

## 5. Understanding the Character of False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the judgment that will come on those who are false teachers. We saw that false teachers will be judged just as the fallen angels will be judged. In our topic today, we are going to learn more about the character of false teachers. The lives of such false teachers are controlled by their sinful desires because they have chosen to reject Christ and teach their own false ideas instead.

In 2 Peter 2:12-13a, we read, “But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, *and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, *as* those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.” Here, we see a very interesting description of false teachers as Peter compares them to natural brute beasts. The word translated “natural” means *they follow their natural sinful instincts*. The word translated “brute” means *totally lacking in reason*. “Beasts” means that *they think and act like animals*.

Jude gives a similar description when he says in Jude 1:10, “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.” False teachers speak with boldness about things that they do not even understand. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 we read, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Here, we see that false teachers cannot understand spiritual truth because the things of God are foolishness to them due to their lack of spiritual understanding. The fact that they do not know God is the reason why they are facing eternal destruction.

We see that such false teachers will utterly perish in their own corruption. The word translated “shall utterly perish” means *to be corrupted or depraved in the mind*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 3:6-8, where we read, “For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith.” Here, the word is translated corrupt while Peter says such teachers will perish in their own corruption.

Peter goes on to say that they will receive the wages of unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 says, “And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” These verses talk about those who will be deceived by the antichrist who will perform signs and lying wonders through the power of Satan. As a result, we see that those who practice unrighteousness are still following Satan and will share in his eternal judgment.

Normally, people who practice evil want to do what they do in the darkness so that others will not

see them. 1 Thessalonians 5:7 says, “For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.” Here, we see that false teachers become so bold that they begin to carry out their sinful living in the daytime. 2 Peter 2:13b and 14 say, “*They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.*” The word translated “spots” means *moral blemishes*. The word translated “blemishes” speaks of people that are a disgrace to society. In contrast, the only other place “spot” is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 5:27, where we read, “That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Here, we see that Christ will present the church to Himself without spot or blemish.

False teachers carouse in their own deceptions. The word translated “carouse” means *to live in luxury*. At the same time, they think that they are able to deceive others because they even join Christians for love-feasts and the communion services that are a part of such love-feasts. Here, we see that false teachers do everything possible to make it look like their teachings are not false. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says, “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” False teachers say and do the things they do because they are really following Satan.

We read that a common characteristic of false teachers is that they have eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin. Matthew 5:28 says, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” In addition to using their false teachings for self-gain, here, we see that their desire is to also fulfill other sinful lusts of their hearts. In order to fulfill their sinful desires, we see that they entice unstable souls. Here, we see that false teachers will particularly try to deceive new or immature Christians. Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” The word that is translated “children” in this verse is a young child (toddler) that does not yet have the ability to speak clearly. This verse says that such individuals can be easily deceived by the trickery of men (especially false teachers).

Seeking financial self-gain is also a common characteristic of false teachers as we see that they have a heart trained in covetous practices. The word translated “trained” means *to exercise either the body or the mind vigorously*. The word translated “covetous practices” means *a greedy desire to have more*. This word was used in verse three of this chapter where we read, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” Here, we see that false teachers have trained their minds so that they can get unstable Christians to give money or possessions to them. As a result, God says that false teachers are accursed children. This is why they look for weak or unstable Christians.

Peter went on to give an Old Testament illustration of such a false teacher who was greedy for

money. 2 Peter 2:15-17 says, “They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Balak offered Balaam a large amount of money if he would curse the people of Israel. God told Balaam he was not to curse Israel. Then, Balak offered even more money and honor. Hoping to get the money, Balaam went with the second group of men even though God said he was not to curse Israel.

Three times, the Lord caused the donkey to try to turn aside. The third time, Numbers 22:26-31 says, “Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?’ And Balaam said to the donkey, ‘Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!’ So the donkey said to Balaam, ‘*Am* I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since *I became* yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?’ And he said, ‘No.’ Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.” Here, we see God spoke to Balaam through a donkey. Later Balaam told Balak another way to destroy Israel. As a result, Numbers 31:8 says, “They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of* those who were killed--Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.” Here, we see that God allowed Balaam to be killed with the kings of Midian for trying to destroy Israel.

Then, Peter used two word pictures to describe false teachers. Peter said they were like wells without water or clouds carried by a tempest. In Israel, and the surrounding nations, there is often a shortage of water. As a result, Peter said that false teachers are like wells without water. They promise much, but provide nothing. He also said that they are like dry clouds blown by a storm. Instead of providing rain to water and cool the land, such clouds only cause the heat to increase.

As we understand what the character of false teachers is like we see why it is important to help our physical and spiritual children learn to protect themselves from false teachers. We also want to help them know how to warn weak and immature Christians to protect them from false teachers. Otherwise such false teachers will deceive immature Christians and take advantage of them for self-gain. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the sinful and deceptive character of false teachers.