



**Prophecy False Prophets and False Teachers
Know the True to ID the False
2 Peter 1:20 - 2:3**

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2 Peter 1:19–21

“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (NASB 2020)



Until Jesus Christ comes and removes us from this planet in the pre-tribulation rapture, we are to give attention to, study, learn and hold to prophecy from the Word of God.

Questions: What is the origin of Biblical prophecy? Where does it come from?

Peter has just informed us that the prophetic word of God is more reliable than even his own eyewitness testimony regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ. We are to read, study, know and take heed of the prophecies which we have been given in the word. And believers, even those who come to Christ after the church is removed, are to continue to do so even up to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

With that, Peter then follows onto the next logical point regarding Biblical prophecy, the origin of all prophecy. Knowing the origin of prophecy helps us to also understand how to interpret prophecy.

“The words “no prophecy of Scripture is” (πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ... οὐ γίνεται) are literally, “all prophecy of Scripture ... is not (or does not occur).” It is an idiom which makes a firm denial concerning all that belongs to the subject negated. “All prophecy of Scripture” designates the whole of Old Testament prophecy, but it is apparent that Peter intends to exclude all nonscriptural prophecies, as well as the predictions of the pseudo-prophets.” (Hiebert 1984, 163-164) He is about to address false teachers, so it includes them too.

Okay, so we now know some of the what about prophecy. We are talking about Biblical prophecy, not the imaginations of a so-called prophet who desires to fall under the Old Testament standard but never has had the meeting with the Divine Council. Per the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:21–22

“I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. **But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.**” (ESV)

For someone to truly be a prophet of God, there was an interview that had to take place, and we see that with Isaiah as well as with Ezekiel and others.

Here in 2 Peter, we have now defined for us what prophecy we are talking about, now what about the interpretation comment from Peter. There are three views of this scripture which need to be considered.

1. “No scriptural prophecy may be interpreted as one will since its origin is divine (this assumes that the teachers he opposes are, as in 3:16, making novel interpretations of Scripture),
2. no scriptural prophecy may be interpreted as one will, and “we” have the divine word on its meaning (i.e., the statement of God at the Transfiguration), and
3. no scriptural prophecy came due to the prophet’s own interpretation, for it comes from God (this assumes that Scripture is a second witness to the Parousia alongside the Transfiguration).” (Davids 2006, 210-211)

In other words, even the Prophet giving the prophecy would have to back up and interpret what it is the Lord has given them. It is obvious from a study of both the major and minor prophets that many times they delivered the prophetic word, and they were clueless.

I like all three of those possible ideas since they tend to blend. Some have used this, such as the Catholic Church, as a way of saying only professional priests with the appropriate training can interpret scripture. That is not what is being said. The prophecy and the scriptures are in harmony.



If we are talking about the New Testament spiritual gift of prophecy, this is still important for “even today prophetically gifted Christians speak of the need to distinguish “revelation,” “interpretation,” and “application,” and argue that a major source of problems in Christian prophecy is the failure to do just this (as well as a failure of “timing”). Naturally, one reading a scriptural prophecy clearly needs to interpret that prophecy.” (Davids 2006, 212)

Paul discussed this issue involving the NT gift of prophecy, which is different from the OT Prophet.

1 Corinthians 14:29–33

“Let two or three prophets speak, and **let the others weigh what is said**. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and **the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets**. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,” (ESV)

“Despite common belief, prophecy is not only foretelling the future. Most of prophecy is forthtelling, or speaking forth the word of God. In fact, the gift of prophecy as it was practiced in the early church was more often used for edification, for exhortation, and for comfort than it was for predicting future events (see I Corinthians 14: 3).” (Smith 2001, 161)

Saying that, we come back to the issue of the false teachers which Peter is preparing to talk more about. But obviously, he has already started referring to some of their so-called teachings.

2 Peter 1:21

“for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (NASB 2020)

No mere mortal chose to utter his own thoughts as though they were God’s. On the contrary, God chose holy men to be His spokesmen, men who uttered thoughts given to them by the Holy Spirit. (Radmacher, Allen and House 1999, 1695-1696)

False teaching, false prophecy, is of human origin and is not from the Lord. Real prophecy is from the Lord.

