

Title: Terrorists in the Church: Description, Danger & Doom of False Teachers (Part1)

Passage: 2 Peter 2:1a

Theme: The deadly danger of false teachers in the church

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**{{Read Passage}}**

**[i] Today we can hardly escape today the subject of terrorism**

Terrorism isn't anything new. Most of us have watched it from afar as young adults & even children. Years ago T. was something that struck other places. T. happened in Ireland or Israel. Not t/USA.

Of course, all that has changed. What we once watched happen in other countries has become real to us. Consequently, t/U.S. has been engaged in military battles in t/Middle East & Afghanistan. Terrorism is now a global threat. By their very design, T. have t/attention of t/world.

It has become a new way of waging warfare. We now fight against a hidden enemy. We don't know where he will strike or how. That uncertainty is what makes T. so effective. Can't cross a border or visit an airport w/o being reminded of it.

As t/root of t/word implies, terrorism is quite effective.

Due to modern technology & t/media, it promotes its own cause as attacks carried out in time are broadcast round t/world in living color. We see t/blood; we see t/grief; we see t/danger. People fear all t/more.

**[ii] Three things in particular that make terrorism so effective . . .**

First - They are anonymous. T. wear no uniform. Operate clandestinely. Don't know where they are. They disassociate themselves from specific governments. Come out from t/shadows.

Second, They are serious. Deadly serious. So serious that they are quite willing to die for their cause. How can you put fear into an enemy who's not afraid to die? How can you threaten someone who's willing to blow himself up for his cause?

Third, They are ambitious. BTIM, they are self-propagating. They spread their philosophy through their homes, through their mosques, through their governments. They train their young from t/time they are born to follow in their bloody footsteps of horror.

They are on a deadly mission.

**[iii] Might I suggest to you that they are not alone?**

Satan has his own network of missionaries, spiritual terrorists working on an entirely different level. These are apostates & false teachers, men & women that operate covertly from w/i t/CH.

Satan's Al-Quida has as their mission t/destruction of souls. Satan's A.Q. works to blow up truth, not for the purpose of error, not terror.

Islamic Al Quida can kill the body; Satan's A.Q. destroys t/soul.

**[iv] These spiritual terrorists are dangerous for t/same 3 reasons: They're anonymous; serious; ambitious**

They're anonymous in that they operate under stealth, they slip in under t/radar.

They come in secretly in order to introduce destructive heresies (v. 1) Jude says that they've "crept in unnoticed."

They're also serious. They, v 10, despise authority . . . . .

And they are ambitious. They're into self- promotion. They exploit the weak and unprotected (v. 3) // they accumulate many followers (v 2).

Like Jesus' denunciation of t/Pharisees in Matthew 23, they travel about on sea and land to convert whom they can to their error & when they do they make that one 2x t/son of hell as themselves.

John MacArthur, to whom I am indebted for this concept of spiritual terrorism, says it well ==>

"As I look at the evangelical church I see parts of the city of God smouldering in destruction from the bombs of Satan's spiritual terrorists that have been planted here and there to blow people to bits and to blow the terrorists themselves into eternal hell, as long as their targets in the church are destroyed. In fact, having thought all this through every time I see an image of a terrorist, it appears to me as a metaphor for what's going on in the church." [John MacArthur, Terrorists in the Church, cassette message on Jude 8-16]

### ***Terrorists in the Church: Description, Danger & Doom of False Teachers (Part 1)***

That title sums up well what we see in this chapter.

[v] Note some of t/things that characterizes these spiritual terrorists:

- 1) They are godless, denying the Master who bought them (v. 1)
- 2) They are greedy (v. 3)
- 3) They are sensual and self-willed (vv. 2, 10)
- 4) They are ignorant about truth, they "revile things they don't understand"(v. 10)
- 5) Slaves of corruption (v. 19)

\* Bent on destroying others, their own end is destruction.

