

FULFILLED SPIRITUALITY IN A TAINTED CHRISTENDOM
"Part III: God's Program On Sidestepping False Teacher Abuses"
(2 Peter 2:1-3:1)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The tragic bomb blast that took the lives of innocent people, including children in a day care center in the Federal Building of Oklahoma City occurred in part due to the events of Waco, Texas one exact year before. On April 19, 1994, David Koresh and his remaining followers died in a hail of bullets and fire that destroyed their entire compound. **This false teacher who twisted Scriptural truths sparked not only the demise of followers on April 19, 1994, but reportedly led to Timothy McVeigh's "revenge" for the Waco incident in his bombing in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995! How, then, can innocent, unsuspecting, weak or new converts to Christ avoid the destructive influence of such false teachers?!**

(2) The challenge of cults exists even for us Evangelicals, for they can start up from very **acceptable, tame** church groups:

(a) The Reverend Sun Myung Moon, founder of The Unification Church which is better known as the "Moonies," started his pilgrimage in a Presbyterian Church in the South Korean Bible belt!

(b) David Berg's Children of God group "started as a fundamentalist counter-culture ministry, but degenerated into belief in the occult, reincarnation, and sexual permissiveness... (He promotes) the use of blasphemy, profanity, vulgarity and pornography." (Gary L. Wall, "A Catalogue of the cults..," Moody Monthly, July-Aug., 1979)

(3) Lest we think that cults start up only in Berkeley, California, consider that social needs right **here** make fertile ground for cultism. Ken Woodward writes in Newsweek (March 15, 1993, "Cultic America: A Tower of Babel") that "Waco is a wake-up call...Warning: do you know where your children are?...In an age when millions of Americans feel codependent, when children readily label their families dysfunctional and there are as many therapies as there are pains, the search for a fast, fast relief can turn strange. G. K. Chesterton, an astute Christian apologist, once warned that when people stopped believing anything, they are prepared to believe everything. If the cult watchers are right, that time has come to pass."

How can weak believers and new converts today avoid being deceived, controlled and hurt by false teachers?!

Need: "With ungodly, destructive teachers on the increase worldwide, can ANYTHING be done about unwitting believers and new converts getting snared and burned by their painful abuses?!"

- I. **When Peter warned believers about false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1, he tried to stimulate God's people to be spotless in their thinking on the matter ("wholesome" in 2 Peter 3:1 of the NIV = *eilikrinays*, "tested by the light of the sun," T.D.N.T., vol. II, p. 397-398).**
- II. **He went on to describe false teachers as a warning for believers to discern them and thus avoid tragic fellowship with them, 2 Peter 2:1b-22. We contrast these false teachers with godly ones to develop an Early-False-Teacher-Warning-System as follows:**
 - A. Discerning Signal One - False teachers secretly introduce destructive heresies (2:1b) where true teachers transparently present the wholesome Word of God, cf. 2 Cor. 2:17.
 - B. Discerning Signal Two - False teachers mislead many and defame the Gospel's testimony, 2:2; true teachers preserve the Gospel testimony plainly at even personal cost, cf. 3 Jn. 7.
 - C. Discerning Signal Three - False teachers are greedy, 2:3a; godly teachers are conversely selfless, 1 Cor. 10:32-33; Acts 20:29-35.
 - D. Discerning Signal Four - False teachers invent teachings, 2:3b; godly ones expound the established truths of God, 2 Tim. 1:13-14.
 - E. Discerning Signal Five - False teachers feed off the sin nature where godly ones live by the fruits of the Holy Spirit, 2:10a versus Gal. 5:16-23.
 - F. Discerning Signal Six - False teachers despise established authority figures where the godly respect them, 2:10b; He. 13:17.
 - G. Discerning Signal Seven - False teachers are boldly arrogant where godly ones are gentle and humble, 2:11a; Jas. 3:17-18.
 - H. Discerning Signal Eight - False teachers fearlessly slander others where the godly respectfully critique by the clear authority of the Word of God, 2:11b; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2.
 - I. Discerning Signal Nine - False teachers act on natural instincts where godly ones stick to principles, 2:12; 2 Co. 12:14-15.
 - J. Discerning Signal Ten - False teachers tend toward sensuous immorality where godly ones are chaste, 2:13-14a; 1 T. 4:12c.