Peter is pointing to the scriptures and the prophecy as being part of them, as being in agreement with each other and as such, a means to be used for interpretation of prophecy.

He would know that since pre-resurrection, he, like all of the disciples, had difficulty put all the pieces about the first coming together. The first to get the entire story, were given it from Jesus Himself as they were walking to Emmaus.

Luke 24:27

“Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things written about himself in all the scriptures.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The Holy Spirit is indeed needed, and He does indeed provide the capability to interpret.

However, false teachers, who also claim to have an in with the Lord, have no problem telling you that they are the only ones who truly know what a prophecy means.

That is why we keep getting books predicting exactly when the rapture will take place. My favorite, **88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988** by Edgar C. Whisenant. He may have made a few assumptions that didn’t quite work out.



2 Timothy 3:16

“Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (NET 2nd ed.)

Paul, in the Greek tells us all scripture is God breathed. How He did this is still being studied today. We know that the four authors of the gospels utilized their own unique vocabulary, yet the text is fully inspired. “The human share in the dual authorship casts no shadow of imperfection on the infinite worthiness and holy excellence of the God-breathed message.” (Chafer 1993, 94)

But this does not stop those who want to read something new into the text or provide a unique interpretation to a prophecy to sell a few books or obtain a following. They become popular in Christian circles because they have a “new” interpretation to prophecy which no one ever has considered before. They hit the prophecy circuit, sell a book or two, and then move on to something new. Meanwhile Berean’s are left to digest what has been left behind.

The false teachers Peter is about to launch into were apparently saying they had been given insight from the Lord on prophecy, individual for them and unique for their ministry.

John 16:13–14

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. **He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.** He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.” (NLT)

Is it possible to obtain something new from word study, scripture review in the original languages or archaeology, yes, it is. But when someone tells you that they alone have developed the key to how this should be read and no one else has ever seen this, well that is what Peter is talking about here. Individual interpretation.

He is not saying that prophecy and scripture can only be interpreted by professionals, not at all. Believers have the Holy Spirit inside who will make certain that our understanding of the text of the scriptures is consistent with the intent of the Holy Spirit, who is the one inspiring the author to write. He teaches us and shows us the meaning of the word.

But there are those who, for reasons only they know, decide to make a buck off this and they begin to start saying that only professionals can interpret this section, or their interpretation is the one which is correct even though no one in two thousand years has seen it quite that way.

A few years back I had multiple people asking me about the Berisheet Passover Prophecy. I had to research this to provide an answer but as I began to dig, it began to appear like Gnosticism as the author of it was the only one who had ever come up with this conclusion based on his review of the text and numerology behind it in Genesis 1:1.

I don’t want to go into all of the details, but for everything to work based on his and his only interpretation of a single Hebrew word, the earth must be 6,000 years old, Adam sinned at the age of 33 and six months. Suffice it to say, he determined the rapture would be in 2023.

Since we are entering the last quarter of 2024, his interpretation is beginning to look a bit suspect.

Deuteronomy 18:21–22

““But you may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the LORD?’ If the prophet speaks in the LORD’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the



LORD did not give that message. **That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.**" (NLT)

But today, the false teacher simply moves on to the next "groundbreaking" book and makes a few more bucks.

There is indeed a place for conjecture and research as in the scriptures, there are indeed areas that lend themselves too exactly that. "By God's design, the Scripture presents the messiah in terms of a mosaic profile that can only be discerned after the pieces are assembled. Paul tells us why in 1 Corinthians 2:6–8. If the plan of God for the messiah's mission had been clear, the powers of darkness would never have killed Jesus—they would have known that his death and resurrection were the key to reclaiming the nations forever." (Heiser 2015, 241)

"False teaching, both in Kefa's day and ours, arises from people's idiosyncratic interpretations, supposedly hearing the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), but not examining other interpretations or admitting that their own could be mistaken. Prophecies are not to be subjected to eisegesis (putting one's own preconceived ideas in), but to exegesis (getting the writer's ideas out)." (Rubin 2016, 1766) Now the conjecture is over the rapture and the second coming.

