any verse in the Bible that better describes the false teaching of the “prosperity gospel” than what God says through the prophet Jeremiah. First, he says not to listen to the prophets who are prophesying ([Jer. 23:16b](#)).

Then, what does God say in [Jeremiah 23:16c](#)?

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Peter writes of the false teachers of his day and ours: *who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction* ([2:1b](#)). How do we distinguish between a difference of opinion and *damnable heresies*? Opinions have to do with such issues as how often to partake of the Lord’s Supper or raising your hands in the worship services. However, *heresies* try to change the cardinal doctrines of the faith, such as the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, salvation by grace, the Trinity, etc.

The false teachers to whom Peter refers were guilty of *even denying the Lord*. The word translated *Lord* (DESPOTĒS, des-pot’-ace) means “ruler” or “sovereign.” It is the word from which we get our word “despot,” which means “absolute ruler.”

The heresy Peter is condemning involves *denying* the lordship of Christ. The false teachers were *denying the Lord that bought them*. This implies that though their sins had been paid for on the cross, they refused to truly accept the Gospel and make Jesus the *Lord*, or sovereign ruler, of their lives. Jesus warns us to *beware of false prophets* ([Mt 7:15a](#)).

Then, what does our *Lord* say in [Matthew 7:15b](#)?

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Peter continues, *And many shall follow their pernicious ways* ([2:2a](#)). The word translated *pernicious* (APŌLEIA, uh-po'-li-ah) means “unrestrained.” They often have lavish lifestyles, many having personal jets and other “unrestrained” indulgences. Because of them, *the way of truth shall be evil spoken of* ([2:2b](#)). Secular news media often run stories about false “prophets for profit.” Some of these false prophets even end up in prison for mail fraud and tax evasion.

Peter writes, *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you* ([2:3a](#)). The word *covetousness* refers to an unbridled desire for money and wealth. The word translated *merchandise* means “to commercialize.” False prophets were making up stories and distorting God’s Word—saying what people wanted to hear and fleecing them in the process. The word translated *feigned* (PLASTOS, plas-tos') is the word from which we get our word “plastic.” Originally, it referred to something not authentic. Just as many plastics are used today to imitate metal or wood, many “plastic” preachers are preaching a false gospel to *make merchandise of* their listeners.

We should know false teachers’ **motivation** and ...

## 2. Their Condemnation (2:3b-6)

Peter warns: *whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not* ([2:3b](#)). This means the severity of their condemnation is accumulating. Every word they speak is being recorded for the Day of Judgment.

What warning about *the day of judgment* does Jesus give, not only to false prophets, but also to you and me in [Matthew 12:36b](#)?

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Peter now gives three examples of God’s *judgment* in the past. First, Peter writes, *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell* ([2:4a](#)). The word translated *hell* (TARTAROŌ, tar-tar-uh'-oh) means “the abyss.” This is where the most wicked spirits are incarcerated until judgment day. We know very little about the *angels that sinned*. This probably refers to the angels who fell with Satan.

[Revelation 12:4](#) says Satan’s *tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth*. Many believe this means one-third of the angels in *heaven* fell with Satan and became demons, or fallen angels. The details will remain a mystery until we get to heaven.

God *delivered them* (fallen angels) *into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment* ([2:4b](#)). The *darkness* refers to what Jude writes about *the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation* (Jude 6a–b).

What does he write God has done with them in [Jude 6c](#)?

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The worst of the fallen angels are in the abyss which is hell's "waiting room," waiting for judgment day ([Rev. 20:11-15](#)). They are like convicted prisoners awaiting their final sentence.

Peter's second example of judgment reminds us God *spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly* ([2:5](#)). The word translated *flood* (KATAKLYSMOS, kata-clis-mos') is the word from which we get "cataclysmic," which means "a great flood" or "deluge."

Noah was *a preacher of righteousness* who preached for 120 years without one convert. Because of the hard hearts of the *ungodly* people who rejected Noah's preaching, God's judgment destroyed the entire world, with the exception of Noah and seven others (Mrs. Noah, his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives). We need to be familiar with the story of Noah.

Why, according to Jesus in [Luke 17:26](#)?

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What were *the days of Noe* (Noah) like? We find out in [Genesis 6:5](#), ... *the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*. All you have to do is watch TV to see the *wickedness of man* today.

Next is Peter's third example of judgment: *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly* ([2:6](#)). The word translated *overthrow* (KATASTROPHE, kata-stro-fay') is transliterated into English as "catastrophe" or "catastrophic." It means "disastrous end."

God's judgment on the ungodly, which includes false teachers, is described with two terrifying words: cataclysmic and catastrophic. Therefore, three things you should know about false teachers, or prophets, are **their motivation, condemnation**, and ...

### 3. Their Destination (2:7-10a)

Just as God saved Noah from the Flood, He *delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation* [conduct] *of the wicked* ([2:7](#), explanation mine). The word translated *wicked* refers to a total disregard for decency. Our culture has become so indecent that almost nothing makes our sensual culture blush anymore. A true believer will be *vexed* by unrestrained *filthy* conduct.

Why, according to [Proverbs 8:13a](#)?

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Through reading the account of Lot's life in *Genesis* we know he had his faults, but he was a godly man and a believer.

We know this because of what we read in [verse 8](#): (*For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;*). His being vexed by the sin around him is a clear indication he was a godly man, even though he sometimes made bad decisions, as he did in moving to Sodom.

Peter sums up his examples by writing: *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations* [trials], *and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished* ([2:9](#), explanation mine). At the same time God brings his judgment, He also knows how to *deliver* godly people. Like great saints of the past, we must stand against the immorality that today is trying to infiltrate the church. In doing so, we will have to endure trials.

According to [2:10a](#), who will the Lord *chiefly* target for severe *judgment*?

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*Lust of uncleanness* refers to people with perverted sexual desires.

The word translated *government* (KURIOTĒS, koo-ree-ot'-ace) means "lordship." It refers to those who refuse the lordship of Christ.

**Three things everyone should know about false teachers** are:

**THEIR MOTIVATION,**

**CONDEMNATION,**

**DESTINATION.**