

*Identifying False Teachers*

I John 2:18-29

How does the church identify false teachers? Who are they? Where do they come from? What do they teach? In our text today, John tells us that false teachers are a sign of the times, and that deception occurs so easily if we're not careful. What can protect us? The Word and Spirit of God! We need to be grounded in the message of the Bible and walking with the Holy Spirit - This is the heart of our text this morning. **Read I John 2:18-29 as a group to refresh.**

1. John begins by telling us in vs. 18 that we are in the "last hour." What is John referring to regarding this "last hour"?
2. John then mentions the antichrist. A final ruler who will arise during a 7 year period that is mainly projected and prophesied about in the book of Revelation. Interestingly, John doesn't spend time on this doctrine of the coming antichrist, and his future revealing, but brings us to the present dilemma - **many antichrists are already among us.** How can we identify them? John gives us two main things to watch for:

He first tells us that **they depart and dissent from the church.** Scripture tells us here, this is often a first ingredient in what makes or shapes a false teacher. Discuss as a group, what these "departers" and "dissenters" look like?

John then tells us that as believers we know the truth! We must have our confidence in the major doctrines of the faith as revealed in the Scripture! This brings us to our second identifying factor of false teachers - **They deny the basic doctrines of Christ.** *Read vs. 24-26 again.* In the midst of the lies and deceit, John tells us what to do! First, **We need to keep fast to the right doctrines about Jesus!** As a group, review and discuss the three statements concerning Jesus (found in our Statement of Faith). These plain, scriptural truths can be found on the next page!

3. Verses 24-27 show us a second principle - one of relationship and truth! John tells us we must **remain in personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.** These work together to guard and protect us from deception. This fellowship is relational and personal! Discuss as a group what this looks like from a practical, applicational standpoint.

As a group, ask God to draw us closer to the truths of Christ, through a personal and relational fellowship with His Word and the Holy Spirit, along with wisdom and protection from false teachers among us.

## **Concerning Jesus Christ**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life and lived to reveal God and redeem sinful men.

*(Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15)*

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*(Acts 2:18-36; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5)*

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate.

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1 John 2:18-29

## **Identifying False Teachers**

How does the church identify false teachers? Who are they? Where do they come from? What do they teach?

John tells us here that false teachers and their deception are a sign of the end times. And it is truly unfortunate how easily deception occurs in this age we are living in.

John shows us throughout the text here **that the Word of God and the Spirit of God guard and protect us from deception and lead us into eternal life.**

**We need to be grounded in the Message of the Bible and walking with the Holy Spirit. This is at the heart of the text this morning.**

**Grounded in the Message of the Bible and walking with the Holy Spirit.**

We are in the last hour this text tells us.

**The last hour refers to our current stage of salvation history. It is the time between Jesus ascending to the Father and His eventual return to earth.**

From the days of Adam to Moses, Moses to David, and David to Jesus—*those were not the last days or hours*—but from time of Jesus’ resurrection and His ascension to God until this very moment—**we are in the “last hour.”**

## Read 2:18a,b

This is the first mention by John about the singular, personality of the one called the Antichrist who is yet to come on the stage of world history.

The Antichrist in Scripture is a final ruler who will arise during a 7 year period that is projected and prophesied about mainly in the last book of the Bible called the Revelation.

The Apostle Paul also spoke of this literal, historical figure that will come on the scene in a future 7 year period.

Paul called him the “man of lawlessness” in his letter to the Thessalonians, whereas John calls him here “the Antichrist.”

And quoting the prophet Daniel who gave us the initial information of the coming Antichrist, **Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that this literal, dark leader—this Antichrist — will “[oppose and exalt] himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”**

***No one knows when this will happen but it is a major part of future biblical prophecy.***

But John does something interesting with this doctrine of the coming Antichrist.

He doesn't spend his time on it but points immediately away from that future revealing, and bring us to the present dilemma—**many antichrist's are already among us.**

## **Read 2:18c**

We could focus too much at times on the future-figure of the Antichrist and not have a balanced, protective outlook on the **many** antichrists already infiltrating the church and trying to pollute its doctrines.

This is something happening right now in the last hour before the main Antichrist comes on the scene.

How can we identify these dangerously false teachers? They are on the internet, in the media, in the pews of churches, even in the pulpits of churches.

John tells us two main things to watch for and be wisely eagle-eyed about when it comes to them.

### **1. They depart and dissent from the church.**

## **Read 2:19**

**Walking away from the fellowship of a true church-community is the first ingredient of what can make and shape a false teacher.**

John tells us that many of the antichrist's that he was dealing with were among the church community at first, they seemingly shared in the faith.

**It is as St. Augustine once stated:**

**"Many whom God has, the church does not have; and many whom the church has, God does not have."**

John goes on to say in verse 19 that, **"they went out, that it might become plain [or revealed] that they all are not of us."**

You see, false teachers and the path of false teachers is that **they not only depart from the local church but they also begin negatively dumping on the local church**—they begin railing against it's teachings, it's leadership, it's mission, it's gathering, it's biblical structures or organization, even it's obedience to Christ.