Now that we know and are secure in the true, Peter takes us to false prophets/teachers.

2 Peter 2:1–3

"But false prophets also appeared among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their indecent behavior, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep." (NASB 2020)

The Greek word Peter uses for false prophet is ψευδοπροφήται (pseudoprophētai).

The word means one "who falsely claims to be a prophet of God or who prophesies falsely, false/bogus prophet." (Arndt, et al. 2000, 1097)

Peter will contrast them with false teachers, ψευδοδιδασκαλοι, (pseudodidaskaloi) and there is a lot of similarity between the two.

The word Peter uses means "false/bogus teacher, quack teacher, of someone in the Christian community who pretends to be a qualified instructor, but whose teaching is contrary to the generally accepted tradition." (Arndt, et al. 2000, 1096)

Peter is not trying to win friends from either group. He is calling them out for what they are, imposters. That is what Satan does. He counterfeits the original making it look almost like the real, but not quite. And yes, Satan does use false teachers.

Peter tells us that as true prophets arrived on the scene; false prophets were there almost immediately to draw people away. "Sometimes these prophets openly opposed the word from God, but often they were seductive, insinuating, and deceptive." (Craddock 1995, 110)

Jeremiah 5:12

"**They have lied about the LORD** and said, 'He won't bother us! No disasters will come upon us. There will be no war or famine.'" (NLT)



As a type of the Tribulation, the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon was being questioned and actively challenged by false prophets in Jerusalem. Jeremiah was very much on his own as the Babylonian forces set up their siege.

Meanwhile, in the Babylon region, there were other false prophets telling those Jews already in exile, about the soon destruction of Babylon at the hands of the Lord in Jerusalem. But meanwhile, Ezekiel is busy saying to everyone, get ready to live here for awhile because Jerusalem is going down.

This is what the false prophets who showed up in Israel and in Judah did, they lied. They lied about the Lord and what His purposes were for the nation. God wanted to draw His people back in repentance, but the false prophets wanted them to feel comfortable in their sin and stayed away from teaching or saying anything divisive or negative. They would stay away from the sin topic and speak good things. Meanwhile, the true prophet, the one who is indeed speaking for the Lord is persecuted. How Jerusalem treated Jeremiah is a classic example.

Jeremiah 38:4

"Then the officials said to the king, **"Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm."**" (ESV)

He told the truth. This is the pressure being felt in churches all over the world every single week. As a Pastor, do I speak the truth, or do I make everyone feel good about their life today and comfortable in their sin?

Paul recognized this tension and gave very specific instructions to his younger protégé, Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:1–4

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**" (ESV)

Paul knew the pressure; he had experienced it during his travels. All too often these days, we see Pastor's giving into the temptation.

It is far easier to avoid topics that cause folks to get upset. This is why so many churches no longer teach prophecy. Do you want to hear about the need to give your life to Jesus and live a holy separated life to Him, or would you like to hear about how to have a better marriage instead. They are both important and teaching the Bible chapter by chapter verse by verse will get there. But too many go there and stay there.

Here at Calvary Chapel, we intend to teach the full counsel of God. Trust me, there are chapters and verses I would like to avoid, but simply cannot if we intend to learn the word together.

What Peter also seems to be implying by how he is linking false prophets and false teachers is that some of the false teachers were also alleging to be prophets as well.

One of the earliest Christian writings, the Didache, "also known as the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, and known more fully as "The Teaching (Διδαχή, Didachē) of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles." (Wilhite 2016) Written in the second century, it had something about false prophets.



However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord's ways. By his conduct, therefore, will the false prophet and the prophet be recognized. (9) Furthermore, any prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it; if he does, he is a false prophet. (10) If any prophet teaches the truth, yet does not practice what he teaches, he is a false prophet. (Holmes 1999, 265)

As you can tell, pastors were looking for guidance over 1800 years ago on much the same topic as we are discussing. Jesus also warned us.