## [vi] Preview . . .

- I. The Commencement of False Teachers (1-3)
- II. The Condemnation of False Teachers (4-10a)
- III. The Character of False Teachers (10b-22)

First look at their commencement . . .

### I. The Commencement of False Teachers (1-3)

Are false teachers something new? Were they always around? When did they arrive? 7 subheadings.

#### A. Be Aware: False teachers in the church parallel the false prophets of Israel (1a)

##### 1. Peter begins by drawing a contrast

Little word "but" that starts of the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of the chapter.

**But false prophets also arose among the people . . .**

##### a. What's significant about that?

Peter is drawing a contrast to what he's just written in vv. 18-21.

{Review 18-20 . . . }

Then v. 21 ==>

**For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.**

Peter is defending t/divine origin of t/OT Scriptures. They didn't come about by subjective ecstasy, t/prophets weren't speaking or writing that which came out of their own imaginations, they were uttering t/very Words of God.

That was always t/central issue. Was t/prophet speaking forth God's Word or man's?

Here's t/contrast ==>

**But false prophets also arose among the people . . .**

"the people" = OT Israel. We know from his 1<sup>st</sup> letter that Peter does not shy away from using OT illustrations & quotes.

In this chapter he refers to: Noah, v. 5; Sodom, v. 6; Lot, v. 7; Balaam, v. 15 – all OT references.

***A. Be Aware: False teachers in the church parallel the false prophets of Israel (1a)***

**2. The history of Israel is littered with false prophets**

Warnings go back to the Torah, places like Deut. 13 / 18.

Jeremiah 5:31 **The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so! . . .**

**a. At least 3 things characterized a false prophet in Israel**

- 1) They lacked divine authority. They didn't speak for God.
- 2) They told the people what they wanted to hear rather than what they needed to hear.
- 3) Promised peace when God threatened judgment.

**(1) Wonderful example of this in 1 Kings 22 (turn there)**

The final battle of wicked King Ahab of Israel. This was around 850 BC during t/time of the divided KD (Israel / Judah).

Israel had been at war with Aram – these were the Syrians to the N. and E. of Israel.

V. 1 says that 3 years passed w/o war between them.

Pick it up at v. 2 . . . . {read}

{Read v. 3} R.G. = border town to the east of Israel. Apparently when Ahab made a covt. or treaty w/Ben-Hadad, then the king of Aram (20:34) R.G. was supposed to be restored to Israel, but never was.

Verse 4 - Ahab enlists the aid of Jehoshaphat, t/King of Judah – "you want to go with me?" Jehoshaphat answers . . . .

Then he perhaps gets a little nervous – v. 5 {read}

So they gather together t/prophecy team. 400 prophets. They come and break baseball bats, snap handcuffs, tear phone books in 2 - that sort of thing. No, t/King gathers 400 prophets together & asks them, "should we go to battle or stay home?"

They answer . . . .

Look at what Jehoshaphat says (v. 7)!

Verse 8 {paraphrase through 23}

Here we have 400 false prophets who didn't speak for God; who told men (here t/kings of Israel and Judah) what they wanted to hear; who promised victory.

We have 1 true prophet who spoke from God and wasn't winning any popularity contests for doing so. He was humiliated and imprisoned.

But he spoke t/truth. Ahab was killed in t/battle and his army scattered (v. 17).

The history of Israel is littered with false prophets.

Isaiah chapt. 30 speaks of the people of Judah who refused to listen to YHWH's instruction, but rather said to t/prophets *"speak to us pleasant words. Prophecy illusions. We don't want to hear about the Holy One of Israel."*

**A. Be Aware: False teachers in the church parallel the false prophets of Israel (1a)**

### **3. Nothing new**

The NT counterpart to Isaiah 30:9-11 is found in 2 Timothy 4 ==> People in t/CH will not put up with sound doctrine, but will scratch their itching ears by flocking to teachers and preachers who say nice things. Like those of Isaiah's day ==> *"speak to us pleasant words. Prophecy illusions. We don't want to hear about a Holy God."*

That's what we see today. False teachers who lack divine authority. They twist and pervert Scripture, if they bother to use it at all.

