

Revelation 2:1-2 — Test the Prophets

Revision: The Divine Outline of the Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:19 NKJV

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

v 19 **Write the things:** This second command to write gives us a structure to understand the Book of Revelation. John is commanded to **write** regarding the past, present, and future (looking from John's perspective).

v 19 **The things which you have seen:** This means that Jesus wanted John to write the things he had just **seen** in his vision of the glorious, heavenly Jesus — Chapter 1

v 19 **The things which are:** This means that Jesus wanted John to write about the things of his present day, the things regarding the *seven churches which are in Asia* — Chapters 2 and 3.

v 19 **The things which will take place after this:** This means that Jesus wanted John to write about the things that would happen after the things regarding the *seven churches*, the things of the last days — chapters 4-22.

The Structure of the Letters to the Seven Churches

We come now to the second section of the Book of Revelation, which deals with “the things which are”. There is a personal message from Jesus to each church. No where else in the scriptures does Jesus speak so directly to the churches. We would do well to pay attention to what Jesus says to us.

Each of the seven letters is made up of a four-element pattern seen in each letter:

First, there is positive affirmation — Jesus finds something good to say about the churches.

Second, there is corrective exhortation — Jesus corrects something they are doing wrong.

Third, there is an eternal motivation — an encouragement to persevere.

Fourth, there is partial revelation of Jesus — each of the churches reveals something of the nature or character of Christ.

Revelation 2:1-7 NKJV — *The Loveless Church*

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ² “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name’s sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and

do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

The Letter to the Church of Ephesus

Revelation 2:1 NKJV

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

v 1 **To the angel:** Meaning “messenger,” it is most likely that the word angel (Greek: *angelous*) used here speaks of a pastor, or leader.

v 1 **of the church of Ephesus:** I mentioned before that the seven church describe church history in chronological order. The church of Ephesus speaks of the period of church history from A.D. 33 to A.D. 100. By A.D. 97—the year John recorded this book—the church was already a mess. The Book of Acts presents the model of the way the church was supposed to function. But Acts only covers a span of thirty years. By the time John wrote Revelation only sixty years later, the purity of the church had been compromised to such a degree that they were in a position to hear the Lord say, “Unless you repent, I’ll not stay in your midst” (see verse 5). What this meant was that the church of Ephesus would cease from being a church. Guess what? There is no church in Ephesus today. We’ll come back to this later.

An important point here is that we can’t appeal to church history for practices of doctrine because the church has had problems from the very outset. Those caught up in some of the so-called revivals of today say, “We can’t explain from the Bible what is happening in our church, but in earlier days, we read of people barking or shaking...” So what if they did. It still doesn’t make it right. All you are doing is duplicating a previous church’s error.

Quote from Jon Courson:

I don’t ever defend church history. But I do defend the church as seen in the Book of Acts. We need to get our direction **only** from the Bible, because that’s where you find safety and sanity. You’re always on solid ground if you stick with Scripture. Again, if you want to know what the church should look like, go to the book of Acts, not church history.

v 1 **write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand:** Who are the seven stars? The leaders of the seven churches.

v 1 **who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:** We covered this previously. Jesus is among the church in its entirety, with each local congregation represented by the seven golden lampstands.

Beware of False Prophets

Now we will look at one of the characteristics that Jesus commended the church of Ephesus for — that they tested those who said that they were apostles (or prophets).

Revelation 2:2 NKJV

2 “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Here, Jesus gives His affirmation. He says, “First of all, I affirm or commend you for staying with the task. That is, you’ve worked hard. You haven’t fainted, given up or quit. Secondly, you’ve stood with the truth. You’ve rooted out the deceivers who have come into your midst.”

This is important. On occasion, people will say to us as Christians, “Don’t judge me. Didn’t Jesus say to not judge not lest you be judged?”

And I tell them He did. But I also remind them that fifteen verses later, He said, “Beware of false prophets who will come into your midst as wolves in sheep’s clothing. By their fruit you shall know them” (see Matthew 7:15, 16).

Matthew 7:1-2, 15-16a NKJV

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you ...

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits.

So what is Jesus saying? In Matthew 7:1, He says we’re not to judge for condemnation. What this means is that we are not to pass condemnation or judgement on people because God is the judge. For example, someone hurts me and I condemn them by saying, “Because you hurt me like that, because you let me down so badly, you deserve to be miserable for the rest of your life...”

