

2 Peter Part 5 – The Pursuit of True Knowledge and Maturity – July 31st, 2026

Summary

This teaching explores **Apostle Peter's** stern warnings regarding **false prophets** who infiltrate the church from WITHIN to deceive believers. By integrating insights from **Jesus, Paul, and Ezekiel**, the teacher illustrates how these deceivers appear as **righteous servants** while inwardly acting as **destructive wolves**. The text emphasizes that these individuals are identified by their **lawless fruit** and spiritual emptiness, often promising **freedom** while remaining enslaved to **corruption** themselves. A central theme is the **gravity of apostasy**, suggesting it is spiritually preferable to have never known the **way of righteousness** than to consciously abandon it. Ultimately, the material serves as an **urgent reminder** for the assembly to remain vigilant, protect their **doctrinal integrity**, and rely on the **holistic scope of Scripture** to identify error.

Study Guide: True Knowledge Versus the Tactics of False Prophets

This study guide is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of 2 Peter 2:12-22, exploring the nature, tactics, and consequences of false prophets as revealed through the holistic scope of Scripture.

I. Definitions of Key Words

- **Asyndeton:** A Greek rhetorical device where conjunctions (like "and") are omitted between clauses. This is used to **intensify emotion, urgency**, and create a streamlined, poetic effect.
- **Protasis:** The "if" portion of a conditional clause that represents a specific scenario or prerequisite.
- **Apodosis:** The "then" portion or the corresponding **end result** of a conditional clause.
- **Darnel:** Often referred to as "false wheat," it looks identical to true wheat until the time of harvest, when the true wheat droops from the weight of its grain while the Darnel remains upright.
- **Heresy:** According to Galatians 1, this is the teaching of anything different from the gospel of the earthly kingdom revealed by the Lord and the Apostles.
- **Apostasy:** The act of **turning away** from the holy commandment after having known the way of righteousness.

II. Expansion of Key Points

1. The Holistic Scope of Scripture

To truly understand the nature of false prophets, one must look beyond a single passage and examine the **remoter context** on the same subjects, provided by the Lord Jesus, the Apostle John, the Apostle

Paul, and the Prophet Ezekiel. This builds a deeper insight into how these individuals operate and protects the assembly from their evil influences.

2. Identifying False Prophets by Their Fruit

In **Matthew 7:15-20**, Jesus warns to "beware of false prophets" who appear in sheep's clothing but are inwardly ravenous wolves.

- **The Litmus Test:** They are known by their **fruits**, not just their words.
- **The Deception of "Lord, Lord":** Many will claim to prophesy, cast out demons, and perform miracles in Jesus' name, yet they are rejected because they continue to **practice lawlessness**.
- **Deed over Word:** Our focus must remain on what people **do** rather than what they **say**.

3. The Tactics of Deception

False teachers are "deceitful workers" who disguise themselves as "apostles of Christ".

- **Satanic Mimicry:** Just as Satan disguises himself as an **angel of light**, his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (**2 Corinthians 11:13-15**).
- **Empty Promises:** They are described as "**springs without water**" and "mists driven by a storm," appearing to offer refreshment but delivering emptiness, as they are dry.
- **The Lure of Freedom:** They promise freedom while they themselves are **slaves of corruption**.

4. The Warning from Ezekiel 34

The Prophet Ezekiel provides a scathing indictment of the "shepherds of Israel" who cared only for themselves.

- **Self-Interest:** These leaders ate the curds and clothed themselves with wool but did **not take care of the flock**.
- **Neglect:** They failed to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, or search for the lost, leading to the flock being scattered and plundered.
- **Divine Judgment:** God declares He is **against the shepherds** and He will rescue His flock from their mouths.

5. The Nature of False Knowledge

While false teachers may possess academic degrees or seminary certificates, Peter describes them as having **no true knowledge** (**2 Peter 2:12**).

- **Unreasoning Animals:** They are compared to creatures of instinct, destined for destruction.
- **Arrogant Words:** Their speech is characterized by "arrogant words of vanity," often fuelled by **unyielding pride**.

6. The Danger of Falling Away

Peter offers a sobering warning regarding those who escape the world's defilement's through Christ but are again **entangled and overcome**.

