

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

Matthew first presents Christ’s legal right to the throne by way of His genealogy, etc. Then in fulfillment of prophecy the forerunner John the Baptist came on the scene preparing the way for the Lord by calling the people to repentance and then introducing Jesus to the nation. Then Jesus proved His moral right to the throne by resisting temptation and exhibiting His kingdom resume by performing kingdom miracles.

This brings us to the unit of Matthew 5-7 which is commonly called “The Sermon on the Mount”. This is called “The Greatest Sermon Ever Given”. In Matthew 3 John the Baptist called for repentance; in chapter 4 Christ called for repentance. Then in Matt. 5-7 Jesus explains how those truly repentant should now live.

All the way through this sermon Christ is contrasting the hypocritical outward/legalistic righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees with that of authentic “kingdom righteousness” which is the fruit of a repentant heart which is demonstrated in the life. The key verse that presents the contrast that is developed in the sermon is found in Matt. 5:20.

Slide # 2

Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)

20 For I say to you, that unless **your righteousness** exceeds the **righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

We are not saved by righteous living, but if we are truly repentant and have true faith then the fruit of it will be a kingdom standard of righteousness as taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. None of us live out this kingdom standard perfectly but there will be some level of kingdom fruit in the lives of those who are truly kingdom citizens – which is a KEY point Christ makes in our study today.

As Christ was preaching evidently quite a large number of people had gathered and heard what He was saying (cf. Mt. 7:24, 26, 28). Jesus has been addressing the standard of kingdom living expected out of His people. But now at the end of the sermon which formally concludes at 7:12, Christ brings forth a FOUR-FOLD warning and challenge. The greatest sermon ever given demands a RESPONSE. Would people repent and align with the kingdom truth being taught by Christ or would they not?

Slide # 3

Matt. 7:13-27 – FOUR WARNINGS

- Two ways (vv. 13-14).
- **Two trees (vv. 15-20).**
- Two professions (vv. 21-23).
- Two builders (vv. 24-27).

Last time in Matt. 7:13-14 we saw Christ saying there are two gates, two ways, and two destinies.

Slide # 4

Matt. 7:13-14

Narrow Gate v. Wide Gate
 Difficult Way v. Broad Way
 Life v. Destruction

Building on this we now come to Christ's second warning/challenge in Matt. 7:15-20.

Matthew 7:15–20 (NKJV)

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Christ here warns of false prophets who come to deceive you with a harmful self-agenda!

The word “Beware” (Gk. prosechete) is a present imperative indicating it is an ongoing command. To beware means to be alert to this danger – to watch out for these people because they are dangerous. To beware means to constantly be on guard. You cannot let your guard down because of the danger involved.

Earlier in the chapter Christ said not to judge, but we noted in context the emphasis is not to judge hypocritically. Christ certainly did not mean we are not to be discerning. In fact, in that same context in Matt. 7:6 Jesus said not to give what is holy to dogs nor to cast our pearls before swine, which as we noted requires a form of “judgment” or “discernment.”

In like manner now in verse 15 Christ says to watch out for false prophets. This too requires making a judgment call. False prophets and false teachers have consistently been a stumbling block for many people down through the ages. They are key instruments the devil uses in spiritual warfare. You don't have to go far or wait long for them to show up. The devil is very active and aggressive in using these agents of his.

One of the KEY issues and really the first one Christ brought up in relation to the last days will be the prevalence of false prophets. This is a MAJOR concern.

Slide # 5

Matthew 24:4 (NKJV)

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "**Take heed that no one deceives you.**

Matthew 24:24 (NKJV)

24 For **false christs and false prophets** will rise and show great signs and wonders **to deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

As we get closer to the end the issue of DECEPTION will become more and more pronounced which will then climax in the time of ultimate deception under the Antichrist.

Slide # 6

2 Timothy 3:13 (NKJV)

13 But **evil men and impostors** will **grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

We have been warned! Christ warned us! There are true prophets and there are false prophets. Actually, there are only false prophets on the scene today, because the true prophets have fulfilled their purpose in giving us the revelation of God and then passed off the scene of history.

The true prophets were the contemporaries of the apostles but when they finished giving us the NT Scriptures their job was done. There are no more legitimate prophets today. However, there are many who still claim to be prophets – but in truth they are all FALSE PROPHETS.

Biblically, a prophet is one who speaks for God. They have new revelation from God. They come proclaiming, "Thus saith the Lord" with authority because God has given them this message. However, to claim to speak for God when in fact you do not is a really serious error!