The first part of my sentence was just the truth of the situation — I have been let down. We need to communicate the truth in love. But the next part, “you deserve to...” is a condemnation. There is no love in condemnation. The loving thing to do, after being honest with how I feel, is to forgive the other person. Yes, there may need to be boundaries if that person can no longer be trusted and legal consequences if they have broken the law, but I still must let go of my right of revenge — I must forgive. This is walking in the Spirit.

In verse 15 in Matthew 7, however, we are instructed to judge for identification — we are to be fruit inspectors. We won’t know them if we aren’t looking! This kind of judgement is to discern if something or someone is right or wrong. Parents do this with their kids all the time. School teachers do it when sorting out issues in the classroom on a daily basis. How silly would it be if the principal said to a student, I’m not going to do anything about your throwing the brick through my windscreen, because I’m not allowed to judge whether it’s right or wrong.

In church, it’s more than stupid to just naively accept peoples claims and teaching without looking at the fruit of their lives and whether or not their doctrine lines up with the bible. This command to test people to see if they are from God or not is explicitly stated in:

1 John 4:1 NLT

Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are **many false prophets** in the world.

Notice that there are **many false prophets** in the world. Why? Because false apostles, false prophets and false teachers and false converts have been Satan's favourite method of spreading deception all through the scriptures. We see this very clearly in the Old Testament. There was usually only a few, or even only one, godly prophet speaking for the Lord. However, in contrast, usually many, many false prophets. Think of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel — one versus 450.

I believe and have observed that the situation, especially in these last days before Jesus comes back, is very similar to what God says about the false prophets and false teachers in the Old Testament. Therefore, what is said about the church of Ephesus as a commendation, something that they were doing right — the exposing of false apostles — is something that I believe needs to be addressed today as there is so much deception around. That's why I'm going to spend some time digging into what the bible says about this for three reasons:

1. many people are deceived today
2. it is a sign of the times (we are in the last days)
3. I don't think the church overall is doing a very good job at warning people about the dangers of false prophets and false teachers.

1 Timothy 4:1 NLT

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons.

Remember that Satan is the father of lies, while God is the source of truth. We will start our study of false prophets and false teachers in the Old Testament.

Here is an Old Testament scripture that sums up the heart condition of those people regularly worshipped God at the temple. It also applies to believers today:

Jeremiah 5:30-31 NKJV

"An astonishing and horrible thing
Has been committed in the land:

³¹ **The prophets prophesy falsely,**
And the priests rule by their *own* power;
And My people love *to have it* so.
But what will you do in the end?

v 31 **The prophets prophesy falsely:** They were saying what the people wanted to hear. They were making the people feel good. God compared them to a wall built with only soft clay holding it together, a wall that was weak and would fall down at any time and destroy those who trusted in it (Ezekiel 13:10-12). What this means is that the false teachers and false prophets manipulated people for their own gain, but the people loved it because these false prophets and teachers told the people that they didn't need to repent of their sins. Instead they could just keep on living their sinful, selfish lives and add God to their lives as an afterthought, like an optional extra. This is made very clear in this next passage from Jeremiah 23. It clearly shows the effect of false prophets and false teachers on the people who listened to them, and clearly describes the type of people who love to listen to the false prophets:

Jeremiah 23:11-32 NLT

¹¹ **"Even the priests and prophets**

**are ungodly, wicked men.
I have seen their despicable acts
right here in my own Temple,”
says the Lord.**

¹² “Therefore, the paths they take
will become slippery.
They will be chased through the dark,
and there they will fall.
For I will bring disaster upon them
at the time fixed for their punishment.
I, the Lord, have spoken!

¹³ “I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil,
for they prophesied in the name of Baal
and led my people of Israel into sin.

¹⁴ But now I see that the **prophets of Jerusalem are even worse!**
They commit adultery and love dishonesty.
**They encourage those who are doing evil
so that no one turns away from their sins.**
These prophets are as wicked
as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were.”

¹⁵ Therefore, this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says concerning the prophets:
“I will feed them with bitterness
and give them poison to drink.
**For it is because of Jerusalem’s prophets
that wickedness has filled this land.”**

¹⁶ This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says to his people:
“Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you,
filling you with futile hopes.

