

The Profile and Peril of False Teachers

2 Peter 2:1-10

I want to start this message off with a doctrinal pop quiz. I will read some doctrinal statements and you tell me if they sound orthodox or not. These are all from the same organization.

- We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
- We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul-We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.
- We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance;
- We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved...
- We believe the Bible to be the word of God

Don't these all sound like statements which support sound doctrine? The problem is that I have not given you the full statements. For example, in its entirety, the last statement reads: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."¹ This is part of the doctrine of the Mormon Church but if you read it selectively, and in many cases redefine key words, you might be fooled into thinking this is orthodox Christianity, which is the very thing they want you to believe.

Let's try another one and this time I won't alter the statement in any way.

- Man did not evolve but was created
- Human death is due to Adam's sin

- The Bible as the Word of God; its 66 books are inspired and historically accurate.
- Christ set example that must be followed in serving God
- Obey human laws that do not conflict with God's laws
- A Christian should keep separate from world
- Christ's one sacrifice was sufficient
- There is only one road to life
- Wicked will be eternally destroyed
- We are now in the 'time of the end'

So far so good, wouldn't you say? I would not have any problem agreeing with all of these statements. I did not later any of the statements but I did not include them all either. Try this one out for size.

- Christ is God's Son and is inferior to Him²

Any guesses as to which group I am reading from? These are the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses from their own website. I had my first visit from a Jehovah's Witness about two weeks ago. I think they have come to the door when I have been gone but this was the first time they came when I was home. I surprised the poor guy because before I opened the door I saw him flipping through his notebook and I saw copies of the watchtower magazine. I interrupted his prepared speech and told him I knew he was a JW.

My point is that far too many Christians don't know what they believe and equally important, why they believe it. This is vitally important because false teachers are on the prowl seeking to destroy you. This is the theme of Peter's second letter and it becomes very clear and the start of the second chapter.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

We know that false teachers exist but first we need to know who they are. According to Peter, here is a basic profile of the false teachers in his day, which I think still holds true today.

1. Secret
2. Destructive
3. Popular

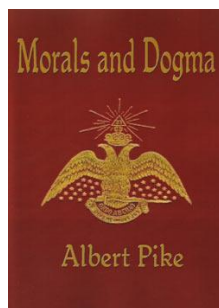
1. Secret—*who will secretly bring in destructive heresies*

The number one goal of spies and double agents is secrecy—and so it is with false teachers. If they boldly announced who they were and what they were doing, most people would never be taken in by their false teaching. The key to their plan is the element of secrecy. They present themselves one way up front but behind the scenes they are something else. A good example of this is the Masons. They appear to be just another civic organization who helps the community but at the highest levels they are Satan worshippers. The higher you go in the lodge the more secretive it becomes. It is a false religion of the highest order.

2. Destructive

The second characteristic of a false teacher is that they have destructive teaching. That may seem redundant at first but we need to recognize that false teaching is not just different from sound doctrine in the Scriptures, it is downright destructive. Peter says that such false teachers even go so far as *denying the Master who bought them*. But this raises a question—How can a false teacher outright deny Jesus Christ while luring away unsuspecting Christians to their false teaching? If it were really that obvious, it would seem that no one would follow them, right? Don't forget that Peter said that these people *will secretly bring in destructive heresies*. Ultimately, they deny Christ but they do it secretly. Again, the Masons are a perfect example.

Listen to this quote from Albert Pike a famous 33rd degree Mason. This is from Pike's book, *Morals and Dogma*, which is the closest thing there is to a Masonic Bible.



To deliver the soul, captive in darkness, the Principle of Light, or Genius of the Sun, charged to redeem the Intellectual World, of which he is the type, came to manifest Himself among men. Light appeared in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not; according to the words of St. John. The Light could not unite with the darkness. It but put on the appearance of a human body, and took the name of Christ in the Messiah, only to accommodate itself to the language of the Jews.³

There are a few things to notice about this quote. First, it was taken from Pike's book called "Morals and Dogma" which means that the Masonic Lodge truly is a religion, which many Masons have admitted.

Second, they weave Scripture into their teaching which appears to lend credibility to their words. Here Pike quotes directly from John 1:5. The doctrinal statements that I showed you earlier from the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses both contain a large number of Scriptural references.

Third, even though Pike is referring to the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ, he also merged it with mystical and pagan ideas, giving Jesus the title of "Principle of Light" and "Genius of the Sun".

Fourth, this famous Mason clearly stated that Jesus only “put on the appearance of a human body.” Later in the same paragraph, Pike wrote, “Still He suffered in appearance only, and His death gave to all souls the symbol of their enfranchisement.” This is a classic case of “denying the Master who bought them.”