The true New Testament prophets were contemporaries of the apostles and they gave us the revelational foundation called the New Testament Scriptures. The ministry of the apostles and their associates the prophets was "revelatory" and "foundational".

Slide # 7

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

20 [The Church] having been built on the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Ephesians 3:5 (NKJV)

5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:**

You only lay a foundation ONCE and then you build the rest of the superstructure upon it. The apostles and prophets gave us the foundation of the NT Scriptures on which the Church is built. We have no more revelation being given. The foundation is complete. The Scriptures are complete. There are no more legitimate prophets – but there are plenty of false ones.

Slide # 8**2 Peter 2:1 (NKJV)**

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.

It's like Peter doesn't even legitimize the role of future prophets instead calling them "false teachers" who will come in the future. Back in the day of the apostles there were legit true prophets and, on the scene there were also false prophets. But now that revelation is complete, there are only teachers. Some are true teachers, and some are false teachers. This in effect, is what Peter anticipates saying, "there will be false teachers among you" not even giving any credence whatsoever to the idea of future prophets.

True prophets truly spoke for God and represented God's interests and the good of the people. In contrast false prophets claimed to be true but in actuality had a self-agenda that came at the expense of the people.

Jeremiah 22 and 23 at great length addresses the serious error of false prophets and God says of them that they, "prophecy lies in My name" and they are "prophets of the deceit of their own heart" (Jer. 23:25-26). Their message was not from God, but rather came from their own deceitful heart!

There is a close link here between false prophets and the broad way that leads to destruction in preceding context of Matt. 7:13-14.

In the immediate context of the Sermon on the Mount it would certainly seem that “false prophets” has application to the false teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. All the way through they are in view in terms of the error of their teaching and their ways.

Three times in Matt. 16 Christ references the “leaven” of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which is shown to be their BAD doctrine (cf. Mt. 16:6, 11, 12). In Matt. 23:13-33 Christ pronounced 8 woes upon the scribes and Pharisees. He calls them “hypocrites” 7 times, “blind guides” twice, fools three times, blind men three times, as well as whitewashed tombs, serpents, and a brood of vipers. He really came down on them!

In Matt. 23:13 Christ rebuked them for hindering people from entering the kingdom. In verse 23 He rebuked them for legalistic nit-picking while at the same time neglecting the “**weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.**” And then in verse 33 He said to them, “**How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**”.

Therefore it is not hard to see how the warning about false prophets would have application to them – especially since they supremely claimed to be THE representatives of God.

However, while it certainly applies to the scribes and Pharisees it is a general principle that has wide application related to all “false prophets” who would come with deceitful intent.

Notice how these “false prophets” come. They don’t come with pitch forks in hand. They don’t come off “mean-spirited” or demeaning. No, not at all! Rather they come off genuine as one of the sheep. That is they come off as true Christians who are true followers of Christ. This is what makes them so dangerous!

And they come in contrast to being sent. These are self-made prophets who come on their own accord with their own agenda. God didn’t send them.

Slide # 9

God takes His truth seriously, and in a confused generation that is totally convinced of any person’s right to promote any opinion, the warning here is critical. ...The contemporary church has lost the sense of God’s sending teachers, and – as any Christian bookstore demonstrates – many have taken to themselves the right to teach their own opinion of God’s truth. – **Ed Glasscock**

These people intentionally come to deceive. They come dressed to deceive. They are pretenders. They pretend to be “sheep” which is to say God’s people. They claim to be followers of Christ. They know the Christian culture, they know the language, they know how to play the part well. And it looks good. They initially look credible on the surface.

But here is the problem, while having on sheep’s clothing (outward appearance) inwardly they are ravenous wolves. They have an inward problem – a heart problem. The problem is what makes them tick as far as motives. Now we have seen in the “thou shalt not judge” section that ultimate judgment of motives belongs to God.

However, Jesus is about to tell us that while God alone is the final JUDGE we are to be fruit inspectors. In fact, we are COMMANDED to BEWARE – that is to be on the lookout for these ravenous wolves. We are to be constantly alert. And I have learned from experience that if you just overlook things it will come back to bite you – BIG TIME!

Wolves are known for being ferocious and merciless when it comes to prey. Wolves care about one thing – getting what they want and they don’t care about the destruction they cause in the process. Wolves have a total SELF-AGENDA and they exploit the flock to that end.

