

Living in an Unbelieving World

10 November, 2010

By Rev. Lonny R. Bower

Scripture Reference – 2 Peter 2:1-22; 3:1-7

Unit Theme: Counsel for Christlike Living

Central Truth: Christians must beware of false teachers and follow sound doctrine.

Focus: Investigate the reality of false teaching and pray for spiritual discernment and perseverance.

Key Verse: 2 Peter 2:9 - *the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.*

Intro:

Matthew 24:24 records Jesus as saying that in the last days false prophets and teachers will arise and deceive many, in fact He warns that even the elect could be deceived. The spirit of deception is blowing across the world as at no other time in the history of the world. Those who do not have the word of God are certain to fall. The only sure way to avoid certain deception is to study and rightly divide the word of God. This however is impossible without the Holy Spirit, for He is the one who leads us into all truth. One of the Gifts of the Spirit is in fact discernment of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). Left to ourselves we would fall for almost anything, however when we surrender to the Holy Spirit He will reveal truth to us. We must then do as 1 John 4:1 exhorts and not believe every spirit but test them to see whether they are of God. The only way to do this however, is through the word of God. Everything and everyone must be lined up with the word of God and if the word of God does not validate it/them then we are to leave it behind. Jesus when warning against false prophets said in Matthew 7:15, 16 that we would know them by their fruit. He was not referring to the fruit of the Spirit, but the evidence of one's own doctrine and faith. Are there converts, are there testimonies of changed lives, and is there evidence of something bigger than the person? Truth changes lives and those lives in turn give glory to the life changer – Jesus Christ. However, keep this in mind, it is not the outward appearance as much as the changed heart that we're concerned with. God changes the heart, then the behavior follows – false teachers often emphasize a changed behavior and pay no mind to the heart. As long as we live in a fallen world we will never live in a believing world, therefore it is paramount that we arm ourselves with the word of God so that we can effectively combat false teachers.

I. Danger of False Teaching – 2 Peter 2:1-11

False teachers are a fact of life, past, present and as the Lord tarries, future. Their intent is to tear down walls of faith and destroy strongholds of hope and they have all the power and cunningness of the devil behind them. There is no hope in their message and their future only holds destruction. However, because of their craftiness they are able to lead many astray. The judgment of the Lord is certain, just as He cast the angels out of heaven that rebelled and brought a flood of destruction on a world that rejected Him in Noah's day. So too will he unleash His wrath upon the unrighteous of our generation. We may not see it in the form that we anticipate, but rest assure, they will indeed face His wrath. Our

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hope is in this, because of the Word of Truth – Jesus Christ, we will be saved from the wrath to come.

Anyone or anything that tries to take that hope from you is not of the Lord.

➤ **Note Taker:** List the examples of divine judgment from verses 4-6.

II. Fate of False Teachers – 2 Peter 2:12-22

These very false teachers that the Lord is warning us against are none other than apostates. They are those who according to the word “once knew” but have chosen to reject their knowledge of the Lord and His salvation and instead return to their former life. This is very important doctrine and problematic for those who claim “once saved always saved”. Look at verse 20 and 21 again and decide for yourself, does this sound like a “once saved always saved” doctrine? Certainly not. Instead it is a word of warning to all of us who through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord and savior are living new lives of righteousness. These false teachers are not content to just reject the gospel and go their own way, but they must hang around the righteous and attempt to deceive and lead astray as many as they can through their swelling words. Consider their end (v 17b), is there any hope in that?

➤ **Note Taker:** Describe the foolish talk of “natural brute beasts” (verse 12).

III. Last Days Doubters – 2 Peter 3:1-9

We are certainly living in the day of scoffers. People scoff at the doctrine of creation, they scoff at the truth of an all powerful God who rules the universe and is able to destroy it all by the command of His voice. They reject the historical divine evidence of a flood, they deny divine intervention in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but instead construct hypothetical theories that they teach as truth. They ignore the power of the gospel, by denying the historical evidence of the life, work and

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love if Jesus of Nazareth. Though there is overwhelming evidence to support the testimony of Christ, they mock at His promised return and use God's mercy as reason to cast doubt on His promised return. As the scripture says they are willingly ignorant, because they love rebellion. God's love and mercy is so great that He is patiently waiting for them to know the truth and thereby be set free from their deception. He has not forgot about His promised return, He's just waiting for more to repent and there has to be a final one. The fact remains, He will not wait forever, but will one day very soon (could be today) return for His church, just as He promised. What will the doubters say then?

➤ **Note Taker:** How are the scoffers willingly ignorant?

Conclusion:

Regardless of what some false teachers try to proclaim, the world is not becoming more righteous. If it is true that more people are coming to Christ today than ever before, it is also equally true that more people are falling away than ever before. We live in an unbelieving world and the gospel proclaims that until Jesus returns to set up His millennial Kingdom we always will. Jesus said that things would get worse. Our responsibility is not to shut the world out so much that we can't reach them. We should love them as Jesus did and live such lives that they desire the same thing we have. The ugly truth however is this, Christianity has done little to make the world want what we have, because in turn we have desired too much of what they have and can hardly be separated from them. Perhaps it's time for us to do the first works over again, repent and allow God to have all our heart this time around. Perhaps it's time to let the unbelieving world know that the Lord loves them unconditionally regardless of what they wear or don't wear, regardless of how they talk or think, regardless of their tattoos and piercings He loves them unconditionally. His love however still requires them to repent and trust in Him for salvation. If we focus on His love and demonstrate His love I suspect God will do the rest.

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Except where I have paraphrased all scripture is taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

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