They tell people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. Just like the false prophets of old, they proclaim a syrupy message of pleasant words & worldly self-interest.

Be aware. It's nothing new.

**a. That's Peter's point:**

**But false prophets also arose among the people, just as also there will be false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies . . .**

Interesting that he switches from OT prophets to NT teachers, from  $\mu\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\pi\rho\omicron\phi\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$  to  $\mu\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\delta\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}\sigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ . ( $\delta\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}\kappa\eta$  - teaching/doctrine;  $\delta\omicron\delta\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}\sigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  - teacher)

May be in keeping with shift in meaning between t/2. The church was built on t/foundation of t/apostles and prophets (past) leaving us preachers & teachers (Eph. 4).

**4. They will be "among you"**

Just as false prophets infiltrated Israel in t/OT; false teachers will infiltrate the church.

**a. Remember Acts 20?**

Paul meets with the elders of t/Ephesian church ==>

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 "Therefore be on the alert . . .

32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

## B. Be Alert: False teachers in the church operate covertly (1b)

Note that they ==>

**. . . secretly introduce destructive heresies . . .**

### 1. Verb παρεισάγω = to bring in secretly (only here in NT)

It's to bring something in that doesn't belong there.

A related word is used in Gal. 2:4 where Paul speaks of ==>

**. . . . false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty . . . in order to bring us into bondage.**

Jude 4 **For certain persons have crept in unnoticed . . .**

### 2. False teachers fall into 2 basic categories:

Those who are within t/CH and those who are outside of it.

I shared with some of you last week – We were getting some dinner in town and 2 Mormon missionaries came in and sat right across from us. I had t/opportunity to reach out to them, as well as our waitress with whom they had struck up a conversation.

Those are false teachers from without. While they are dangerous in their own right, they are easy to ID.

What's more sinister are false teachers from within. They are Trojan Horses who make their way into t/CH. These are men who preach from Evang. pulpits. They teach in Evang. schools. They take up leadership in Evang. CHs.

Might be a RC who teaches at an Evang. school.

Might be a musical trio on Xn radio that denies t/Trinity.

Might be a televangelist proclaiming t/Health/Wealth heresy.

Might be a pastor teaching his church that God is so loving that he would never send anyone to hell.

Or the author of a best-selling novel that's prominently on display at your local Xn bookstore.

### ***B. Be Alert: False teachers in the church operate covertly (1b)***

Stealth bombers; Fly under the radar.

What's innocently portrayed as truth (or something that ought to be tolerated under the broad umbrella of Christianity is actually) ==>

**... destructive heresies ...**

### **3. Some debate as to how to translate this word**

Most render it "heresies" which is a transliteration of t/Greek word αἱρέσις. Related word αἱρέτικος is rendered "factious" in Titus 3:10. But that's the word we get our Heretic / Heretical from.

#### **a. Issue is what the word meant in the first century**

Words don't have static meaning. Watch an old movie where someone in a moment of giddiness says, "I'm so gay!" Means something today that it didn't mean in 1940s.

This is why biblical word studies can be deceiving. Be careful importing meanings that a word had in 200 BC into a first century AD context. We could be talking about 2 or 300 yrs. Think about how much English has changed in 200 years.

As early as t/1st c. BC t/word αἱρέσις meant "a school" (of thought), a "party" or "sect". That meaning carried over into the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD

Word is used 6 x in Acts (trans. "sect")

5:17 (the sect of the Sadducees)

15:5 (sect of the Pharisees)

24:5 (the sect of the Nazarenes)

1 x each in 1 Cor. / Galatians (factions)

Here in 2 Peter (heresies)

Went from the neutral idea of a "sect" or "party" to t/negative idea of "a faction" / "division" to "heresy"

We see t/word used t/way we understand it as something contrary to Xn ortho. by the start of t/2d century

Ignatius of Antioch wrote a letter to t/Ephesians where he praised them for their orderly conduct, that they lived according to truth, that no heresy had a home among them, and that they refused to hear anyone who said anything contrary to the truth of JC. [Eph. 6:2]

That was around 105 AD. Interesting because it parallels John's record of t/Ephesian church a decade earlier when he says that they put false apostles to the test and hated t/deeds of false teachers.

