

## A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

### XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness

#### K. Christ's Instruction To Those Who Enter His Kingdom

#### 4. Christ's True Versus False Servants

(Matthew 7:15-23)

#### I. Introduction

- A. After critiquing the Pharisees' false righteousness, Christ addressed those who desired to enter His Kingdom in Matthew 7:7-29 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 186).
- B. Matthew 7:15-23 is part of that address, and it contrasts Christ's true versus false servants. We view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

#### II. Christ's True Versus False Servants, Matthew 7:15-23.

- A. False prophets, and false teachers in general, "are part of the cause for the way" of truth being "narrow and hard to find," for these evil men are like ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing, deceiving many immature, unsuspecting people, including many believers, only to harm their victims and leave a bad testimony by their actions for God's truth (Matthew 7:13-14; John F. Walvoord, Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come, 1974, p. 57-58).
- B. Thus, Jesus told His disciples to "be on one's guard against" (*prosecho*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 721) false prophets, and thus also against false teachers, Matthew 7:15a.
- C. The reason for being on guard is that false prophets and teachers present themselves in sheep's clothing so as to leave their victims unguarded so that the false prophets and teachers can take harmful advantage of their victims while inwardly these prophets and teachers are self-serving, destructive wolves, Matthew 7:15b.
- D. Jesus then taught His disciples how to discern such wolves, revealing that false prophets and teachers are known by their "fruits," Matthew 7:16a. Farmers do not gather grapes from thorns nor figs from thistles, for every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit, Matthew 7:16b-17. A good tree cannot bear the bad, nor can a bad tree bear the good, so every tree that does not bear good fruit is known to be bad and is thus cut down and burned up, Matthew 6:18-19. Thus, by their "fruits" will we know them, Matthew 7:20.
- E. However, what Jesus *meant* by *bad "fruit"* had to be *illustrated*, for false prophets and teachers try to *deceive* by appearing to be godly (Matthew 7:15). Christ thus illustrated this truth in Matthew 7:21-23:
  1. False prophets and false teachers will say "Lord, Lord" while not being able to enter heaven for failing to do the will of God the Father, which will involve trusting in Christ for salvation of the soul by God's grace, Matthew 7:21a with John 3:16. In other words, fine-sounding words are used by false prophets and false teachers to give the appearance that they are true "sheep" of God, but they do not believe in Christ!
  2. False prophets and false teachers will even have performed impressive works like prophesying in Christ's name, casting out demons and performing many miracles in Christ's name without having trusted in Christ for salvation, Matthew 7:21b-22; John 3:16. They will have performed ministries by Satan's power in deceiving many people, including many weak and immature believers, without having trusted in Christ.
  3. In fact, at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15), regardless if these false prophets and teachers having called Him "Lord, Lord," or their having prophesied in His name or in His name cast out demons and performed many miracles, Jesus will tell them that He never knew them, that they were to depart from Him into the lake of fire because they were workers of literally "lawlessness" (*anomia*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 71; Matthew 7:23), those who violate Scripture!
- F. By application, since carnal believers can act like the unsaved (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), carnal believers can also deceive immature and weak believers as being godly when they actually disobey Scripture and are ungodly!

***Lesson:*** (1) *False prophets and false teachers parade themselves with fine sounding words and even many miraculous works though not having believed in Christ for salvation. In presenting themselves this way, they deceive others to their harm, for such prophets and teachers are inwardly ravenous wolves who will eventually be condemned to the lake of fire. Believers are to be on their guard against these false prophets and teachers by looking beyond their nice words and even their miraculous works to discern if they have truly believed in Christ for salvation. (2) Carnal believing teachers must also be discerned by their failure to obey God's Word!*

***Application:*** (1) *May we beware of false prophets and teachers by viewing their "fruit." (2) Though a teacher may be saved, he may be carnal and function as an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), so we must examine the "fruit" of all teachers to see if they function Biblically by the Holy Spirit or if they disobey Scripture by their sin nature.*