They are **making up everything they say.**
They do not speak for the Lord!

¹⁷ They keep saying to **those who despise my word,**
‘Don’t worry! The Lord says you will have peace!’
And to those who stubbornly follow their own desires,
they say, ‘No harm will come your way!’

*(this is why they are so popular... they teach that you can do what you want to be
happy — healthy, wealthy and wise)*

¹⁸ **“Have any of these prophets been in the Lord’s presence
to hear what he is really saying?**

Has even one of them cared enough to listen?

¹⁹ Look! The Lord’s anger bursts out like a storm,
a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked.

²⁰ The anger of the Lord will not diminish
until it has finished all he has planned.

In the days to come
you will understand all this very clearly.

²¹ “I have not sent these prophets,
yet they run around claiming to speak for me.
I have given them no message,
yet they go on prophesying.

22 If they had stood before me and listened to me, they would have spoken my words, and they would have turned my people from their evil ways and deeds. (repentance)

23 Am I a God who is only close at hand?" says the Lord.
"No, I am far away at the same time.

24 Can anyone hide from me in a secret place?
Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?"
says the Lord.

25 "I have heard these prophets say, '**Listen to the dream I had from God last night.' And then they proceed to tell lies in my name.** 26 How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say. 27 **By telling these false dreams, they are trying to get my people to forget me,** just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal.

28 **"Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between straw (chaff) and grain!**

29 Does not **my word (the bible)** burn like fire?"
says the Lord.

"Is it not like a mighty hammer
that smashes a rock to pieces?"

30 "Therefore," says the Lord, "I am against these prophets who **steal messages from each other and claim they are from me.** 31 I am against these **smooth-tongued prophets** who say, 'This prophecy is from the Lord!' 32 I am against these false prophets. **Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin.** I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I, the Lord have spoken!

Now we will go through it again, but will stop and comment on certain points.

Jeremiah 23:11-32 NLT

11 **"Even the priests and prophets are ungodly, wicked men. I have seen their despicable acts right here in my own Temple," says the Lord.**

(Just like the Old Testament false prophets were at home in the temple, the modern false prophets and false teachers are at home in the church)

12 "Therefore, the paths they take
will become slippery.
They will be chased through the dark,
and there they will fall.
For I will bring disaster upon them
at the time fixed for their punishment.
I, the Lord, have spoken!

13 "I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil,
for they prophesied in the name of Baal
and led my people of Israel into sin.

(The consequences of false religion is that it will lead people into sin)

¹⁴ But now I see that the **prophets of Jerusalem are even worse!**

(These are the priests who claim to represent God, who have studied the bible, and God sees them as being worse)

They commit adultery and love dishonesty.

They encourage those who are doing evil so that no one turns away from their sins.

(The message of the false prophet or false teacher is one of popularity. To be popular you must make people feel good about themselves. Therefore they don't say anything bad about them. Therefore, they don't talk about sin.)

These prophets are as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were."

(Despite their nice suits, nice gestures and smooth talk, God sees their hearts — and they are evil)

¹⁵ Therefore, this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says concerning the prophets:

"I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink.

For it is because of Jerusalem's prophets that wickedness has filled this land."

(The reason that there is so much sin in the church is because of this: Bad doctrine leads to bad attitudes and bad behaviour — in other words, sin is not dealt with. Think about how few churches actually do church discipline as described in the bible. Instead they tolerate sin and compromise)

¹⁶ This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says to his people:

"Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes.

(Sure, their message will make you feel good, but it is like a doctor telling a terminally ill patient that they are well. It makes them feel good, but it is a false hope — they are trusting in a lie, and they will die.)

They are **making up everything they say.**

They do not speak for the Lord!

(The bible calls their message "doctrines of demons" — their message is straight from hell. What isn't the truth is a lie. What won't save you will kill you.)

¹⁷ They keep saying to **those who despise my word,**

(how does a person despise the Word of God? Easy, the same way you despise anything else — you ignore it, forget about it, and refuse to listen to it. Generally speaking, someone who remains biblically illiterate is someone who despises God's word. There is so much said in the bible about how important it is to read the bible for ourselves — we are without excuse)

'Don't worry! The Lord says you will have peace!'