They start stewing in their own high-minded ideals and judgments against the local church for whatever reasons they have and this leads some of them right into belligerent attacks on the local church, ***and for some, it leads to eventual attacks against the doctrines of the church and the setting forth of their own.***

**Nearly every false cult is led and filled with people who once attended a sound, biblical church.**

For some of these dissenters, their departure, begins to ferment in whatever heat was started in their former church

experience—whether they didn't get their way, or they didn't get the attention, or they griped so much that they were asked to leave, or they claim they weren't heard when it came to their own knowledge and a special teaching that they had, and suddenly: **every one else is all wrong except them; they are the ones with the all the knowledge now about what church really is and what correct doctrine truly is, and then, before long,** God is suddenly “speaking” to them *about a new revelation and a new doctrine* and they know the Bible better than others and then bam! **We have a false teacher born, an antichrist, who is ready to do the devil's work.**

### **Let me make this very practical.**

I am so careful right now about the abuse the church has suffered in the last two years during the pandemic.

I have heard and read wild, misinformed doctrinal things about the nature of the church from God's people. I have seen people despise the public gathering nature of the local church. I have watched people leave the assemblies they once were in and go out bashing the church and then doing their own thing, **and some even stealing sheep from other churches to do their thing**, spreading their new and freshly made teachings, led by an ungodly ambition and a lack of proper understanding of what they actually read in Scripture —so I know, just like John is saying here: that **departing can lead to dissenting and this can lead to damnable doctrines that are developed and then delivered against the local church to cause division in the local church.**

**I am quite cautious of “departers” and “dissenters.”**

**Because as Scripture tells us here, *it is often the first ingredient in what makes or shapes a false teacher.***

**I have seen it first hand.**

**So we must be careful of those voices of people out there who have left the church *and are now left-hooking the church* claiming they know the better doctrine and they are against the local church built and purchased by the blood of Christ and at the same time are also claiming to be Bible Believing people, and inviting us into their Bible studies or the online cults.**

**But as John informs us...**

**Read 2:20**

**John is confident in the readers as Scripture now is encouraging us.**

**We must know that we as believers within the Biblical church assembly have been given a great gift from God—John writes, “[we] have been anointed by the Holy Spirit of God and we are in the know about the true doctrines of our faith.”**

**What he is affirming here is “Let’s not play games with these false teachers. Let’s not feel rattled one bit about their garbage teachings that sink in the bag of their pride.**

**We know what is right doctrine and what is wrong doctrine because the Spirit leads us to it by a honest and balanced study of the Scripture using our reason, our experience, the traditions and the church community itself, working together in the Holy Scriptures with the Holy Spirit dwelling within us to understand them and articulate them.”**

**Read 2:21**

**We who are here today that have been saved, baptized and then discipled, we can have confidence in what we have been taught and have confidence in what we already know about Christ and God and the church and the historical doctrines of faith.**

**Read 2:21b**

**When John says, “no lie is of the truth,” this statement is interesting because it directs our reasoning powers to see that, if we are true believers, then *we are quite aware about what is false and what is true.***

***False teachers like to wrap the skin of truth around the body of lies.***

***It was AW Tozer who said,***

The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still.

***Let's make sure that just because a false teacher quotes or claims to teach Scripture that we aren't prepared to test it.***

***We, who know Scripture, and know Christ, can see right through it if we test it.***

**And we have to be logical just as John states here: no lie or half-truth is of the truth. It is either true or not.**

**I mean, there is no such thing as a *half-truth* anyhow.**

**A *half-truth* is a *whole lie*.**

**Therefore, no compromises can be made with any doctrine or teaching or any teacher that offers something we know is a lie against what Scripture clearly states.**

**We can be brave with the Word of God to silence them in our life and in our churches.**

**I exhort you this morning, have confidence in the major doctrines of the faith as revealed in the Scripture.**

Spurgeon proclaimed :

**“I believe a very large majority of churchgoers are merely unthinking, slumbering worshipers of an unknown God.”**

And Rabbi Abraham Heschel voiced it similarly when he wrote that:

**“In biblical days prophets were astir while the world was asleep; today the world is astir while church and synagogue are busy with trivialities.”**

If you need a tune up or a start up then start studying them for yourself as a born again believer with a trusted saint who knows the word. You will be able to see the difference yourself. **(\*discipleship and Sunday connect plug and Wednesday night)**

**Now, secondly, we can identify the false teacher by the fact that...**

## **2. They deny the basic doctrines of Christ.**

**Read 2:22-23**

**False teachers deny the basic truths of Christianity as taught by Jesus and as revealed in the Bible.**

**John tells us to be on the lookout for those antichrists who deny Christ as being the Messiah, or deny Christ as being the only Savior of the world, or they deny Christ as being the one who was physically resurrected for our deliverance and justification, or they deny that Christ is God revealed in the flesh.**

**If those things are denied, then we are dealing with a false teacher, period.**

**To deny Jesus' blood as an atoning sacrifice that saves the human soul—to deny that doctrine is a false teaching and is the spirit of the antichrist.**

— According to a recent survey taken of 521 clergy and laymen attending the National Council of Churches' General Assembly in Miami Beach, only a little more than half believed Jesus to be divine.

