

# Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

by Sonya Cherici



**“Who can speak and have it happen if God has not decreed it?” - Lamentations 3:37**

**T**he Bible contains many scriptures about false prophets and teachers. As written, they are godless men (and women) who do not speak the words of God. Their words are from their own imaginations. They live unholy lifestyles while leading the church. Scripture also tells us that they carouse in broad daylight; so their sin is evident. Since the Bible has provided clear definitions and warnings concerning false prophets and teachers, we most certainly should refer to it for guidance. Especially as we are living in a time when evil is increasingly prevalent.

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them - bringing swift destruction on themselves.” - 2 Peter 2:1 (NIV)*

Prophecy is one of the divine gifts and an evidence of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The book of 1 Corinthians lists several gifts of the Holy Spirit including the message of wisdom, the message of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different tongues (languages) and the interpretation of tongues (languages). Additional gifts of the Spirit are noted in Romans 12:6-8 (NIV) and Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV) as gifts of service, teaching, encouragement, contributing, leadership and mercy. Spiritual gifts are given to man to build up the church. They are not put into effect by man's own strength. Thus, spiritual gifts do not originate with man, but with the Holy Spirit. We error when divine gifts are used to bring to glory man rather than God.

The Bible states that those with prophecy hear the words of God revealed through thoughts, visions, dreams and scriptures. People gifted with prophecy speak the words of God. The Spirit of Truth guides them into all truth and reveals what is yet to come. (2 Peter 1:21; John 14:26 and 16:13 NIV) A true prophet turns people from their evil ways. Their prophecies warn, instruct or lead people to repentance to glorify the Lord.

God spoke primarily through prophets in the Old Testament. Many of their prophecies are being fulfilled today. There were, however, prophets among them who did not have the word of the Lord (such as Hananiah, Balaam and Simon), just as there are false prophets among us today. In fact, Matthew 7:15 warns us to be alert and watchful for false teachers and prophets. These ungodly people come into the church and introduce destructive heresies. They appear to be part of the group so they are dressed in sheep's clothing, but inside they are wolves. They mislead well-meaning Christians. Their purpose is deception. (Matt 24:11) This is in accordance with the work of darkness. Satan imitates the gifts of the Spirit. Likewise, false teachers and prophets masquerade as messengers of God.

For this reason the Bible instructs us not to believe every spirit. We must test everything, holding on to the good and avoiding the evil. The key is to know the word of God so well that a false messenger is immediately recognized.

## Wolf in Sheep's Clothing continues...

The Bible describes the characteristics of false prophets as such:

- speak from the world's perspective, appealing to the flesh
- carouse in broad daylight
- seduce the unstable
- continually sin
- commit adultery
- lovers of money (greed)
- use their power unjustly
- prophesy lies
- distort the words of God by their own words
- bold and arrogant
- speak dreams and visions that they imagine

(The above list can be found in the following scriptures: 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; Jeremiah 29:8; Jeremiah 23:10, 36; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:2-18; Matthew 7:15, 1John 4:5.)

The prophet Jeremiah says in chapter 23:15 and 22, "If they had stood in my council they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds." False prophets and teachers bring the truth into disrepute. (2 Peter 2:1; Jeremiah 23:31; 16-17) Instead of warning, encouraging or instructing according to God's word their prophecies lead people astray and give false hopes. When the prophecies proclaimed do not come true, you will know that he or she has not spoken the words of God. (Deut. 18:21-22) Likewise, anyone who does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the son of God, is not of God.

My fellow believers, the enemy wants to lead the whole world astray. I thank God for the Holy Spirit who guides us in all truth, teaches us and directs our paths. As you spend time in the word of God, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Observe and listen closely to what is being proclaimed. Part of the truth mixed in with a little lie is not truth. The whole truth is the truth. Satan is an imitator of light. He subtly mixes the truth with lies so those who do not know the Bible will fall for the deception. False prophets and teachers do the same, and like the devil they seek the glory for themselves. They want recognition for the work of the Lord. Thus, it is paramount to remember that we are followers of Christ, not man. God uses people; however, all the glory goes to God alone. He will not share His glory with another.

You will know a tree by its fruit. Look for the evidence of righteousness and holiness. Titus notes the character of leadership as a husband who is married to one wife, self controlled, hospitable, gentle and respectable; one who is neither given to drunkenness nor dishonest gain. (1Timothy 3; Titus 3 and 4) Thus, when you see the evidence of false prophets according to scripture, do not believe or follow them. They have already been judged. According to the Bible, their followers will be punished along with them. We have the truth in God's word. Make note so that you are not deceived by a wolf masquerading in sheep's clothing.

I pray that God will give you discernment and a humble, teachable spirit towards His word. I pray that He fills you with knowledge and wisdom so that you may overcome the schemes of the enemy. To the glory of His name.

### Additional scriptures:

1 Kings 13:33-34

Ezekiel 13:2-7, 17-23

2 Peter 2-1

Jeremiah 23:9-18

Matthew 24:24

1 John 4:5