And to those who stubbornly follow their own desires, they say, 'No harm will come your way!'

(this is why they are so popular... they teach that you can continue to sin without any consequences, that to be a christian all you have to do is add God to your life without repenting of your sin. This is often communicated by telling people how good and wonderful they are as they are. This is lie from hell.)

18 **“Have any of these prophets been in the Lord’s presence to hear what he is really saying?**

Has even one of them cared enough to listen?

(The answer to this rhetorical question is no... despite the constant claims that the false prophets and false teachers make to hearing from God)

19 Look! The Lord’s anger bursts out like a storm,
a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked.

20 The anger of the Lord will not diminish

until it has finished all he has planned.

In the days to come

you will understand all this very clearly.

21 “I have not sent these prophets,

yet they run around claiming to speak for me.

I have given them no message,

yet they go on prophesying.

22 **If they had stood before me and listened to me,**

they would have spoken my words,

and they would have turned my people

from their evil ways and deeds.

(Repentance is what is required for a person to be truly born again. Repentance: — a change of mind that leads to a change of heart the leads to a change of behaviour. Like John the Baptist, Jesus and the apostles, our gospel message must include repentance, the turning away from sin.)

25 “I have heard these prophets say, **‘Listen to the dream I had from God last night.’**
And then they proceed to tell lies in my name.

(Has anyone noticed the emphasis on dreams in many churches these days. Many people think that every dream is from God and must have a meaning. Most likely they just had too much pepperoni on their pizza)

26 How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say. 27 **By telling these false dreams, they are trying to get my people to forget me,** just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal.

(Have you ever gone from the bedroom to the kitchen to get something, but then someone calls you or your kids ask you something, and then you end up back in your bedroom wondering what it was you were going to get from the kitchen? This is a distraction, and a distraction keeps you from focusing on and doing what you first intended to do. The focus on false dreams take peoples’ minds off God’s word and onto themselves. They forget what they initially came to church for.)

28 **“Let these false prophets tell their dreams,**
but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word.
There is a difference between straw (chaff) and grain!

29 Does not **my word (the bible)** burn like fire?”

says the Lord.

“Is it not like a mighty hammer
that smashes a rock to pieces?

(The word of God is powerful. The Word of God is true. The Word of God is pure. The word of God is convicting. The word of God is sharp like a two edged sword. The word of God does not return void. The word of God is real food. A true messenger or pastor will only share what the word says, not his own opinion, especially in times when the message is not popular and may cause division and offence.)

³⁰ “Therefore,” says the Lord, “I am against these prophets who **steal messages from each other and claim they are from me.**

(This is another thing that I have noticed about these false prophets, they all seem to have a similar message. They all seem to get onto the same bandwagon. They all seem to agree with each other. This is another of Satan’s tactics, because it makes the false message sound more believable if more people are saying it.)

³¹ I am against these **smooth-tongued prophets** who say,

(The lies are so subtle, they might only be 0.05% of what they say. You might say that 99.95% true is OK. But don’t forget that rat poison is only 0.05% poison. Poison is always poison, and it will kill you.)

‘This prophecy is from the Lord!’ ³² I am against these false prophets. **Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin.**

(After being distracted and deceived, people are lead into sin because they have lost sight of the truth. It could be covetousness, or legalism, or weird practices, or any kind of sin. I heard of a pastor who encouraged his congregation to get drunk. He would actually invite people around to his house to get drunk with him.)

I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I, the Lord have spoken!

Just like children will always want chocolate over vegetables, so the unrepentant heart will always like false doctrine that promises blessing without change (without repentance). It’s just the way our sinful nature is — always in rebellion against God.

This is why false prophets and false teachers are so popular — their message tastes good, but it will kill you in the end. This includes, but is not limited to, the prosperity gospel. Other churches have their own false prophet that they get inspiration from and their own ways of manipulating people.

Now some of you may say, come on Dave, that was just the Old Testament. Things are different today. We are smarter, not so easily deceived. After all, the prophets today are calling for revival, for blessing, for deliverance from pestilence and other disasters. They are calling people to pray for God’s blessing in the world. They are so encouraging and accept people just the way they are — they never seem to point out people’s sin, never really stand against abortion or homosexuality, or fornication, or greed etc.