And a 2020 survey conducted by Ligonier Ministries reported that 1/3 of evangelicals do not believe that Jesus is God revealed in the flesh as Scripture teaches!!!

**John says in verse 23, to deny God the Son is ipso facto, meaning, by the very act of denying Christ and all that pertains to Him, (by that very act) is to deny God the Father.**

You cannot choose God or claim to have God and yet reject Jesus and His teachings, **according to the Bible.**

**The antichrist, false-teachers— deny Christ, deny God in Christ, and distort Christ and distort God.**

That is what they do.

Now how can we respond to this? How can we grow and strengthen our faith and withstand the onslaught of false teachers?

John gives us instruction here because he is concerned that the local church be alert to what he calls "the liar, and "the deceivers."

**Read 2:26**

**Read 2:24-25**

**Keep fast to the right doctrines about Jesus.**

**Read 2:24a**

**Let me say it clearly: *Scripture alone, Scripture alone, Scripture alone tells us who Jesus is.***

**Not a systematic theology book, not a favorite Bible teacher, not a new age mystic, not a Bible study podcast.**

**While these might provide insight and be positive and teach us the truth about Jesus that they derived from Scripture, hopefully—but all I am saying on a philosophical level is that We must affirm from the start that only the Scripture and the Scripture alone can tell us who Jesus is.**

**Martin Luther** wrote over 60,000 pages of bible study and theology in his lifetime, however, at the end of his life he

remarked, “I hope that all of my books disappear and the Holy Scriptures alone are read.”

**We must go there first, foremost and faithfully.**

**Our church seeks to study Scripture and articulate unashamedly what is clearly taught in Scripture about Jesus.**

**Our statement of Faith about Jesus says this:  
Concerning Jesus Christ**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life and lived to reveal God and redeem sinful men. (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb.4:15)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and, that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Acts 2:18-36; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (Acts 1:9-10; Heb. 9:24; 7:25; Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2)

**These plain truths all come from the Scripture.**

**We are called to let these crucial truths dwell within us as a people and as a church.**

**Anything that attempts to deny or exceed them or add to them without clear Scriptural warrant is suspect and deemed antichrist doctrine.**

**Read 2:24-27**

**The good doctrine of Jesus keeps us mutually dwelling with the Son and the Father.**

**Which leads to the second thing:**

**Remain in personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.**

Verse 24-27 here gives us the principle of relationship and truth.

The Word of God and the Spirit of God work together to guard and protect us from deception.

And John says in verse 27, “**we have no need that anyone teach [us.]**” *This doesn’t mean that teaching ministries and the need for bible teachers are unnecessary. That is not what this is saying as we have Scripture that teaches us about the teaching ministries necessary in the church.*

**What is being said here in the context is that the Holy Spirit is the adequate teacher of the true doctrine of Christian faith and there is no need anymore for us to be taught anew with some supplemental or extra-revelation from somewhere else or some brand new pseudo spiritual teaching.**

**We have the Word of God and we have the Holy Spirit teaching and confirming for us what the truth is that God has given to His local church.**

And as you can see in the final verses here we cannot let this truth be merely dogmatic and doctrinaire **but it is relational and personal.**

Read 2:28

**The truth of God and the Holy Spirit of God must dwell within us like someone we care about who cares about us and comes into our home and sits at our kitchen table with us and eats with us, talks with us, shares with us and even helps us clean up the dishes afterward.**

This is relational.