Matthew 24:4–5

“And Jesus answered them, **“See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.”** (ESV)

Jesus let us know that the last days would be filled with ever increasing deception. This deception is coming from the pit of hell and is intended to confuse and prevent anyone from knowing what the truth of the gospel is. When Peter is writing, 35 or so years after Jesus said that, he is dealing with false teachers who are already aggressively teaching heresy even alleging the rapture had already taken place like in Thessalonica.

The issue at that time, all the church had to read were letters they were passing around. A few had a copy of the Old Testament, but nothing like what we have today. Today, we have no excuse to know what the scripture says and to stand strong against deception, yet we are doing poorly on this front because of Biblical illiteracy. Seen in the number who even think Biblically to begin with, 6% of the population of the United States.

A 94% Biblical illiteracy rate means “the burden is on the shoulders of those with a biblical worldview to explain why we believe the Bible is true, what we believe the Bible says about any given issue or situation, and to show how that truth is applied to life. If we cannot articulate and demonstrate a persuasive perspective on these matters, great numbers of people will suffer the consequences of biblical illiteracy and ungodly living—and our inability to spare them from those consequences. (Barna 2022, 126)

In other words, we see many who are believers who have never bothered to study the Bible. Because of that, they embrace and do things the culture says are ok, but really aren't.

When the physical impact of living a sinful lifestyle begins to hit home, they are then flabbergasted and ask, why me? Sowing and reaping.

Yes, they do indeed also show up for counseling, but when told of the need to repent of their lifestyle, they refuse. And they go somewhere else where they are affirmed in their sinful lifestyle, yet the physical ramifications of sin continue, per Romans 1, to be felt.

Everything I read tells us that what Peter is telling the church here in 2 Peter, is even more of a vital issue for the church today than it was in his day. There are aggressive false teachers everywhere.

It used to be that you could follow a pastor or teacher, and they would remain faithful to the word their entire ministry, that is no longer the case as seen by some recent defections taking place in rather large churches.

Being a Berean is now a requirement. And for those who have the spiritual gift of discernment comes the constant struggle over giving a warning and just how to do so.



As Peter tells us, the modus operandi of the false teacher is to secretly introduce the destructive heresy they intend to teach. To slip it in. What we see today is that once that has been accepted, and in some cases in the thousands, then on to the next bit of twisting.

Soon, it is a different Jesus being presented. But the music sounds the same as before. True, but listen to the lyrics. Are the lyrics doctrinally sound or are they abstract?

I have listened to a lot of contemporary Christian music over the years and when the artist starts singing abstractly about the Lord, look out.

Groups I used to listen to I no longer do. When the lead singer comes out in favor of gay marriage and LGBTQ+, it is time to get rid of the music. In popular Christianity, apostasy has become an in thing. When performers show up in drag at the Dove Awards. Enough already.

Destructive heresies showing up right now: denial of the rapture of the church, denial of Jesus Christ being God, sexual confusion, and add to that word of faith, prosperity gospel, the new apostolic reformation and some aspects of Christian nationalism and dominion theology, and you must be constantly on the lookout.

Popular these days is the seven-mountain mandate or prophecy. That is unbiblical but is an element of NAR, Christian nationalism and Dominion theology. They are not looking for the rapture either. Those who follow the seven mountain mandate believe that, in order for Christ to return to earth, the church must take control of the seven major spheres of influence in society for the glory of Christ. Once the world has been made subject to the kingdom of God, Jesus will return and rule the world. (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

This is not in the Bible by the way, not at all. But they believe the church must take control of education, religion, family, business, government/military, arts/entertainment and the media. Terms that are used include invading the culture and transforming society.

For some reason, it becomes very popular every four years or so in this country.

The New Apostolic Reformation, or NAR, is an unbiblical religious movement that emphasizes experience over Scripture, mysticism over doctrine, and modern-day "apostles" over the plain text of the Bible. Of particular distinction in the New Apostolic Reformation are the role and power of spiritual leaders and miracle-workers, the reception of "new" revelations from God, an over-emphasis on spiritual warfare, and a pursuit of cultural and political control in society. (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

Some false teachers prey on new believers. By the way, various cults do the same. They want someone who is not fully grounded yet so they can redirect from a faith based on the facts of the word and Jesus Christ to one based on signs and wonders or false theology. Yes, the Lord heals, the Lord still does show up and do miracles and the goal is to follow Jesus and become more like Jesus.