My response would be to ask them to read Jeremiah chapter 23 again, and look for the similarities to today. Then I would direct them to:

2 Peter 2:1-3 NLT

But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. ² **Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality.** And because of these teachers, **the way of truth will be slandered.** ³ **In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money.** But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

2 Peter 2:1-3 is basically a condensed version of the severe expose and warning from God concerning false prophets that we read in Jeremiah 23:11-32.

There are 6 insights we get from 2 Peter 2:1-3 regarding false prophets:

1. **But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you** (verse 1): we have been warned, so don't be deceived. As Jesus said, "he who has ears let him hear."
2. **cleverly teach destructive heresies** (verse 1): i.e. will disguise their lies — often they won't explicitly teach false doctrine, but will gradually lead people away from the truth.
3. **deny the Master** (verse 1): you might say, "how can they be denying God if they are talking about Him and saying that they are praying to Him?" It's just like the pharisees and teachers of the law in Jesus day, despite all their long prayers and talk about God and the law, Jesus said that they were not entering into the kingdom themselves and they were preventing people from entering in also.

Luke 11:52-53 NLT

"What sorrow awaits you experts in religious law! For you remove the key to knowledge from the people. You don't enter the Kingdom yourselves, **and you prevent others from entering.**"

⁵³ As Jesus was leaving, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees **became hostile** and tried to provoke him with many questions.

And just like the pharisees became extremely hostile to Jesus when their lies were threatened, so do the modern false teachers. As Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun.

Back to 2 Peter 2:1-3

4. Here is a dreadful prophecy, "**Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality**" (verse 2). Just look around at the many mega churches that just seem to spring up overnight — They are incredibly popular. They are characterised by either not teaching the word, or not teaching it effectively. They use a host of gimmicks to draw people in.

Remember this verse when you think that, well if it's that popular, it must be right:

Luke 6:26 NKJV

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

Luke 6:26 NLT

²⁶ What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.

Jesus tells us in John 7:7 that the world hates Him because He testifies that its works are evil. We should also expect to be hated by the world if we are doing our job and testifying that the world is evil as we share the gospel and call people to repentance.

Back to 2 Peter 2:1-3

5. **the way of truth will be slandered** (verse 2): how true this is today. Because of the very public nature of these televangelists and other false teachers, with their obvious, decadent, self-indulgent lifestyles and greed for money, and the huge following they have, christianity as a whole has been misconstrued as greedy leaders fleecing the flock with a lot of foolish people willing to part with their money. I find it incredible that the unbelieving public are more aware than the Christians are of just how evil and wrong these false teachers and false prophets really are. Why? I believe the main reason is that there are multitudes of baby christians who don't know their bibles very well and are therefore so easily deceived. Churches need to study the Word of God so believers can be built up and grow up. Listen to what Paul says in:

Ephesians 4:14 NLT

Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

I also believe that there are multitudes of false converts tagging along, enjoying the false positive affirmation, having their ears tickled.

Back to 2 Peter 2:1-3

6. **In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money** (verse 3): Well ain't that the truth! The false teachers play on greed. They promise that if you give to them, God's anointed ones, then you will be blessed materially. People give so they can get. They might use phrases like, "sow a seed of \$1,000 and you will receive...."

I believe that people are so easily duped into this lie because it's what the prosperity gospel teaches... come to God and be blessed. It's not about being saved from eternal damnation, because that message is offensive. I mean, who wants to be told that they have broken God's moral law, offended the Almighty God, are headed for hell, that they can never be good enough to save themselves, that they need to instead trust a Saviour, Jesus, to save them from hell. Nobody — but this is the message of the Gospel. "He became sin who knew no sin, that we might become His righteousness" (2 Cor 5:21). This is why the road to eternal life is the narrow road and there are few who find it.

Summary for false prophets: ***False Prophets and false teachers teach a false gospel and get people to trust in false promises and rest in a false hope — all to their own destruction.***

To finish talking about false prophets and false teachers I would like to finish with one specific example from the old testament.

In Jeremiah 22, Jeremiah told the people to repent, that God was going to judge the land by sending the Babylonians to invade them and conquer them. The false prophets contradicted Jeremiah, and as a result the people didn't listen to Jeremiah, and they therefore didn't repent. The false prophets and false teachers of the day said that because the temple was inside the city, and God dwelt inside the temple, then they were safe, and the city would never be taken. Therefore, as long as they kept going to the temple every sabbath, people could go on living according to their evil ways for the rest of the week.