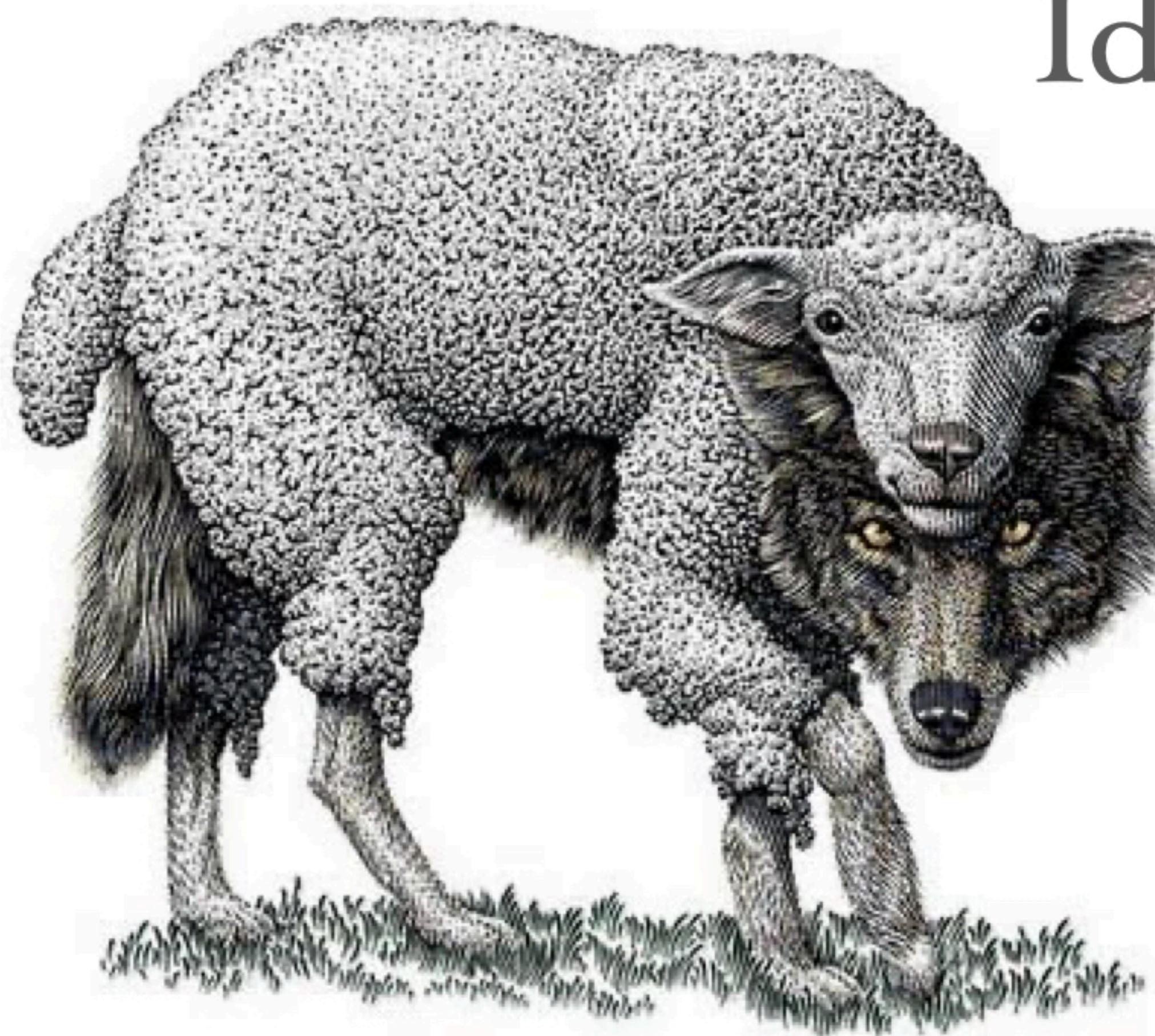
Understanding good doctrine and Christian living revolves and revives in relationship with God and hearing the Scripture as His voice.

This is where the precious power of the faith between us and with God advances and is revealed.

We are not following a cold system of beliefs, we follow a living Lord who teaches us by the Holy Spirit who He is and we must cling to Him and His truth in a personal way with joy and hope.

**It is the Word of God and a personal relationship of abiding with God, the Son and the Holy Spirit and each other that protects and guards us from false teachers.**