- **The Final State:** Their last state becomes worse than the first (**2 Peter 2:20**).
- **Better Not to Know:** It would be better never to have known the way of righteousness than to turn away from it (**2 Peter 2:21**).
- **The Proverb:** They are likened to a dog returning to its vomit or a scrubbed sow returning to the mire (**2 Peter 2:22**).

III. Study Questions

1. How does the physical difference between Wheat and Darnel at harvest time serve as a metaphor for discerning true and false believers?
2. Explain the significance of the "Lord, Lord" passage in Matthew 7 regarding signs, miracles, and wonders.
3. Define **Asyndeton** and explain why Peter might have used this figure of speech in 2 Peter 2:12.
4. According to Ezekiel 34, what were the specific failures of the shepherds of Israel?
5. Why does Peter argue that it would be "better not to have known the way of righteousness" for those who eventually turn away?
6. Describe the three metaphors used in 2 Peter 2:17 to describe false teachers.

IV. Answer Key

1. **Wheat vs. Darnel:** True wheat becomes heavy with grain and droops, while darnel (false wheat) remains upright and obvious. This mirrors how true fruit eventually makes the difference apparent.
2. **"Lord, Lord":** It demonstrates that religious language and even miracles do not grant entry into the Kingdom; only doing the **will of the Father** matters. Those who practice lawlessness are rejected despite their "spiritual" deeds.
3. **Asyndeton:** It is the omission of conjunctions. Peter uses it to create a sense of **urgency and intensity**, ensuring the saints understand the critical nature of his warnings.
4. **Failures of Shepherds:** They took care of themselves (food/clothing) but neglected the weak, sick, and lost. They ruled harshly and brutally, causing the flock to be scattered and plundered.
5. **Better Not to Know:** Because knowing the truth and then willfully rejecting it (apostasy) leads to a worse state of entanglement and judgment than if they had remained in ignorance.
6. **Metaphors:** "Springs without water" (promising refreshment but empty); "Mists driven by a storm" (unstable and deceptive); "Black darkness reserved" (their ultimate destiny).

V. Biblical References within the Sources

- 2 Peter 2:1-22
- Matthew 7:15-23
- John 14:21-22
- Galatians 1

- 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
- Ezekiel 34
- Ezekiel 14
- Numbers 22, 24, 31:8, 16
- Romans 6:16
- Proverbs 26:11

VI. Exhortations

- **Build Your Root System:** It is imperative to build your root system in the **rightly divided word of God** to avoid being enticed by fleshly desires and sensualities.
- **Guard the Assembly:** Do not allow just anyone to speak in the assembly; protect yourself and others from doctrines that lead to the "wide gate of destruction".
- **Watch for Pride:** Never underestimate the power of pride in those who teach error. God hates pride; conduct a study on it to remain humble and teachable.
- **Hold the Line:** Apostasy is not an option. Once you have seen the truth, do not return to the "vomit" of your former sins. Stand your ground where living truth is found.

Discerning the Deception: The Nature and Tactics of False Prophets

Contrasting the outward religious performance of false prophets with their inward predatory nature and the empty fruit of their teachings, emphasizing the need for discernment of character over charisma.

The Anatomy of Deception



- **Sheep's Clothing vs. Ravenous Wolves**
They look and sound like true believers but are inwardly driven by predatory instincts.



- **The "Darnell" Principle**
Like false wheat, they are indistinguishable from the true until their "fruit" matures.



- **The Tactic of Disguise**
Servants of error often disguise themselves as servants of righteousness to gain credibility.



Comparison of Shepherd Character
(Based on Ezekiel 34)

True Shepherds		False Prophets
 Strengthening the weak and seeking the lost	Primary Focus	 Taking care of themselves and eating the choice meat
 Justice and gentle pasturing	Method of Rule	 Harshness, brutality, and shoving the weak away
 Security, blessing, and a "covenant of peace"	Final Outcome	 Accountability, removal, and judgment from God

Identifying the "Fruit" of Error

- **Deeds Over Miracles**
Miracles and "Lord, Lord" declarations do not validate a teacher if they practice lawlessness.



- **From Promise to Enslavement**
They promise freedom while remaining slaves to corruption and prideful desires.



- **"Springs Without Water"**
They offer spiritual refreshment but are empty wells that provide no actual nourishment.