- K. Discerning Signal Eleven - False teachers entice weak, new converts to follow themselves, 2:14b; godly ones nurture others to follow an all-sufficient God, Jn. 21:15-17; Acts 20:28.
- L. Discerning Signal Twelve - False teachers seek unjust fiscal gain, 2:15-16; the godly are content with what comes in, Phi. 4:11-13.
- M. Discerning Signal Thirteen - False teachers pretend to offer rich truth but cannot deliver it, 2:17-18; godly teachers are rich in truth and spiritual power even when **humanly** weak, 1 Cor. 2:1-5.
- N. Discerning Signal Fourteen - False teachers promise liberty but deliver only license, 2:19; godly teachers teach liberty via the Holy Spirit that is above license, Gal. 5:13-23.
- O. Discerning Signal Fifteen - False teachers go from bad to worse where godly ones keep on improving, 2:20-22; 1 T. 4:15b NIV.

III. **However, some aren't aware of these warning signals and will be seduced. Yet, God is willing and able to judge false teachers and to rescue His people from apostates no matter what, 2:4-9!**

- A. As in the case of fallen angels, God is willing and able to judge even the most powerful and influential of false teachers if He has bound lofty angels for their sin in Satan's fall, 2:4; Ez. 28:15.
- B. As with Noah, God is willing and able to rescue His people who are subjected to evil for a long time, 2:5; 1 P. 3:20; Gen. 6:3.
- C. As in Lot's case, God is willing and able to rescue His people who are exposed to the vilest of apostasy, 2:6-9:
 1. Peter tells his readers of Lot's internal stress of taking a stand amidst the ungodliness around him in Sodom, 2 Peter 2:7-8.
 2. We are told of that wickedness where adult men in Sodom sought vile relations with God's angels they were so bad, Gn. 19:5.
 3. Yet God saved Lot and destroyed the region with fire, 2 P. 2:6-7a!

Application: To sidestep false teachers, (1) believe on Christ for salvation and become indwelt by the parenting Holy Spirit, Jn. 3:16; Ro. 8:9b & Jn. 14:16-18. (2) If we sin, confess it for cleansing and control by the Spirit (1 Jn. 1:9; Ga. 5:16ff); then we can (3) discern and thus (4) apply 2 Peter 2:1-22 to sidestep false teachers before being hurt by their influences. (5) If a party we know is in the clutches of a false teacher, recall God's will and ability to salvage him, and pray!

Lesson: (1) Regardless how bad false teachers are, no matter how long they have controlled others and regardless how influential they are, God is willing and able to deliver followers from them. Yet, (2) we can use 2 Peter 2:1-22 to discern false teachers in advance to avoid them.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon's lesson . . .)

Garrick Peterson who now lives in Lilongwe, Malawi wrote a letter to the editor of Newsweek following its March 15th issue that focused on David Koresh's Waco cult. Garrick told the editor of his brush with Koresh's teaching seven years before Waco as follows:

"In 1987 Koresh spoke to the young adults at my church in Berkeley, Calif. It was an interesting lesson in cult methodology. He began with a (1) **long, rambling Bible lesson**. With (2) **ungrounded authority** and (3) **without much subtlety, he hinted that we were all guilty of hypocrisy** and needed to repent and reform. It's not that we despised correction, but (4) **we saw that this was a tactic to weed out the willful from the weak and easy to manipulate, who felt the need for a strong parental voice.**"

If we examine Mr. Peterson's report in light of 2 Peter 2, we can see the following signals warning of Koresh's tendencies towards cultism **seven years before Waco**: (1) regarding Koresh's "long, rambling Bible lesson," notice how well Koresh fit 2 Peter 2:17-18's warning of teachers who pretend to offer rich truths in their lessons but cannot really deliver it; (2) regarding Koresh's alleged "ungrounded authority" in his style, see 2 Peter 2:11. Koresh displayed bold arrogance like false teachers do; (3) regarding Peterson's observation that Koresh spoke "without much subtlety" in putting a guilt trip on his listeners, see 2 Peter 2:11b. Koresh typically slandered others fearlessly as do false teachers; (4) regarding Koresh's tactic of weeding out "the willful from the weak and easy to manipulate, who felt the need for a strong parental voice," see 2 Peter 2:14b. That passage describes David Koresh to a tee with his false teacher's effort to seduce weak, new converts by offering "a strong **parental voice**!" **From Garrick Peterson's description of David Koresh's actions in a Bible lesson he gave in a Berkeley church in 1987, SEVEN YEARS BEFORE WACO'S TRAGEDY, we can tell that we should not have followed him! Think what might have happened if the followers in Koresh's group at Waco had used 2 Peter 2 the same way! There might not have been the (1) WACO tragedy. (2) In view of Waco's alleged influence on Timothy McVeigh, Oklahoma City might also have been spared this April 19, 1995! We can sidestep false teacher abuses, but we must use Scripture to do so!**