

A Portrait of False Teachers, Part 2

2 Peter 2:1-3

61-17

I have great anticipation in my heart as I come to this text of Scripture that God has set before us tonight. Open your Bible, if you will, to 2 Peter, chapter 2 and we're going to return to our study of verses 1 through 3, the subject, "The Portrait of False Teachers."

Let me read these three verses for you that you might have them in mind as we begin to look at them. Second Peter chapter 2 verse 1, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of truth will be maligned. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep."

One of the curiosities in my own life has been to follow some of the intricate events in the history of the nation Israel. Any of you who are familiar with recent history in Israel will recognize the name Eli Cohen. Eli Cohen was born in 1924 in the Jewish quarter of Alexandria, Egypt, the son of a Jewish silk tie maker. Born in Egypt he worked hard to obtain an education. He excelled as a student becoming fluent in many languages.

War came to Egypt in the 1940s, and soon Cohen found himself drawn to political causes and became involved with the Egyptian branch of the Mossad Aliyah Bet, an organization that smuggled immigrating Jews past British officials. In the ensuing years, Cohen supported many Israeli causes and developed an expertise in espionage. To the Mossad, which is the Israel intelligence agency, Cohen became a valuable man, for during the course of his covert activities in support of Israel, he maintained his outstanding credentials as an Egyptian. He was a perfect spy.

In 1961 the Mossad sent Cohen to Damascus, Syria, to pose as a wealthy Arab businessman with holdings in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He quickly engaged himself in the import-export business in Damascus, secured an apartment in the wealthiest sector of the city and then began giving large sums of money to Syrian politicians to buy his way into the elite. In turn they gave him entree into the high political social circles. He became a regular guest at presidential palace parties and became a personal confidante of most government leaders. It was not unusual for him to be taken on high level briefings at the Syrian-Israeli border.

In those days Israel was dependent on pipelines in Galilee for its water supply. The pipelines passed through the Golan Heights region which was under Syrian control. Cohen discovered that the Syrians were preparing to implement a plan to cut off the water supply to Israel. During a visit to the Syrian frontier, Cohen convinced President al-Hafiz to plant eucalyptus trees at major military installations all across the Golan Heights. He said the trees would provide good cover and shield the installations

from Israeli air surveillance while Syria proceeded to carry out its plan. Eli Cohen's life of espionage was uncovered in 1965. The Arabs found out he was a Jewish spy and he was hanged as a spy in the town square of Damascus, a place I myself visited.

A few months later during the famous Six-Day War, Israeli fighter pilots had very little trouble knocking out all the Syrian targets on the Golan Heights. They were all marked by eucalyptus trees.

The Golan Heights today are in control of Israel because of an imposter who infiltrated the Syrian society to work for their defeat and their destruction. His approach: Pose as one of them and then lead them to tragedy.

When I was in New Zealand where 40 million sheep are sent to market each year, I learned about special sheep. I told you about him many months ago, called by a special name. He is specially selected, castrated, male sheep who leads the unwitting sheep to the killing floor. Unaware of what is to happen the sheep blindly follow one they believe is leading them to food and leading them to rest, and they follow him to their death. As they approach the killing floor a trap door opens and the lead sheep slides down a ramp to go back down to the pen and lead another group of sheep to slaughter. The New Zealanders call that sheep "the Judas sheep."

There has always been in the history of the church a major danger to God's people by those who would lead the church to its destruction as agents of the enemy. And consequently the Scripture has much to say about how God views those who are false, those who pretend to be friends but really represent the enemy. And such false leaders are Peter's concern as he writes to the Christians scattered around the Gentile world in this epistle. This letter serves not only as a warning to them, but a warning to us, to set our defenses against such false teachers as are bound to infiltrate, claim to be our friends, with the goal in mind of leading us to slaughter. Remember, Satan's most subtle operation is to falsify God's truth from inside the church, to pose as one of us, a friend, a sheep like us, thus to deceive, thus to destroy.