Jeremiah 7:1-11 NLT

The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, ² "Go to the entrance of the Lord's Temple, and give this message to the people: 'O Judah, listen to this message from the Lord! Listen to it, all of you who worship here! ³ This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says:

" 'Even now, if you quit your evil ways, I will let you stay in your own land. ⁴ But don't be fooled by those who promise you safety simply because the Lord's Temple is here. They chant, "The Lord's Temple is here! The Lord's Temple is here!" ⁵ But I will be merciful only if you stop your evil thoughts and deeds and start treating each other with justice; ⁶ only if you stop exploiting foreigners, orphans, and widows; only if you stop your murdering; and only if you stop harming yourselves by worshiping idols. ⁷ Then I will let you stay in this land that I gave to your ancestors to keep forever.

⁸ " 'Don't be fooled into thinking that you will never suffer because the Temple is here. It's a lie! ⁹ Do you really think you can steal, murder, commit adultery, lie, and burn incense to Baal and all those other new gods of yours, ¹⁰ and then come here and stand before me in my Temple and chant, "We are safe!"—only to go right back to all those evils again? ¹¹ Don't you yourselves admit that this Temple, which bears my name, has become a den of thieves? Surely I see all the evil going on there. I, the Lord, have spoken!

*Again, why did the people continue to follow the false prophets? **Because they didn't have to repent**, they didn't have to change their ways, they could still live their evil, selfish lives during the week and think that they were pleasing God because they still attended worship at the temple. Consider that, right until the end, the people were still worshipping at the temple, but their hearts were never right, because they never repented. It's like people who listen to the false prophets and false teachers today — they go through the motions of worship but their hearts are not right with God. It means nothing. God doesn't accept false worship. The only worship God accepts is from a repentant, humble, contrite and obedient heart.*

Notice how this passage on false prophets and false teachers finishes with the same words as the other Jeremiah passage we looked at, "**I, the Lord, have spoken!**" *The question now is, will I listen?* I have been warned, and now so have you. Will you listen to the warning? Are you willing to warn others? The stakes are high. At worst it's peoples' eternal destiny or at best it's a life destroyed and made ineffective by being shipwrecked in their faith. Jesus repeatedly warned people about the false teaching of the religious leaders of His day.

For more on how to tell a false prophet, see Deuteronomy 18, where it says that if a prophet is wrong, even just once, then don't listen to them and don't be afraid of them. It also says to checkout their doctrine, whether or not it matches what the bible says.

If we only teach the Word, but don't warn the flock about liars and deceivers, then we simply fatten people up for the kill. Part of the job of parenting and pastoring, part of the responsibility of any believer is to warn of false doctrine and false teachers. I love you and I want to protect you from being used and abused by these deceivers.

To finish, remember what repentance is: ***Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change of actions or behaviour.***

I think it's important that we get an understanding of what true repentance looks like, of the attitude or heart that a truly repentant person has. We'll finish by meditating on some beautiful scriptures that describe the truly repentant heart.

Psalm 34:18 NKJV

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Psalm 51:17 NLT

The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
You will not reject a broken and repentant (contrite) heart, O God.

Isaiah 57:15 NKJV

For thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
"I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite (repentant) ones.

Isaiah 66:2 NKJV

For all those things My hand has made,
And all those things exist,"
Says the Lord.
**"But on this one will I look:
On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,
And who trembles at My word.**

May we be those who tremble at God's Word, who read it, meditate on it and obey it. If we do we will not be deceived like those who despise it.

Matthew 5:3-4 NKJV

³ Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴ Blessed *are* those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
⁵ Blessed *are* the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
⁸ **Blessed *are* the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.**

Who wants to see God? Just remember that the road to God is a low one, a life of self-denial and repentance, but God will comfort and fill us with a joy and satisfaction that the world knows nothing about. Remember that at God's right hand are pleasures forever more. We can either take the easy road and experience the temporary pleasures of the world, or we can go through the painful process of humbling ourselves and experience eternal fulfillment of a much greater magnitude. The choice is yours.