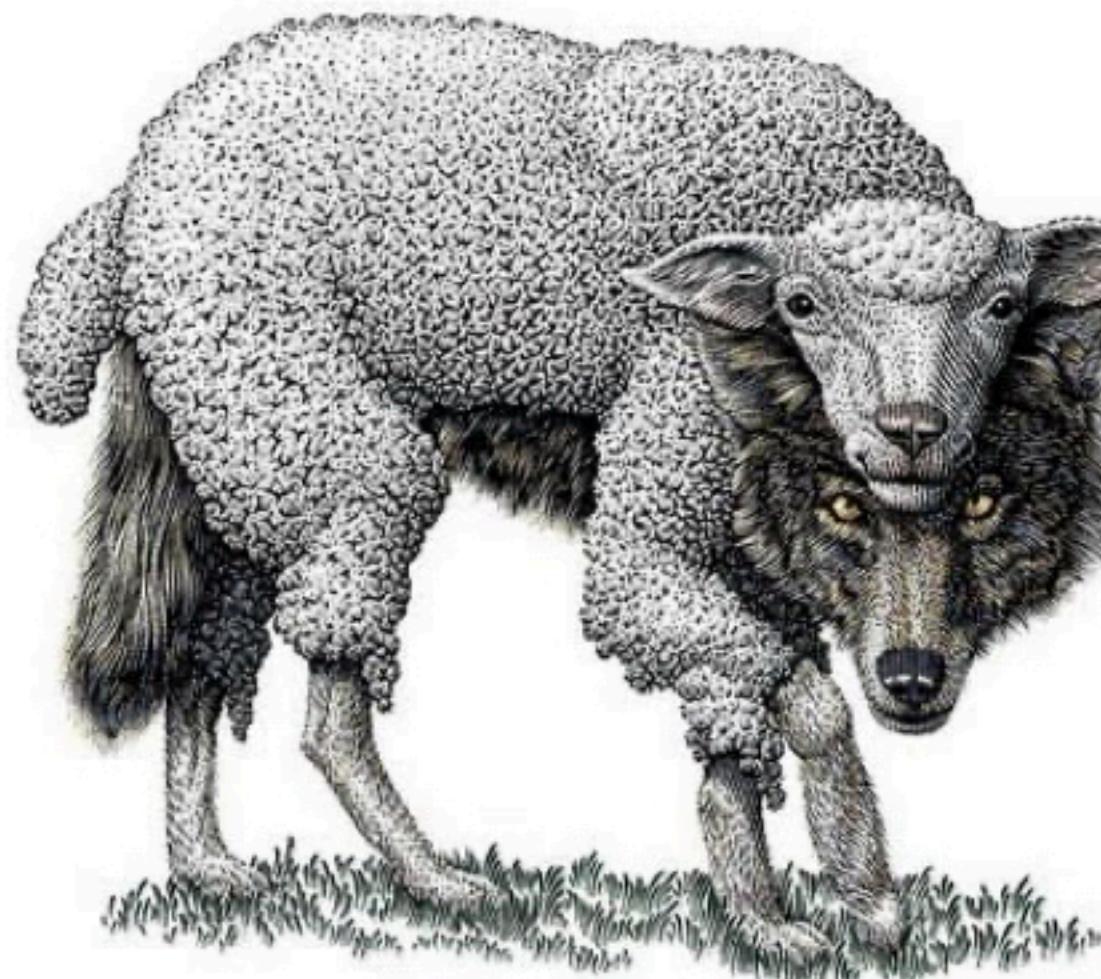
**Let us walk with God and beware of the antichrist's that are increasing among us.**