If that is not enough evidence for you, listen to this quote from the same book.

There is in nature one most potent force, by means whereof single man, who could possess himself of it, and should know how to direct it, could revolutionize and change the face of the world.



This force was known to the ancients. It is a universal age whose supreme law is equilibrium; and whereby, if science can but learn how to control it, it will be possible to change the order of the Seasons, to produce in night the phenomena of day, to send a thought in an instant round the world, to heal or slay at a distance, to give our words universal success, a make them reverberate everywhere.

This agent, was adored in the secret rites of the Sabbat or the Temple, under the hieroglyphic figure of Baphomet or the goat of Mendes.

This “goat of Mendes” is an obvious symbol for Satan and Pike taught that everyone should tap into this source of power. But if you asked the average Mason if they are Satan worshippers, they would be offended because this is often hidden from them (even though it was not at all difficult for me to find!)

3. Popular

The third characteristic of false teachers is that they are popular. Peter wrote that *many will follow their sensuality*. Just how many people will be led astray by false teaching? In the world today we could estimate that there are at least five billion people that are following some kind of false teaching. Wouldn't you classify five billion as “many”? But remember that Peter is writing this letter to the church. In the first chapter he addressed this letter to the following recipients.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours
by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter is clearly writing to believers within the church yet he warns even them that *many will follow their sensuality*. Peter was concerned that some of his readers could be led astray by these false teachers. This is why every believer needs to know what they believe and why they believe it.

Most of you have probably heard the illustration of comparing the truth to a counterfeit bill—that the best way to spot a counterfeit is to know the real thing extremely well. We experienced something like this at our house last week. One of Ryan's friends had dropped a pair of underwear on our garage floor. The boys were just pulling out in the car when Karen discovered

this so she grabbed a dustpan, scooped up the underwear and ran out to the car to give it to the boys.

The story got weirder when Kellyn posted the story in facebook and Karen joined in on this. Frankly, I was a little surprised by this since Karen tend to frown on facebook posts like this. Last year Ryan and I posted something that was a little debatable and Karen was adamant that we had made a poor decision. We were sitting at the kitchen table and in a very serious voice, Karen looked at Ryan and I and said, “Do you know what your problem is? You both value humor over good judgment.” Ryan and I looked at each other with a smirk and a look that said, “Well of course we do—what else?!”

Anyway, other people picked up on this story and one person posted a question for Karen wondering how she know this was a foreign piece of underwear. Karen replied that she knew it wasn't from our family because after doing everyone's laundry for so many years, she instantly recognized a counterfeit from the real thing! ☺

It's a crazy story but it makes the same pint as the counterfeit bill. Every believer should know what they believe and why they believe it so well that they can instantly recognize a false teaching disguised as the truth.

Even though these false teachers intend to cause great harm, Peter wanted his readers to be encouraged with the knowledge that these false teachers and purveyors of greed and evil would not go unpunished. Peter made mention of three of the most famous cases of judgment in Old Testament history to make his point. These represent the peril of false teachers.

1. if God did not spare angels when they sinned

The fall of Satan and the angels who followed him is a fascinating subject in Scripture. There is lots and lots of descriptions of the devil and his angels, especially surrounding the ministry of Jesus in the gospels, but here is not one place where the whole story is told in unambiguous detail. Most scholars think that Isaiah 14 described the fall of Satan.

*“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star (Lucifer), son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!
13 You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’
15 But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.*

Peter matter of factly stated that the angels did sin and deserved to be cast into hell and gloomy darkness. When Moses wrote Genesis chapter three, the serpent suddenly appeared to lead Adam and Eve into disobedience without ever explaining how or when he got there. We don't know all there is to know about demons but we do know enough. They are our mortal enemy, Jesus has won the victory and they are being held for punishment.

2. if he did not spare the ancient world (water)

Next Peter made a brief mention of the worldwide flood described in Genesis chapters six through nine. Until the great tribulation and final judgments, the flood will remain as the single greatest judgment upon mankind. In terms of the total number of people to be judged, the flood is a smaller judgment but in terms of percentage of people judged, there will never be an equal.

But in this judgment, we are reminded of God’s provision in the midst of judgment—but *preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.* The flood was not just a picture of judgment but also of salvation. The ark is a type of Christ. If you are “in Christ” you are saved. This is true for all of these judgments. There is always a way of escape. But if you are not “in Christ,” then you will be swept away by these same judgments.