The Greek word (harpax) translated as “ravenous” is also translated other places as “swindler” or “extortioner” (cf. Lk. 18:11; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:10). Ravenous “wolves” take advantage of vulnerable people for self-serving reasons.

Slide # 10

2 Peter 2:1–3 (NKJV)

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.

2 And **many will follow** their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 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.

The ***Didache*** is one of the earliest Christian writings after the days of the apostles. It presents sort of a manual on Christian living.

It warns of false prophets. It describes them as being “Christ merchants”. In other words, they are those who are trying to make a profit off of Christ. They are all about “marketing Christ”.

Slide # 11

Didache – Marks of False Prophets

- 1) Seek to remain as a house guest for more than two days.
- 2) Ask for money.
- 3) Lives contrary to the standards he preaches.
- 4) Not willing to work.

False prophets and false teachers descended on the Church early – essentially right from the beginning. The N.T. Scriptures are full of warning and exhortation about this problem showing that the warning of Jesus is ever relevant (cf. Acts 20:29; 2 Cor. 11:11-15; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 17-22; 1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:1-6).

Slide # 12

Acts 20:29–31 (NKJV)

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**, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Paul was passionate about watching and warning concerning the onslaught of false teachers both from the outside and from the inside. These people have a total self-agenda but they come off so legit. They fool many people which makes it really hard for those with discernment who try to warn the flock. Often those warning and raising a RED flag are considered to be the bad guy by the undiscerning.

Slide # 13



Slide # 14

Remember what Christ taught us: It is the hireling who sees the wolf coming and refuses to protect the flock. It is the spirit of the true shepherd to protect the flock at all costs (cf. Jn. 10:11-14). Of course, Christ ALONE is the ultimate good shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep.

But faithful “undershepherds” are not in it for the money, but rather for the health, well-being, and good of the flock. The false prophets cry “peace, peace” when there is no peace (Jer. 8:11). They cry all is well when they should be calling for repentance. They cry for prosperity when they should call for brokenness!

Exactly what these false prophets will teach is not stated but the flow of the Sermon on the Mount and the immediate context suggests that they will not acknowledge nor teach the narrow gate nor the difficult way of persecution that goes with it. They want the EASY way that promises your best life now – that is all about self-fulfillment – that caters to their own desires (cf. 2 Tim. 4:3-4). This is what so much of popular Christianity is all about!

Slide # 15

2 Timothy 4:3–4 (NKJV)

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

False prophets prevent others from entering the narrow gate because they beckon people to the broad gate.

– *The Moody Bible Commentary*

Wherever the stern demands of true discipleship are taught, there are false prophets who advocate the wide gate and easy way.

– *William MacDonald*

This is my issue with the “Lordless Gospel” or what is often dubbed “Easy Believism”. It caters to the flesh that says you can have Christ and live anyway you want to live. That is a false gospel. If the gospel doesn’t change you from the inside out that is a false gospel. This is in keeping with the message of false prophets who promote the “broad easy way”.

Slide # 16

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because **many false prophets** have gone out into the world.

Slide # 17

Luke 6:26 (NKJV)

26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Do you want to be popular, or do you want to be faithful? It is generally the larger churches that hold to a watered-down message (there are exceptions). It is generally the false teachers who have the largest crowds and are the most popular. “BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS”. They come disguised. They come garnering acceptance, but they have hidden ravenous motives that seek to EXPLOIT people. They are in it for what they can get out of it for SELF!

16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

We leave final judgment up to God as God alone is the final JUDGE. But we are to be “fruit-inspectors”. Christ said we will know “false prophets” by their fruits! This is how we know them. Fruits are not merely what one says or what one does in isolation, but rather the whole BIG picture of what one says and does as an ongoing lifestyle pattern.

Those that are good players can play the game really well for a time. Recall that player called Judas. False prophets might fool most people for a time, but true character does come out in the crucible of life over time. This is what Jesus is saying, “Watch their lifestyle over time.” What they are really about will come out.

This is one reason the Church is not to put a man into the position of elder if he is a novice. He is to be proven over time. It is for this reason Paul exhorts to not “lay hands on anyone hastily” (1 Tim. 5:22). Deacons before they are appointed to serve in this office are first to be “tested” (1 Tim. 3:10). People are known by the fruits of their life whether it be good or bad.

Fruit is what a tree produces. Metaphorically it represents what comes out in the life. Does the life bring forth Christ-centered fruit or does it reveal self-centered fruit. Who or what is the person living for?

