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**Matthew 7:15-20**  
**Righteous Living!**

Intro: God will judge Counterfeit Christians on Judgment day. Counterfeit Christians will suffer eternal damnation. However, Jesus commands Christians to discern counterfeit Christians before Judgment day.

Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount to reveal what true Christians think like, look like, and act like. True Christians have a change of heart that expresses itself outwardly. The Sermon on the Mount is a disclosure of the fruits that come out of regeneration. A changed heart produces a fruitful life. One fruit that results from regeneration is an ability to discern real from counterfeit, true from false, right from wrong.

Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets." The word "beware" is a command to hold the mind towards, pay attention to, be cautious about, and be on your guard. The word "beware" is in the present tense which denotes continual action. Jesus commands Christians to continuously be on guard for false prophets. You cannot let your guard down. Live alert!

## Beware of False Prophets (Matthew 7:15-20)

False prophets are Christian predators. Jesus compares false prophets to wolves and Christians to sheep. Wolves are sheep predators. A predator is one that preys, destroys, or devours. The definition of a predator fits the description that Jesus gives in John 10:10 of anyone who tries to stand in His office as mediator. Jesus said, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*" False prophets try to assume the office of mediatorship. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5, "*There is but one Mediator between God and man.*"

### I. **Spiritual Predators:**

- A. Costume of False Prophets: Jesus warns about the appearance of false prophets. Jesus describes false prophets as wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. Outwardly, false prophets look like Christians. They look like and sound like the right people. Sheep's clothing denotes a gentle, sincere, meek, harmless, and inoffensive outward demeanor. In other words, false prophets assume the appearance of holiness and innocence. False prophets don't look false! They are not easily detected, noticed, or identified.  
False prophets carry Bibles. They know how to quote the Bible. False prophets use Christian terminology. They talk about God, talk about Jesus, talk about the cross, they emphasize the love of God, and they know how to say everything a Christian would say.
- B. Conduct of False Prophets: The false prophet uses their demeanor as a cloak to hide their real wickedness. These people creep into the church without the church being aware of their presence.

The conduct of false prophets is to lead sheep away from the Shepherd.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:5-7 *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

2 Timothy 3:13 *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*

Jesus tells us “Watch out for false prophets.” Be on your guard.

- II. Spiritual Discernment: Christians are able to detect the counterfeit. Be discerning. Spiritually judge fruit. Jesus said you shall know them by their fruit. We are not to be judgmental of people, but we are to judge fruit. In Scripture, fruit is work. The fruit Jesus refers to in the text is teaching. W.F. Adeney said, “The quality of the work is determined by the character of the worker” (Pulpit Commentary). Work is growth from a man’s life. False prophets teach false doctrine.

Examples of false doctrine:

The offense of the Gospel is removed. Negligent to teach about God’s holiness, righteousness, anger, and justice. Avoidance of any teaching about God’s judgment. Lack of teaching about man’s inability to do good on his own. No preaching or teaching about man’s need for repentance and conversion. Teaches many ways to God the Father—Christ is not the only way to heaven. Teaching that encourages people to enter in at the wide gate and live on the broad way.

- A. Fruit Inspector: Jesus said, “You shall know them by their fruits. *“Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”* Grapes grow on vines, not on thornbushes. Thornbushes can only produce thorns. Figs do not grow on thistle or prickly plants. Figs are the fruit of fig trees. A tree can only produce fruit of its kind. Fruits come from trees of its kind. In other words, you don’t expect a peach tree to produce apples, a pecan tree to produce plums, a banana tree to produce coconuts. A tree can only produce fruit of its kind. Fruit correspond to the tree.
- B. Not a Leaf Inspector: As a fruit inspector our focus is fruit, not leaves.

Jesus said, “Every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit” (verse 17).

- 1) Good Fruit- Verse 18, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.  
Fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23  
*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*

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- 2) Bad Fruit- Verse 18, A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Bad fruit is teaching that produces works of the flesh.

Paul helps us identify works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21.

***Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***

***Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.***

***Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.***

It is law of universal application that whatever is useless and evil shall be destroyed. Things that are of no value to you, you get rid of them. If you bring forth bad fruit or have no fruit you are fit for the fire.