

**Text: 2 Pt 2.1-3**

In our study of 2 Peter, we have had much discussion of the virtues Peter calls us to. He does so as a *reminder*, he is unapologetic about giving the reminder, and he grounds his authority on his status as an apostle and on the sure foundation of the Word of God.

The whole body of chapter 1 promotes personal growth in the lives of the believers. We are to give *diligent attention* to this.

Chapter 2 gives us a primary reason for Peter's intense reminders:

***There Will Be False Prophets***

As Peter turns to this subject, he goes into a kind of "rant" mode, showing his intensity in warning believers about these figures.

Unfortunately, this passage and passages like it get very little attention in the church.

As we read the chapter, the subject matter isn't very appealing. We don't like to think about this. We would rather talk about virtue, faith, self-control, etc., the qualities of good Christian living.

Nevertheless, we ignore passages like this at our spiritual peril. Many false teachers and false prophets have come into the world since Peter's day.

Many professing Christians have gone astray under their influence!

How many of these professors were sincere believers, only foolish and duped? God only knows.

**Read 2 Pt 2.1-3**

**Proposition:** We do well to be aware and be warned of the reality of false prophets.

**I. The reality of false prophets (1)**

A. Peter uses two terms: false prophets and false teachers

1. False prophets represent those who led Israel astray time and again in the OT (Gr. *pseudoprophetai*)
2. False teachers represent those who in like manner rise in the church (Gr. *pseudodidaskaloi*)

They are false both in their persons (not real followers of God) and in their messages (not telling the truth about God).

## B. These characters are deceptive

1. They arise from within
2. They secretly introduce destructive heresies (divisions)
  - a. Secretly = “to lead in alongside”
  - b. Their teaching is very subtle, it sounds right, but it is a little off

This is a persistent characteristic. One of the reasons we keep going over theology and Bible teaching is to help you discern: false teachers are subtle; you need to be able to catch the subtlety.

## 3. Heresies

- a. Basic meaning: “a choosing”
- b. Then, “a decided opinion, a chosen opinion”
- c. Came to refer to groups pushing their own ideas, alongside the truth, *i.e.*, heresies

## C. They are extreme in their unbelief

1. They will go so far as to deny the Master who bought them
  - a. Peter doesn't mean they are just “misguided believers”
  - b. He means that Jesus died for all men, including these evil men

“This verse supports the doctrine of unlimited atonement, which is the view that Jesus Christ died for everyone, not just for those who would believe on Him for salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

- c. False teachers in their subtlety will deny the doctrine of Christ
  - 1) Sometimes they do it by coming very close to the truth, but carefully parsing their statements

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pt 2.1.

2) Sometimes they try to create doubt by saying “the church is holding out on you”

3) Ultimately, they will deny, either explicitly or implicitly, fundamental doctrines of Christ and salvation

d. People who do this are not true believers

“... New Testament writers sometimes use the language of Christian conversion for such people [non-Christians] on the basis of their appearance.”<sup>2</sup>

2. Their extremity brings on them “swift destruction”

a. This isn’t necessarily “soon destruction”

Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon in 1829. He lived on into 1844 before he was shot and killed in a dispute with disgruntled followers (partly over his move to polygamy). His destructive career lasted thirteen years Brigham Young took over, continuing in leadership of the Mormons until 1877, thirty-three years later.

b. The swiftness refers to the speed of judgement when it descends

1) The false teachers were saying “the Lord delays his coming” (3.9)

2) Peter says, “your judgement comes swiftly”

## II. The damage of false prophets (2-3a)

A. A frequent area of damage is morality: people “follow their sensuality”

“When people abandon God’s standard of truth they usually adopt a lower standard of morality.”<sup>3</sup>

1. Mormon polygamy is a case in point

2. So, too, the scandals surrounding people like Jim and Tammy Baker and others

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, 2 Peter, and Jude, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1996), 154, quoted in Constable, 2 Pt 2.1.

<sup>3</sup> Constable, 2 Pt 2.2.

3. Note: “many will follow” – the presence of crowds is no guarantee of legitimacy

B. The behaviour inspired by false teachers and false teaching discredits the gospel

1. People make Christianity the butt of jokes

2. People use these failings to justify unbelief

“Few things hinder the cause of Christ like the bad reputations of professing Christians who are members of orthodox churches.”<sup>4</sup>

C. Behind the false teaching lies the greed of the false teachers

“Religion is the biggest racket going.”<sup>5</sup>

Mic 3.11 Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, “Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us.”

“the Greek term always has a bad sense and depicts an insatiable craving and grasping for more of something to which one does not have a just right”<sup>6</sup>

1. The word “exploit” is a business term

2. We get “emporium” from this word – it can refer to legitimate business ventures

3. But here it refers to someone selling damaged goods as whole: they are exploiting you because of greed

D. The unique quality of false teaching

1. Gr. *plastos*

<sup>4</sup> Warren W Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 447.

<sup>5</sup> T. W. D. Johnson, a frequent quote from my dad when discussing these topics.

<sup>6</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, S.C: Bob Jones University Press, 1989), 93.

## 2. False teachers use plastic words

“The false teachers use our vocabulary, but they do not use our dictionary.”<sup>7</sup>

### III. The destiny of false prophets (3b)

A. Their judgement “is not idle”

B. Their destruction “is not asleep”

Peter’s “point was that God is never late or asleep in executing justice, though He is patient (cf. 3:9).”<sup>8</sup>

“The first member of the parallelism points to the Judge and His verdict; the second, ... points to the criminals and their penalty.”<sup>9</sup>

#### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** We do well to be aware and be warned of the reality of false prophets.

The warning of these verses behooves us to be careful students of the Word, making following Christ *the priority* of our lives.

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<sup>7</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:447.

<sup>8</sup> Constable, *Expository Notes*, 2 Pt 2.3.

<sup>9</sup> Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude*, 94.