The thing about fruit is that you can’t tell overnight what kind of fruit is going to be brought forth. It takes time for a tree to produce fruit. This is known clearly over time. When someone wants to be a teacher – give it some time. Go slow. Watch for what kind of fruit is brought forth.

Living according to kingdom norms can be feigned for a time, but what one is will eventually reveal itself in what one does.

– **D.A. Carson**

As you study the N.T. there are really three areas of “fruit-inspection” that are to be applied. We are concerned with a person’s character, their creed, and their conduct. These three should align with kingdom values in a consistent manner – not perfectly, but consistently.

Slide # 18

A. Character (Self-Oriented – Problem with Authority)

1 Timothy 6:3–5 (NKJV)

3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does **not consent to wholesome words**, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which **accords with godliness**,

4 he is **proud**, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with **disputes and arguments** over words, from which come **envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions**,

5 useless **wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth**, who **suppose that godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself.

Paul in 1 Tim. 3:2-7 gives 15 specific qualifications that are necessary for one to serve as an elder/overseer. Most all of them are essentially matters of character. What is their character like when no one is watching!

Slide # 19**B. Creed****Romans 16:17–18 (NKJV)**

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who **cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine** which you learned, and avoid them.

18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Slide # 20**C. Conduct****2 Peter 2:12–14 (NKJV)**

12 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,

13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it **pleasure to carouse** in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, **carousing** in their own deceptions while they feast with you,

14 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.

Of course there is overlap here between character, creed, and conduct. They go together. But Christ's point is what one really is by NATURE will come out. It will show in the fruits of their life be it in character, creed, or conduct or some combination of the three.

Christ asks the rhetorical question: ***“Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?”*** The answer is of course not!

Slide # 21 – Thornbush v. Grapevine

Slide # 22 – Fig Tree v. Thistles

If you plant grapes, thorns, figs, or thistles the reality of its nature will be seen in the fruit. And so it is in the life as well. Our real nature is seen in the fruit borne in the life. Fruit doesn't lie!

Slide # 23**2 Peter 2:20–22 (NKJV)**

20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the **knowledge** of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

21 For it would have been **better for them not to have known** the way of righteousness, than having known it, **to turn** from the holy commandment delivered to them.

22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "**A dog** returns to his own vomit," and, "**a sow**, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

These people have known the truth. They have the knowledge of Christ as Lord and Savior and yet in the end they turn from the truth. They may have even made a profession, but it wasn't real, and their real nature comes out as they go along. Domesticate your dog all you want it still remains a dog. Wash the sow and clean her up real good for the fair but the pig still retains the nature of a pig. And this is Christ's point! The nature of a person will reveal itself in the life. People are thus known by their fruits.

17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

The nature of the tree is seen in its fruit. Good trees bear good fruit while bad trees invariably bear bad fruit.

In other words, true Christians bear Christian fruit while non-Christians may play the game for a while but eventually it comes out in their BAD fruit that they are not real Christians. Their real nature comes out.

The fruit of true Christians is seen in the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:9; Gal. 5:22-23). It is seen in the reality of Christ in the life – certainly to some degree.

Slide # 24

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV)

5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that **Jesus Christ is in you?**—unless indeed you are disqualified.

If Christ is not seen in the life, it is evidence the person is not a true Christian. If a person shows no interest in Christ, never talks about Christ, has no desire for worship or learning about Christ, they are just fooling themselves. Christ in a person changes their whole orientation to where Christ is their life.

The Pharisees knew a lot about God’s Word. They were skilled in the finer points, but their life was not really about God. Instead of God-likeness self-centered legalism defined them. Instead of caring about people they were judgmental, self-righteous, hypocritical, and harsh. They did not know God and it showed!

Note how certain Christ is in stating this: **“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.”** The fruit in the life will absolutely be consistent with the kind of person they really are. Those that are truly regenerate – truly born again will bring forth good fruit. Now indeed, as Christ taught elsewhere there are differing degrees of fruit bearing– some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some a hundredfold (cf. Mt. 13:8). But the point is they all bring forth good fruit to some degree.

In contrast those who are unregenerate do not bring forth any real good fruit – it is all just an act that really plays to a self-serving agenda.

Everything in nature produces after its kind, and this is also true in the spiritual realm. – **Warren Wiersbe**

If a person’s profession of faith has not changed their life in a Christ-oriented way, then in truth they are not a Christian. The fruit tells!