Not to follow a specific teacher. Even the Torah warned against following those using signs and wonders to seduce to follow other gods.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

"If a prophet or someone who has dreams arises among you and proclaims a sign or wonder to you, and that sign or wonder he has promised you comes about, but he says, 'Let's follow other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let's worship them,' do not listen to that prophet's words or to that dreamer. For the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul. You must follow the LORD your God and fear him. You must



keep his commands and listen to him; you must worship him and remain faithful to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he has urged rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the place of slavery, to turn you from the way the LORD your God has commanded you to walk. You must purge the evil from you.” (CSB)

Don't go to their meetings!

“Attendees at some popular gatherings are most often presented with a weak Christianity that does not focus on the biblical Gospel. Some claim healing, for a while at least, and some see what they think are miracles and buy into the whole package but without becoming born again followers of Jesus. They hear Christian-like sayings peppered throughout, but most of what is presented is severely lacking in biblical content.” (Philpott 2017, 216)

Yes, scripture is used, but more as an eisegetical proof text to prove a point or encourage giving. And universalism is back.

Yes, there are now those who teach a form of universalism who would encourage you deconstruct your faith to the point you no longer have faith. They are indeed denying the Master who bought them. We call that Progressive Christianity.

For example, progressive Christians view the Bible as primarily a human book and emphasize personal conscience and practices rather than certainty and beliefs. They are also very open to redefining, reinterpreting, or even rejecting essential doctrines of the faith like the Virgin Birth, the deity of Jesus, and his bodily resurrection. (Childers 2020, 8)

Progressive Christianity is not Christianity since the Jesus they worship is not the same who we worship.

2 Peter 2:2–3

“Many will follow their indecent behavior, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (NASB 2020)

The tragic fact about many false teachers is that they are successful—people listen to them and follow them and their shameful ways (aselgeiais, which Peter also used in 1 Peter 4:3 [“debauchery”]; 2 Peter 2:7 [“filthy”]; v. 18 [“lustful”]). (Cf. aselgeia in Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; Jude 4.) It refers to debased sexually immoral practices. (Gangel 1985, 870)

One of the primary reasons why folks gravitate to false teaching is it, in many cases, decreases or eliminates the accountability we have before our creator. Our culture is given over to immorality, pornography, human trafficking, abortion and pretty much anything goes. Are these false teachers and those falling away and becoming apostates involved in immorality? In most cases, the answer is a resounding yes. Either through the participation in it or the approval and affirmation of it.

We are to be in the world, not of it. As Peter has already pointed out in his first letter, we are resident aliens.

“Wrong belief leads not only to wrong conduct and social rupture but also to eternal separation from God. These heresies are not merely harmful; they also lead to final doom.” (Green 2008, 240) Which is why Peter is so vocal against them and why we should be as well.



In Acts 20, Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, and he knows he will be arrested. Along the way, he holds a Pastor's conference to provide some instructions, and he has the same concern as Peter. He makes a specific charge to Pastors.

Acts 20:28–30

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will rise up even from your own number and distort the truth to lure the disciples into following them.” (CSB)

Even then, Paul was warning about the danger of being oriented towards having followers rather than being a follower.

After warning us about the indecent behavior false teachers will try and drag you into, Peter then tells us something we know to be the truth.

2 Peter 2:2b

“...and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;” (NASB 2020)

Because of our culture, we have made celebrities of Christian leaders, musicians and others. This results in Jesus being replaced by a person who is then lauded and assigned attributes of holiness which, when you examine their lives, they never had to begin with.

When they fall from their perch, the world responds with shock. Another fallen Christian, but the reality, there are questions as to whether they were ever saved to begin with and that usually shows up in the aftermath. We have seen Megachurch Pastors crash and burn and, this is new, then reject the faith. We have seen multiple so called Christian artists do the same. The common factor post fall, a complete rejection of the faith.