As Peter pens this second chapter, he unmasks the traitors. This, as I noted for you, this chapter is parallel to the little epistle of Jude. They have much in common and you should study that single chapter of Jude because of its close association to this chapter. But as Peter pens the words of this chapter, he carefully paints the portrait of the false teacher so you can recognize him. He doesn't want any Eli Cohens, any Judas sheep, any false teachers to be able to carry on their work with the church not recognizing them.

Now he starts out with a sketch in verses 1 to 3 and then in verses 4 to 22 he paints it in full color. Let's just look again at the sketch. Verse 1, "But false prophets also arose among the people," you remember I told you that's the Jewish people, "just as there will also be false teachers among you," that's the church. It was true of God's people Israel that Satan sent his false emissaries to deceive and confuse and destroy and it will continue to be his ploy among you even as it was among them; false prophets then, false teachers now. Though he is pointing to the past and the future, he is also including the present. In fact, in chapter 1 verse 16 Peter contrasts himself with false teachers already at work in the church when he says, "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The implication is that there are some who are feeding you cleverly devised fables.

He was aware already that the future was now and that false teachers were active. Paul said it in Galatians chapter 1 very clearly. He said, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel. There are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. Even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." Already these false teachers were busily infiltrating the church at the beck and call of Satan. They were the agents of seducing spirits teaching demonic doctrine. Paul in Philippians calls them dogs, evil workers, false circumcision. When you read the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, you see constantly in the background the pictures of these false teachers. And as I said, in the epistle of Jude the same thing.

And so, from the very beginning of God working with the chosen people, Satan has endeavored to sow his tares in the midst of the wheat and the false in the midst of the true. It is his most subtle operation.

Now let me remind you of what we noted as we looked at the operation of these false teachers. First we saw the sphere of their operation and we noted that they worked among the people and they now will work among you. These false teachers that Peter is talking about work inside the church. There are false teachers outside the church, of course, in all the false religions of the world, but the most potent, the most destructive to the work of the church are on the inside. Like Eli Cohen they gain positions of influence and respect and power and prestige. And like a Judas sheep they appear to be one you can follow to food and rest. They are honored, they are respected, they are trusted and they work among the believers. They are accepted because they say the right thing and they make the right claims, they identify with the right people. They belong to the right associations. They may have even gone to the right schools and institutions. The sphere of their operation is inside the church.

Secondly, the subtlety of their operation. It says in verse 1 that they secretly introduce destructive heresies. Their operation is deceitful, it is subtle, it is under cover. They smuggle in their demon doctrine. They smuggle in their spiritual ideas that are not from God. What they teach is obviously opposite the truth of God. And Paul, as I noted, says, "And though they be claiming to be a messenger from God," they are evidenced by the characterization of their teaching when it says, "their heresies are of destruction." They bring destructive heresies. This teaching, invented by demons, propagated by these hypocritical liars who are parroting the doctrines of demons, is intended to lead people astray and damn them into Satan's eternal dwelling place. Satan is trying to collect people for hell and he wants to work inside the church, not that he can steal the salvation of true believers, but because he can confuse and deceive those who are coming into the church pursuing the truth. And because, also, he can derail and confuse true believers and render them useless.

Now he says that their heresies are of destruction. I need to comment on that word. "Destruction" is used five times in this letter, five times in just these three chapters. It always means final damnation. It always means final damnation. That is its intent. It is used a second time, you'll notice, right there in verse 1. It is used again in verse 3. It is used again over in chapter 3. Its uses refer to final damnation. They bring in teaching the damns souls. Now remember, it cannot damn the regenerate...regenerated soul but it can damn those who come to the church in pursuit of the truth. By the way, it assumes unsaved people in the church. And if you have problems with that assumption you need to go back to Matthew 13 and remember that there are some temporary converts, soil that is rocky, soil that is full of weeds. There are some tares sown among the wheat.

