

Deceivers – Part 1 • 2 Peter 2:1-11

INTRODUCTION • Read John 21:15-17

1. No one ever suspected the model congregation in San Francisco would end up where it did.
 - a. Why, they built a swimming pool for the urban poor.
 - b. They organized horse rides for underprivileged children.
 - c. They gave scholarships for needy students, & built housing for seniors.
 - d. They even ran an animal shelter, medical facility, & drug rehabilitation program.
2. Vice President Walter Mondale wrote that the pastor was “an inspiration to us all.”
3. The Secretary of Health, Education, & Welfare listed the pastor’s outstanding contributions: “He knows how to inspire hope. He’s committed to people in need & councils prisoners and juvenile delinquents. He started a job placement center; opened rest homes & homes for those w/Downs Syndrome. He runs a health clinic & provides free legal aid. He preaches about God, casts out demons & performs miracles of healing.”
4. That’s an impressive resume for what seemed a mighty spiritual leader and his church.
5. So Where is that congregation & pastor today?
6. Dead. All of them.
 - a. One day the pastor called them all to a pavilion in the center of their compound near Jonestown, in Guyana, South America.
 - b. As so many times before, they heard his hypnotic voice over the speaker as, sitting in his customary chair, he called them to gather.
 - c. He spoke to them about the beauty of death & the certainty that they’d soon meet again.
 - d. Armed guards stood round the edge of the crowd.
 - e. A vat of cyanide-laced Kool-Aid was brought out.
 - f. Most drank the poison with no resistance. Those who **did** resist were **forced** to drink.
 - 1) 1st, the 80 babies & children - Then the adults. Finally, the pastor himself.
 - 2) In a few minutes, it was over. The members of the **People’s Temple** & their leader Jim Jones were all dead. All 780 of them.
 - 3) At a nearby airfield where US Congressman Leo Ryan & his aides had arrived to investigate the group, the guards sent to meet him opened fire & killed them all.
7. The tragedy at Jonestown in 1978 was the largest loss of American civilians by a deliberate act, prior to 9/11.
8. It stunned, not just the Nation, but the World.
9. The lesson of Jonestown endures: We must be on our guard!
 - a. Religious hucksters & frauds are real and present a danger to God’s people.
 - b. Don’t be fooled by enticing words & slick appeals.
 - c. They’re fakes, phonies!
 - d. Their words, while sweet, are toxic & will kill **spiritually** no less than then cyanide-laced Kool-Aid drank at Jonestown.
10. Peter devoted **an entire chapter** to the problem of false teachers because just 30 years after the Rez, the Church was being troubled by them.
11. He wrote to disarm them & alert Christians to their insidious presence.
 - a. It was part of the duty Jesus gave him when he said – “Tend my sheep.”
 - b. The shepherd’s task is to L, F, & Protect.
 - c. Crucial to protection is warning people about dangers & threats.
12. Peter does his duty here in ch. 2.
 - a. And rather than just saying in 1 short verse, “Watch put for false teachers,” he **describes** them.
 - b. He makes it clear what they teach is ruinous.
 - c. He lays bear their motive & describes their destiny.
13. Now I’d prefer to cover all of ch. 2 in one message. But it’s too much, so we’ll spend 2 weeks on it.
Vs. 1-3
1. Remember when Peter penned this, he included no chs or vs; it’s a letter.

2. So, having just spoken there at the end of ch. 1 about prophecy & the work of the HS in both giving Scripture & helping us understand it,
3. Peter moves to the **other** side of the issue: **FALSE** teachers & prophets who ignore the HS & twist God's Word to their own ends.
4. We see the connection between the end of ch. 1 & beginning of ch. 2 I the firsts word
¹ **But** there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.
5. There always has been & always will be people who seek to prey on God's people.
 - a. They are **false** prophets & teachers.
 - b. That is, their message is a lie that if heeded works ruin.
6. Peter calls their teaching, **heresy**.
 - a. The word means to "take, seize."
 - b. It pictures someone who **lays hold of others** to form **their own group or sect**.
7. That's always the aim of false teachers. They sneak in & through stealthy means, pull people away to form their **own** group.
8. Heresy works by **dividing** people. It forces them to choose who & what they're going to follow.
9. False teachers know if they were open & honest about their error when they first arrive, no one would listen to them.
 - a. So they **begin** by **infiltrating** a church, looking & sounding like sheep,
 - b. But in fact they are wolves in sheep's clothing.
10. Paul warned about them in Acts 20
²⁷ I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves & to all the flock, among which the HS has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, & remember that for 3 yrs I did not cease to warn everyone night & day with tears.
11. The "**con**" in **con-artist** comes from the word "**confidence**."
 - a. The "con" in a con-artist's scam is to **build trust** with the people being conned.
 - b. It's what the main characters did in *Redemption of the Heart* by presenting themselves as missionaries.
12. False teachers build relationships with people, then **USE** those relationships to launch their attack.
13. Peter says 1 of the things a false teacher denies is the **Lordship of Jesus**.
 - a. It's one of the major marks of false doctrine is a goofy **Christology**.
 - b. Their view of who Jesus is, is non-Biblical.
 - c. Most false teachers deny either Jesus' **deity** or **humanity**.
14. Now You all know I love history. I have a Church History podcast called Communio Sanctorum.
 - a. So I would **love** to launch into a lecture now on **how** the Early Church came to articulate its understanding of the Trinity & the nature of Jesus as both God & Man.
 - b. Let me just say that this issue was THE work of the great leaders & minds of the Church for the first 400 years.
 - 1) They saw clearly what the Bible said That Jesus is both God & Man.
 - 2) But it took them a while to understand how those two natures dwell side by side in the one person we know as Jesus Christ.
 - 3) Specifically, it took them a while to settle in on **precisely the right words** to use to describe all that.
 - c. They **believed it** from the beginning. It just took a while to say it in a way that accurately gathered all Scripture said in a simple summary.
 - d. And along the way, there were false teachers like Arius & Marcion who **ignored** what the Bible says about Jesus.