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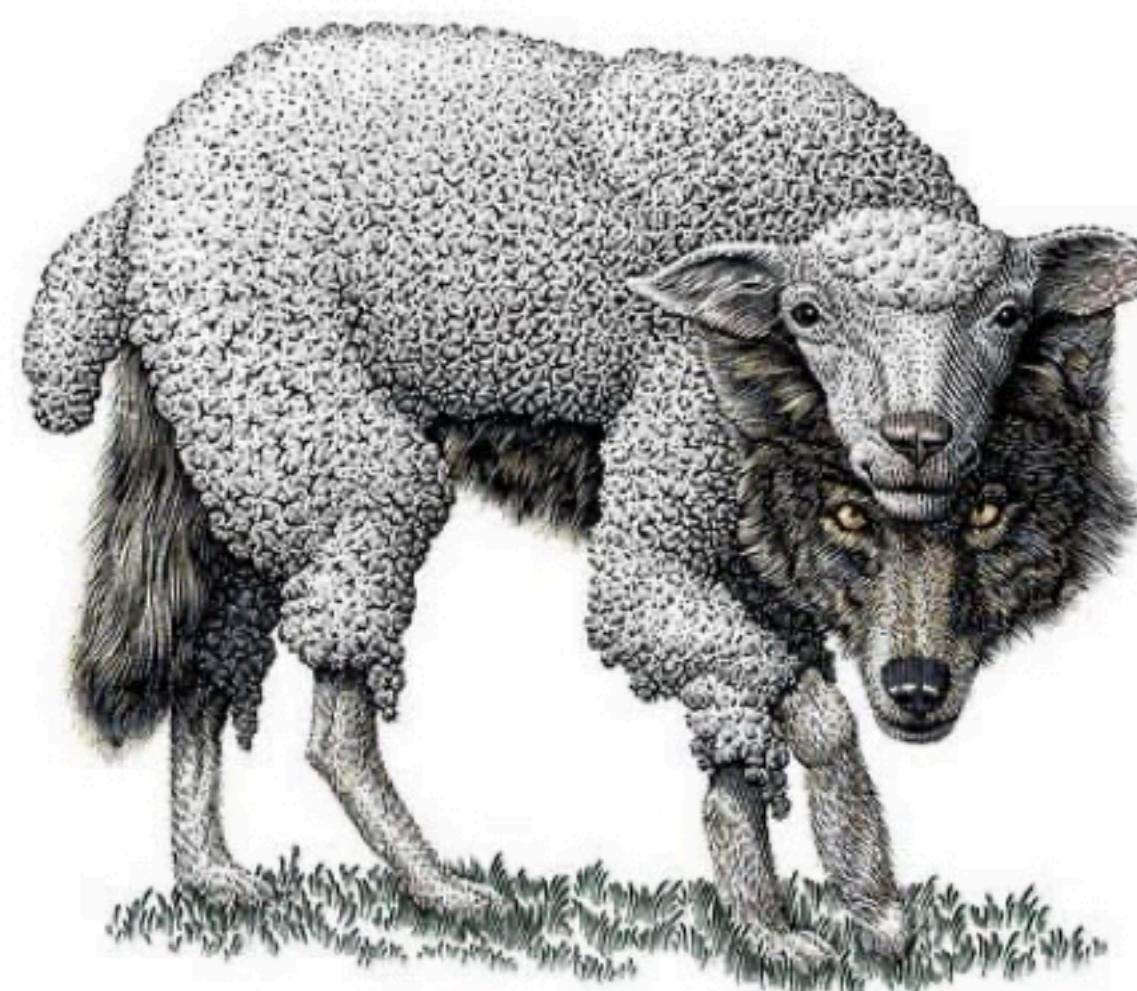
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