They were otherwise doctrinally sound. Their "heresy sniffers" were in good working order. Of course, their "love meter" didn't have a pulse.

**b. All that to say ==>**

This word at t/time of Peter's writing was transitioning from being a neutral term to a negative one, probably carrying t/idea of cultic doctrines that were outside the scope of apostolic teaching.

4. May wonder what it was that they were teaching / can we identify these ψευδοδιδάσκαλος as a group

We have to glean what we know from how Peter describes them. May have been an early form of Gnosticism.

They denied the future coming of X to judge t/world (3:3-4); they opposed or misrepresented t/OT prophets and their message (1:16-21); They were greedy, sensual, licentious. (chapter 2).

Many of t/ECFs thought them to be a group known as The Nicolaitans (cf. Rev. 2). Nicolaitans are considered a sub-set of early Gnosticism.

Schaff ==>

The licentious Gnostics, as the Nicolaitans . . . in a proud conceit of the exaltation of the spirit above matter [believed] . . . that sensuality must be overcome by indulging it; [they] bade defiance to all moral laws, and gave themselves up to the most shameless licentiousness. It is no great thing, said they . . . to restrain lust; but it is surely a great thing not to be conquered by lust, when one indulges in it. [They] identify[ed] Christ with the generative powers of nature, practiced debauchery as a mode of worship, and after having, as they thought, offered and collected all their strength, blasphemously exclaimed: "*I am Christ.*" [Schaff, P., & Schaff, D. S. (1997). History of the Christian church. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.]

We don't know for sure that's who they were. But there are striking similarities. We do know that they were apostates. BTIM - they came

from w/i t/CH, they had once IDied w/true Xns, and had even "known the way of righteousness" as Peter says in v. 21.

They came from w/i t/CH and refused to leave it.

### *I. The Commencement of False Teachers (1-3)*

*A. Be Aware: False teachers in the church parallel the false prophets of Israel (1a)*

*B. Be Alert: False teachers in the church operate covertly (1b)*

*C. Be Separate: False teachers in the church deny Christ (1c)*

**. . . even denying the Master who bought them. . .**

Here's another reason to think that they had at one time IDied w/the Xn community

The way Peter introduces this "Even" emphasizes their arrogance. (cf. Phil. "even" death on a cross – emphasis).

**1. Here we are introduced to 2 huge theological issues that arise out of this statement by Peter**

Peter, speaking of apostates who were destined for destruction / under t/wrath of God / says that they were guilty of ==>

**. . . even denying the Master who bought them . . .**

**a. Here are t/2 issues:**

1) Can genuine believers commit apostasy? (can a true Xn be finally lost and go to hell).

2) What does this say, if anything, as to the extent of the atonement? (is this saying that JC really redeemed them?).

"How can someone perish whom Christ has redeemed? How were they redeemed if they could perish?"

**(1) First issue is easy to address**

Can a genuine believer become an apostate, fall under God's eternal wrath, and be forever lost? No!

We know that JC bought salvation for his elect, His CH. He purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28). he loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25). He will save his people from their sin (Matt. 1:21). He gives his life for the sheep, no one can snatch them away (John 6). The elect were chosen before t/foundation of t/world (Eph. 1).

They were foreknown and predestined; nothing can separate them from Christ's love (Rom. 8).

In his 1<sup>st</sup> letter Peter says that true believers are protected by God's power for salvation later to be revealed.

John tells us that apostates left t/faith because they were never of it (1 John 2:19).

**(1) Second issue isn't so easy {restate}**

There are no less than 6 different views on this single question.

Want t/answer? Come back next week.