No one is saved BY good works, but every true believer is saved FOR good works.

Slide # 25

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NKJV)

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John the Baptist seeking the ritual of water baptism, John told them to go and “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Mt. 3:8). Their manner of living exposed their false profession of claiming to know and love God.

The apostle Paul said that in obedience to his gospel mission mandate given to him by the Lord that he preached everywhere that people “***should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.***” (Acts 26:20). You see if people are truly repentant the expectation is that it will show in good fruits in the life. That is in keeping with true repentance.

Faith is the root – good works are the fruit! And where the root is good so will be the fruit!

19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Bearing no good fruit is a picture of the unregenerate life. Where there is no good fruit, the tree is cut down and thrown into the fire. In context it would seem this refers ultimately to hell fire. In Matt. 3:10 John the Baptist used this same language in warning the Pharisees and Sadducees concerning the need for true repentance.

Jesus in the next few verses goes on to speak of mere professors to whom He will say, “I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Mt. 7:21-23).

The only thing bad trees are good for is firewood, a striking metaphor of the future judgment for false prophets. – ***ESV Study Bible***

20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Satan is a master deceiver. It's what he does best. And he is constantly trying to infiltrate the followers of Christ with false prophets and false teachers who can inflict damage as they seek to carry out their SELF agenda!

Slide # 26

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 (NKJV)

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Satan and his agents are very deceptive. They make themselves look like ministers of righteousness who really stand for what is right. They can appear so convincing which is what makes them so effective.

But if you look carefully – if you are a discerning “fruit inspector” you will know them by their fruits. Their fiery end will be “according to their works”. Like Judas they might fool everyone for a time, but they will never fool God. Only fools try to fool God!

Slide # 27

Jude 4 (NKJV)

4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 12–13 (NKJV)

12 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;

13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

But Christ's point here is that if we are faithful to "beware" and apply diligent and careful discernment we will normally be able to discern those who are ravenous wolves by their fruits.

I received an apologetics newsletter this last week. It said...

"The first quarter of 2021 witnessed the demise of what was no doubt the most influential Christian apologetics ministry in the world [Ravi Zacharias International Ministries] – as the result of serious long-term ongoing (and presumably unrepentant) immoral conduct by its founder and leader."

What a terrible thing! But as various Christian leaders began to examine how this could happen, they discovered that really there was smoke long before we saw the fire.

A few years ago, Ravi caused quite a stir when he spoke at the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City Utah. He didn't call out the Mormons for their false gospel – in fact he didn't address it. He did however call for Mormons and Evangelicals to stand together on matters of "morality" – of all things "morality".

When charges of sexual misconduct emerged, Ravi did everything he could to silence and destroy his accusers both legally and socially. It proved very effective for a time. But eventually it did come to full light – although it was after his death.

You will know them by their fruits – sooner or later it does come out, but this illustrates all the more the critical need to BEWARE! We can't just let glaring inconsistencies slide.

The newsletter went on to say,

So now the work of promoting and practicing Christian apologetics has become even more the responsibility of every believer (1 Pet. 3:15)...

Frankly this is where the church should have been aiming all along. 1 Pet. 3:15 says to every believer "be ready to give a defense to everyone". And Paul makes it very clear that it is particularly gifted and qualified pastor/teachers who have the responsibility in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). The "celebrity" model with little or no accountability has proven to be an abject failure.

A few years back ironically Ravi Zacharias shared this story – he was after all a master storyteller.

After someone had shared a very convincing apologetical message in an academic setting. Someone asked a learned person what they thought of it. Their response: **“Very, very powerful, but I wonder how he lives in his private life.”**. (I heard Ravi tell this on Focus on the Family on 12/29/08)

To share stories like that while at the same time carrying on with gross immorality involves a very HIGH LEVEL of deception! As 2 Tim. 3:13 says of the last days, “evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

If ever there was a time we need to BEWARE of false prophets it is now!

There is what we call orthodoxy (right doctrine) and there is orthopraxy (right practice). A life of good fruits involves both. Jesus said, “by their fruits you will know them.” Sooner or later, by their fruits everyone is known. Eventually the truth will be known. Live accordingly!

God help us to be wise fruit-inspectors – not hypocritical judges, but discerning fruit-inspectors who are concerned for the spiritual welfare of all involved.

Final JUDGMENT is God’s prerogative alone, but we are called to be discerning FRUIT INSPECTORS.

God help us to that end!