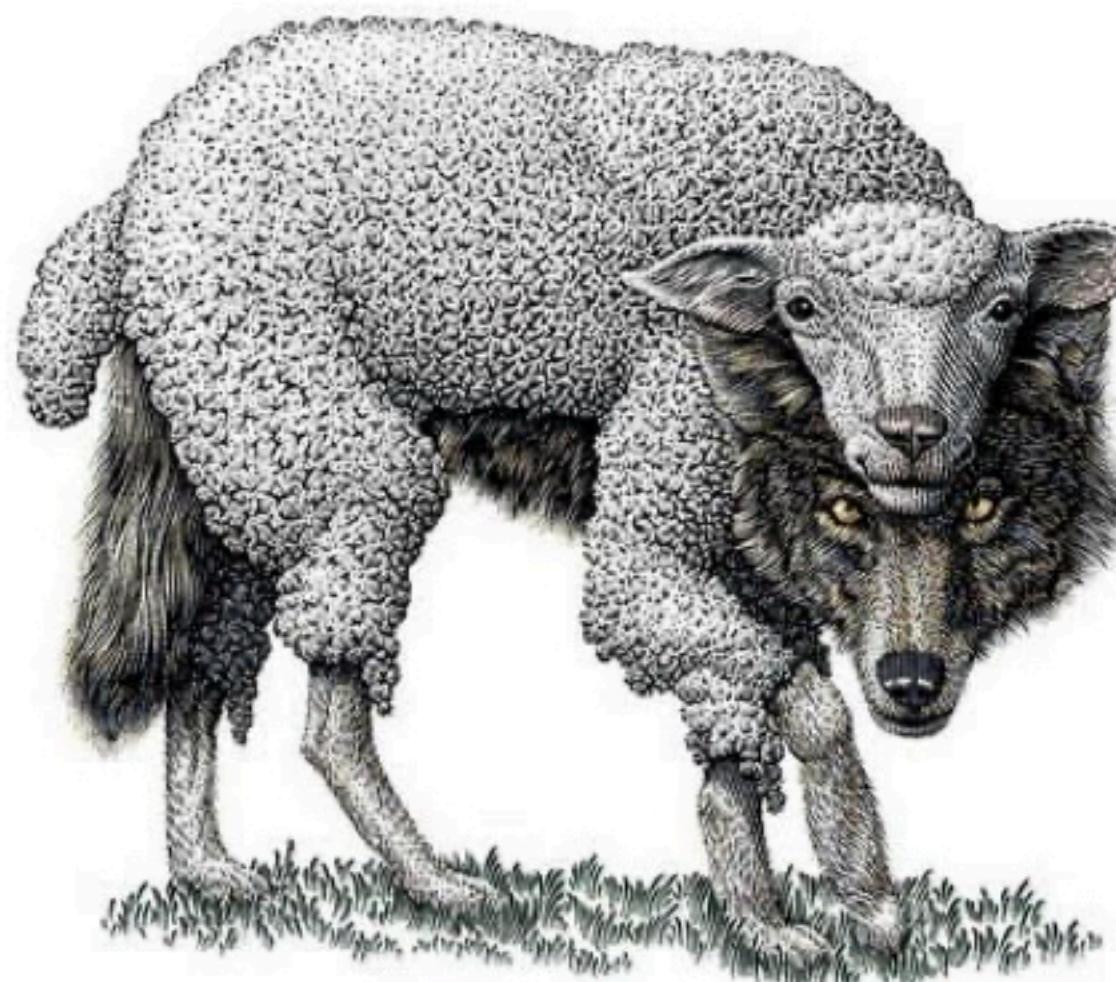
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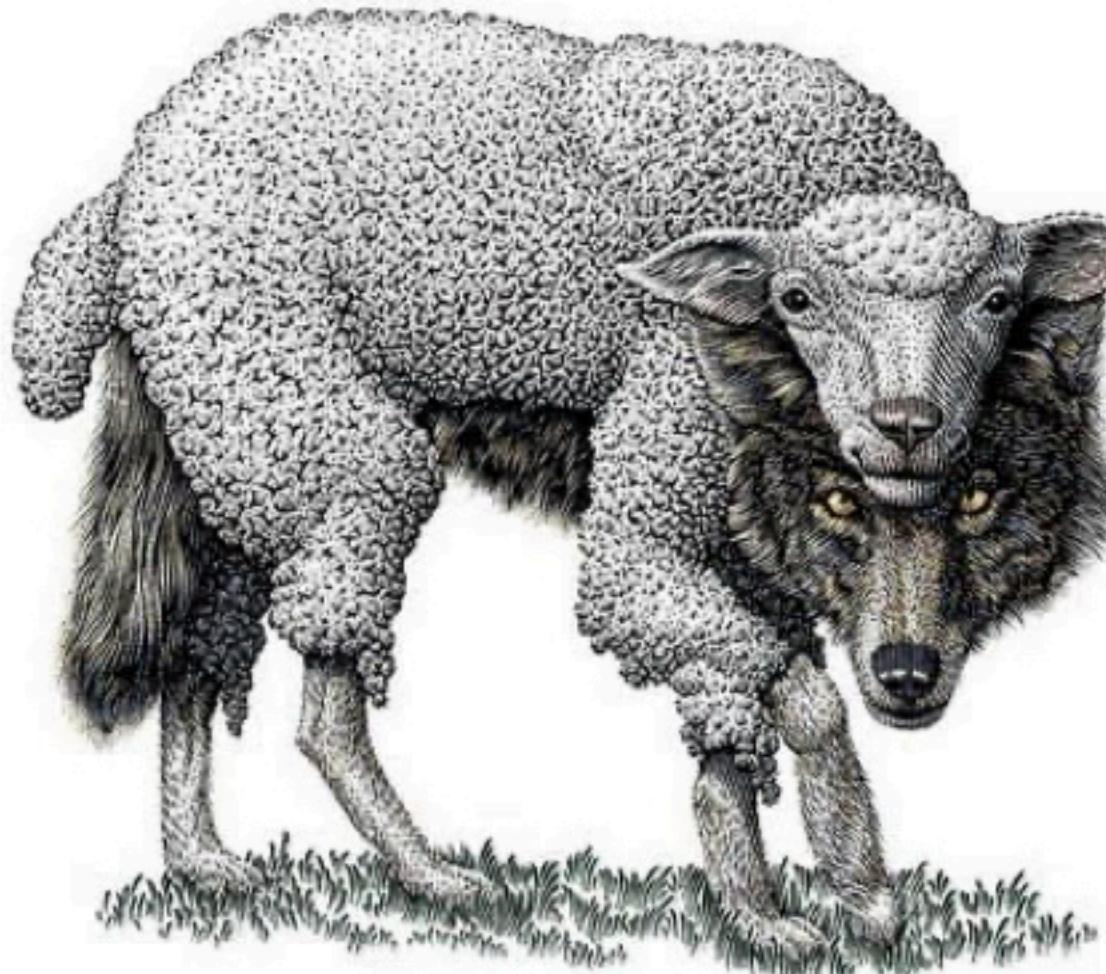