The impact, the truth is maligned. We grieve with those congregations who are caught up in this.

For us as believers, our conduct should be such “that it does not cause those outside to slander the name of God (Rom. 2:24; 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:5). If slander is provoked, it should only be the result of the Christians' good conduct (1 Pet. 4:3–4). The heretics, however, are viewed as part of the Christian community by those on the outside, and the end result is that their conduct brings slander against the “way of truth.” Since their conduct has generated such antipathy, we can surmise that they have engaged in behavior that is not even acceptable according to the norms of the wider society. (Green 2008, 244)

And we are indeed now seeing that to be the case as well. Those performers and artists who suddenly shift to unbelief and support views that are not Biblical, shock even the outside world.

There is an expectation that a Christian will not wander into a cesspool and then stay there. But that is taking place, and it even shocks the unbelieving world who simply has trouble accepting that level of betrayal.

2 Peter 2:3

“and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (NASB 2020)

Now we get down to the source of the problem, the place that Satan has made a claim on the heart of those who are false, it is all about the Benjamins. “All you have to do is turn on cable television to find half a dozen preachers asking for your checkbook or Visa card.” (Barrett 2014, 27)



This greed is not just about money, this greed is also over headcount, ministry size, and overall church growth. There are many who start off well, but then the ministry takes off exceeding their wildest dreams as the Lord does a massive work. Why then would you switch to the worlds method of doing things, but the attraction of multicampus facilities and increased “celebrity” status is just too attractive to some.

Many are under the assumption that if their church simply does a, b, and c, then they will grow, as if God himself has promised this to be the case, as if there were a magic formula: outreach + contemporary music + fun kids programs = church growth. Usually they say something like, “Well, if we simply do these things, then our church will become big and successful.” Not only is this a twisted understanding of the church’s purpose and mission, but it assumes that God always blesses outreach with numerical growth. (Barrett 2014, 28)

Whenever we use, or anyone else uses the word “success” for what it is the Lord has called us to do, we must be careful to keep it framed as He defines success, not the world.

God defines success as faithfulness, not as the size of the flock (Matthew 25:21). He has told us the key is remaining faithful to the mission we have been called to, making disciples.

Whenever I have read through church growth books or talked with well-meaning folks wanting to implement marketing techniques on our behalf, I tend to ask this question, “how will that make disciples?”

But the congregation will grow as more come. We meet outside, we already know that is a natural barrier for some. I was challenged by a member of our board to do a “marketing” mailing. So, we did.

Based on the response, would I do this again? The jury is out but moving heavily towards no.

It is so easy for a leader or a pastor to change up what they in order to increase the overall guilt factor in a congregation and drive giving. But we trust that the Lord will meet our needs, He has, and He does, so why use psychological manipulation to increase giving?

Based on what Peter says, that is not a barrier to those who are in it for the money. And there are too many of them. I’m sure there are great reasons behind the shift, but again, how does it make disciples?

2 Peter 2:3

“and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (NASB 2020)

False teachers, per Peter, are greedy. Don’t assume it is only money. They are greedy for followers, they are greedy for titles, they are greedy for buildings, for recognition and on and on.

The greed drives towards exploitation of the flock. This is done verbally and per Peter, with false words. In other words, there are those who are greedy for, whatever it is they have replaced the Lord with, and they are willing to lie to you, gas light you, emotionally and psychologically exploit and control you to obtain what it is they want. It could be as simple as loyalty; all they want is thousands of followers. It could also be as complex as a name and a kingdom.

But all of it is based on greed, exploitation, psychological manipulation and lies. The future, assuming no repentance is not a good one.

Peter is not done with the topic of false teachers yet. He has lots more to say about them and what is in their future unless they do repent.



The topic of judgement and sifting, which we have seen some ministries begin to endure recently, have all tended to point to individuals who fell into a trap. Some repent and return to the Lord, others are simply fired and, as we have seen in a few cases, they pop up again but there is no confidence of repentance and change. More to come on this topic.



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