- e. They **twisted** Scripture to fit their own ideas.
 - f. And that end was this: They wanted people, **not** to follow Jesus, **but to follow THEM!**
15. Sadly, many did & do . . .
- ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.
16. The success of false teachers at gathering a crowd is because they appeal to something in those who go after them.
- a. Most often that appeal lies in masking selfish desires & pride behind a thin veneer of religion.
 - b. Why **resist sin** when you can **recast** it as **righteousness**?
 - c. Turn Greed into Faith. > Make Pride, Zeal. > Lust becomes Love.
17. What's distressing is that while those who follow false teachers gain an excuse for living in the flesh, even unbelievers look on know it's all a lot of huey!
- a. The cult can **call** it Faith, Zeal & Love but the world knows it's really just Greed, Pride & Lust.
 - b. And they're **disgusted** by it!
18. The proof of v2 is what happened after the Televangelist scandals of the 80's.
- a. Christianity & the Gospel became the butt of endless jokes.
 - b. Tens of thousands mocked religion in general & the Church in particular.
 - c. And even to this day, the sting of those scandals still smarts.
19. At the end of v3 when Peter says –
- for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.
- a. He means the judgment of false teachers & those who support them is certain.
 - b. Just because God doesn't thump them the moment they utter a lie doesn't mean He won't.
 - c. Their judgment is as good as done from the Eternal Perspective.
 - f. If they fail to repent, it will not go well with them.

Vs. 4-11

- 1. V4 begins a single sentence that runs into v10.
- 2. Peter speaks here about the **certainty** of judgment for false teachers . . .

⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *1 of 8 people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)—⁹ *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

- 1. Peter refers to 3 examples of God's judgment;
 - 1) The Judgment of Angels
 - 2) The Flood &
 - 3) Sodom & Gomorrah
- 2. If we had more time this morning, I'd love to go into these stories as illustrations of God's judgment, especially this **wild** mention of the **angels who sinned**.
- 3. Let's just summarize by saying that Peter's point is that if God wouldn't hesitate to judge & punish angels, He's certainly not going to balk at dealing w/false teachers!
- 4. In the examples of the Flood & Sodom, the idea is that while God **judges** evil, He **rescues** His own. Look again at v9 ...

⁹ *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

5. Then Peter applies these 3 examples of judgment to his subject False teachers.

¹⁰ and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority.

6. Nearly all false teachers are marked by 2 traits –

1 They're **consumed** by the lusts of greed & sexual immorality

#2 They **despise authority**.

1) They resist those **God** has ordained to lead.

2) They want to be **in** authority but never **under** it.

3) They set themselves up as the final authority & refuse to answer to anyone.

4) 1 of the premier marks of a cult is that it follows a leader who claims to be God's sole agent of revelation.

7. All of that is reinforced by what Peter goes on to say in v10 ...

They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹ whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

8. Jude uses virtually the same words as Peter when he writes regarding false teachers ...

⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹

Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these speak evil of whatever they do not know;

9. The point of both Peter & Jude is that even angels are ultra-cautious in speaking disrespectfully to & about authority; & in this case that authority is the devil.

10. While Satan is now the arch adversary of God, at 1 time he was the **highest** of all God's creation.

a. Though stripped of this position, the angels are still cautious in their treatment of him.

b. If **they** have this posture toward *the devil*, how much more wrong is it when false teachers disrespect the authority of God-ordained leaders?

CONCLUSION

1. Peter has more to say about these false teachers & prophets that we'll look at next week.

2. Here's how we'll end today . . .

a. Though only 30 yrs had passed, there were **already** guys sneaking into the Church, teaching goofy things.

b. They weren't **innocently** wrong; they hadn't just made a mistake in their theology . . .

c. They **KNEW** what they were saying was a lie.

d. They wrapped it in an appealing package, because their goal was to draw people away to themselves.

1) They hoped to build their own group by which they could live off.

2) They wanted the financial support & power being a leader would make them.

3) They weren't servants, they were lords. And as lords they inevitably had to redefine who the real Lord was.

4) Their Jesus wasn't THE Jesus of the Bible; the One who saves.

5) No—their Jesus; the Jesus of the cults, always ends up being nothing more than some comic figure who waves the wand of acceptance over whatever they want to do.

3. So this morning, I must do what Peter does here – Warn you that there are false teachers still!

a. They will try to sneak in here and rip you off.

b. My job is to protect you.

1) I'll do that by being a **true** teacher.

2) We'll keep going thru the whole Bible so when you hear a lie, you'll know it for what it is.

- 3) It's not my job to ***tickle*** your ears; it's to nourish your soul in & with the Truth.
- 4) Oft-times, that Truth is hard; it's a challenge & not easy.
- 5) Protecting you also means ***warning*** you; of saying the sometimes hard thing that could offend.
- 6) If it does, please remember that that it's said in love, because I care deeply for you & want to see you safe.