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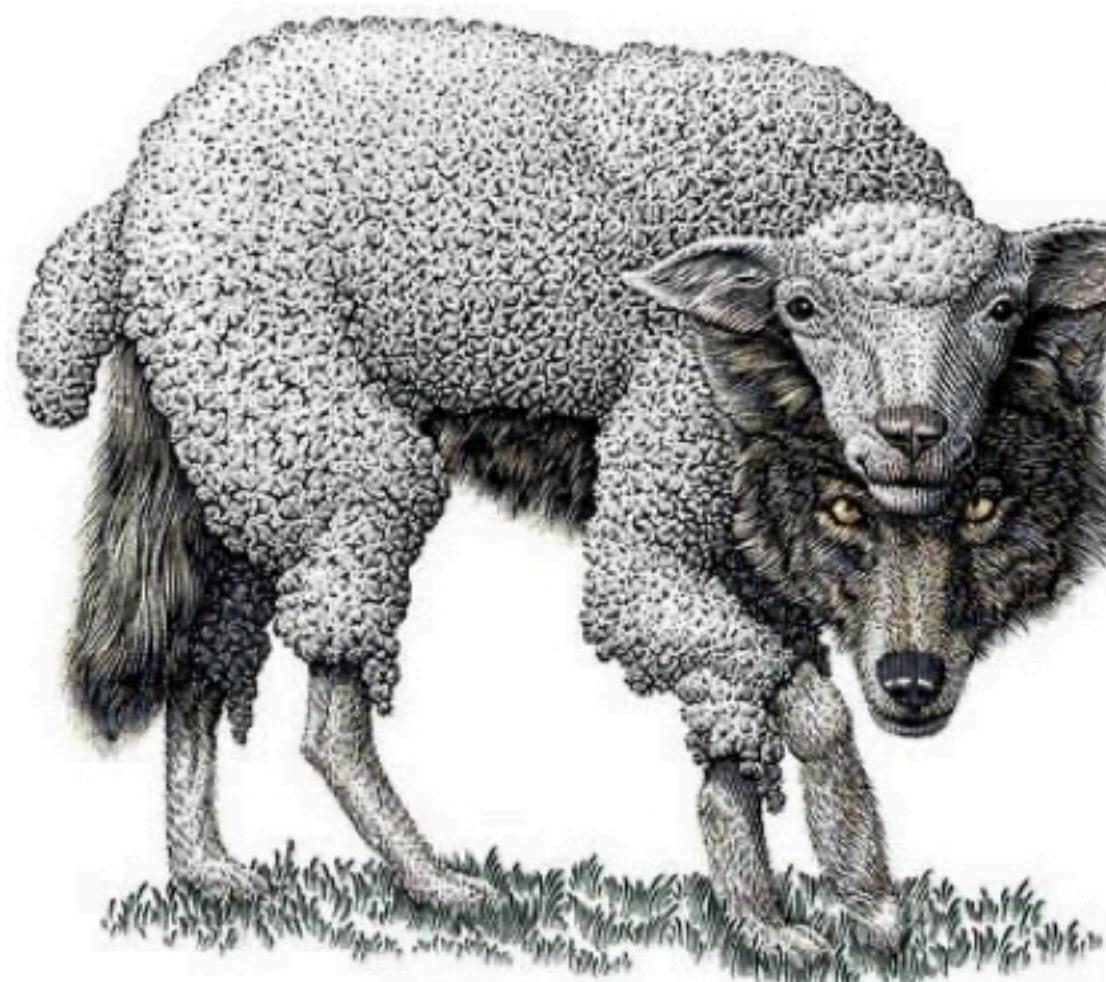
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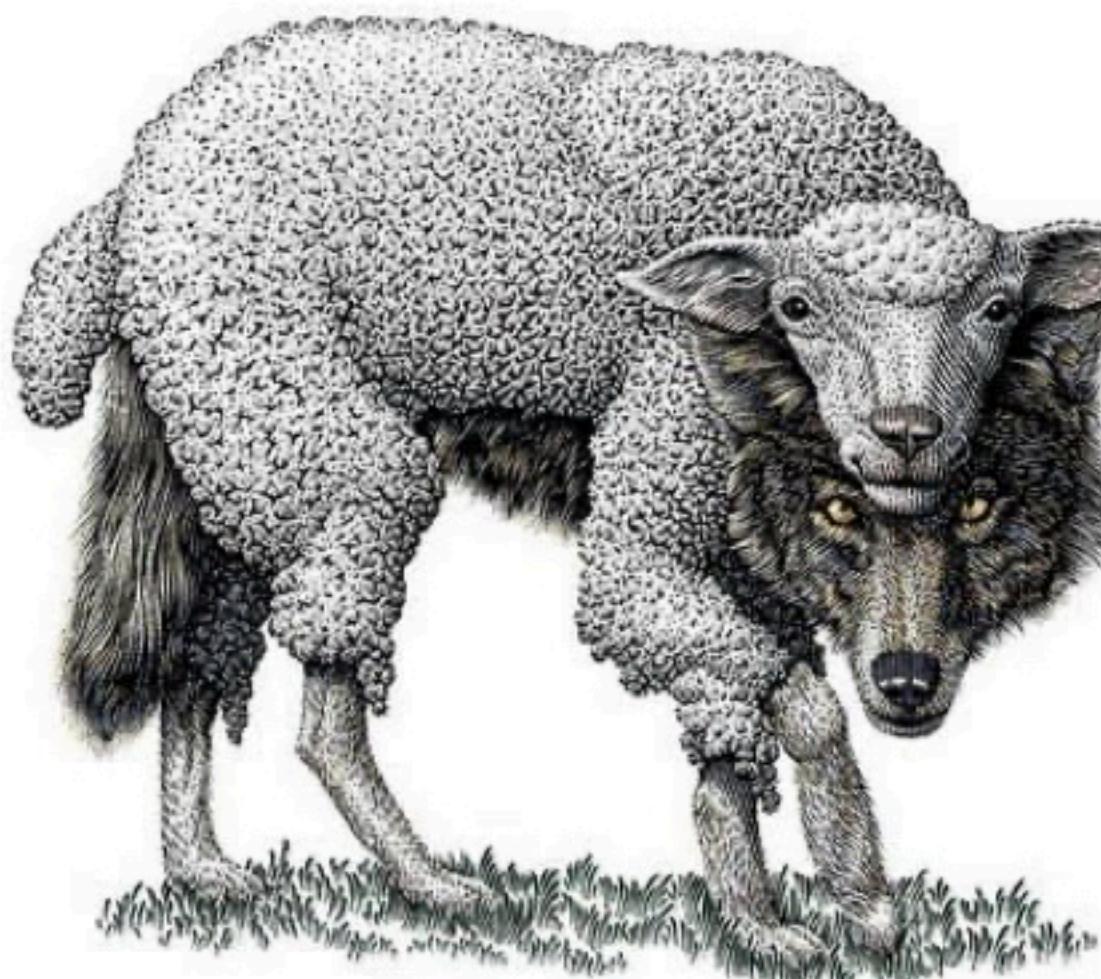
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