3. if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction (heat)⁴

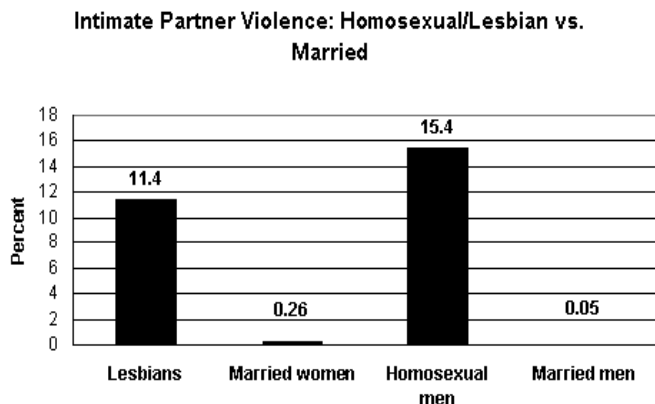
Peter paired together the twin judgments of the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah just as Jesus did. In Luke 17.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:16-19)

You can really see the depravity of the people in verse ten—*those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion.* The literal translation of this verse is “going after flesh in a passionate longing for defilement.”⁵ These people want to be defiled. They long for it and passionately seek after it.

This leads to the first application of this passage—**sin is its own punishment, but not the only form of judgment.** For example, gay marriage is back in the news thanks to President Obama. We have all heard statistics about gay men and the prevalence of AIDS. A gay newspaper reported that “Gay and bisexual men account for half of new HIV infections in the U.S. and have AIDS at a rate more than **50 times greater** than other groups, according to Centers for Disease Control & Prevention data”⁶



But we don’t often hear about the effect on homosexual women. Here is a chart which shows that lesbian women are battered by their partners at a rate almost 44 times that of married women.⁷ That works out to a 4,380% increase!⁸ Can you imagine if a person was 4,380% more likely to get cancer by engaging in a certain behavior? Sadly, many would still participate in such a behavior if it brought them some sort of pleasure.

Sin is its own form of punishment, but it is

not the only form of punishment because...

Justice will prevail in the end. Not all sin seems to have its own form of punishment. Very often, the wicked seem to prosper. In fact, this is what Psalm 73 is all about. Listen to the struggles of the writer.

- ¹ Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.
- ² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.
- ³ For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- ⁴ They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.
- ⁵ They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.
- ⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.
- ⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression.
- ⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.
- ¹⁰ Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.
- ¹¹ They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?"
- ¹² This is what the wicked are like— always carefree, they increase in wealth.
- ¹³ Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.
- ¹⁴ All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.
- ¹⁵ If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children.
- ¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me
- ¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.
- ¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.
- ¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!

You can feel the inner turmoil of the psalmist as he considered the apparent prosperity of the wicked. But the key to his understanding came when he "entered the sanctuary of God." If we look at our circumstances around us, we will despair. If we look at others, we will compare ourselves with them and grow discontented, angry, sullen and ungrateful. But when we enter the sanctuary of God and see things the way they really are. We know that God rescues godly men and women from trials and keeps the unrighteous for the day of judgment.



However, certainty of this judgment must never cause the opposite reaction which would be to gloat over their destruction. The third application is that we can love our enemies precisely because justice will be accomplished. We cannot and must not allow hate to arise within us toward the unrighteous. It is good and even necessary to hate the things they do but we must not hate the people who do them.

A great example of this is Kim Phuc, who became immortalized in this Pulitzer Prize winning photo from the Vietnam War. Just

before this photo was taken, Phuc was burned by a napalm bomb which burns at 800 degrees and burned the clothes off of her and left third degree burns over 30% of her body. After she endured this great suffering the Communist government in Vietnam realized that Phuc would be a powerful symbol for the nation so they used her by trotting her out before the media for many years.

In 1982, Phuc picked up a Bible, began to read and was soon radically converted. Here are a few quotes of hers.

“My situation did not change one bit, but my heart was filled with joy!”

Her life verse became Psalm 118:17, “I shall not die, but live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.”

“Before we can give hope we have to learn to forgive.”

Rich Maurer
June 3, 2012

¹ <http://mormon.org/articles-of-faith?gclid=CNj76fTOo7ACFYje4AodcSzeVw>

² <http://www.watchtower.org/e/jt/index.htm>

³ http://www.benpadiah.com/otherstuff/elib/religious/AlbertPike_MoralsAndDogma.pdf

⁴ Sodom and Gomorrah were already wicked places when Lot chose to live there.

Genesis 13:11-13 *So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.*

⁵ Moo, D. J. (1996). *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter, Jude* (107). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁶ Dyana Bagby, “Gay, bi men 50 times more likely to have HIV: CDC reports hard data at National HIV Prevention Conference,” *Washington Blade*, August 28, 2009.

⁷ “Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence,” *U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs*: 30; “Intimate Partner Violence,” *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report*:11.

⁸ Gay men experience intimate partner violence at a rate of 30,800%