There are some who identify with the kingdom when the net is pulled in and only at the end can they be sorted out like the good fish and the bad. The church grows like a mustard seed into great dimensions, so big, it says, that birds nest in it. In other words, it collects all kinds of things. And yes, we assume that there are many people who come to the church, some seeking truth who are then confused and deceived by the false teachers.

So the sphere and the subtlety of their operation. Thirdly, and for tonight we move into this point, the sacrilege of their operation. This is the heart of the issue, the sacrilege of their operation. It is unthinkable, and I suppose that's why Peter throws in the word "even" in the middle of verse 2. Their heresies are destructive, even denying the Master who bought them. That is the sacrilege of their operation. The word "even," as if unthinkable, denying. Very interesting, now follow carefully because you need to know these words, denying, *arneomenoi*, means to say no to. It means to be unwilling. It means to refuse. It's a strong word, to say no to. By faith Moses when he had grown up, Hebrews 11:24, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He refused to submit to that. He said no to that. That's what the word means. Present tense indicates a habitual pattern of saying no. These false teachers — watch this — can be recognized because they characteristically say no to whom? To the Master who bought them.

What does that mean? This will expose the depth of their crime and their guilt. The word "Master" here is the word in the Greek *despotēs*, from which we get the word despot. That means sovereign, lord, it means ruler. It means master. That is the meaning of *despotēs*, master. The word despot, or *despotēs*, appears ten times in the New Testament and it always refers to one who has supreme authority. In five instances the reference is to the master of the house, or the master of the estate who has full authority over everybody who's in it. That's how it's used in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Peter. In the remaining five uses it refers to God the Father or God the Son. Ten uses, all referring to sovereign rulership: Five times the rulership of the head of a house over everything under him; five times the rulership of God and Christ, the sovereign rulership.

Now listen to this, Peter is saying the supreme sacrilege of false teachers is that they deny the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. They deny the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. That's their supreme sacrilege. Now listen carefully, there are heresies that could include denying Christ's perfection, there are heresies that could include denying the virgin birth, denying the deity of Christ, denying His atoning sacrifice, denying His bodily resurrection, denying His ascension, denying His Second Coming, denying His future kingdom, denying His eternal glory. Those would be heresies, too. But the supreme and unthinkable heresy is to say no to His sovereign lordship. This is the matter at hand. Here are people who probably won't deny the deity of Christ, who probably won't deny His atonement outwardly, even though they may deny it inwardly, who probably won't take a position against the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection, who may not deny the Second Coming, may even preach it. They may name Christ, claim Christ, serve in His name, preach His name, cast out demons in His name, do many wonderful works in His name, but they say no to His what? To His lordship.

What does that mean? That means they will not submit their lives to His rule. The issue here, beloved, is primarily not theological, it is ethical. It is not their theology that unmasks them. It is their morality that unmasks them. You understand that? It is not their theology that...that is covert. It is their morality that unmasks them. And he says they even deny the Master who bought them. And that completes the analogy of the *despotēs*. Some people have wondered why he added "who bought them." It's because a master, a *despotēs*, of a house bought the slaves and the slaves owed

him allegiance as their sovereign. They bore his name, they were associated with his estate, but they refused to submit to his authority. That's the analogy. This describes those who claim to believe in Christ. They affirm the atonement; they affirm that He bought them with His death. They affirm that they belong to Him. The word "bought" is *agorazō*, simply means to buy, to purchase.

There are two ways to understand this, apart from the analogy. The analogy simply says "unthinkably, unimaginably, having been bought by a master they refuse to submit to his authority." In the spiritual dimension you would ask the question: In what sense did Christ buy these false teachers? Two ways to view it. First of all, you can view it as universal provision for the redemption of sinners, even though they refuse it and are damned.

But I think there is a second sense in which we have to understand this, that they have made an earthly identification with Christ's redemption so that they claim Him as the one who bought them and they claim Him as their Redeemer, testifying that He indeed has bought them and their word then is taken at face value. No matter what they say, though they say they are Christ's, they refuse to say yes to His sovereign lordship and thus they are false teachers.

True Christians gladly affirm they are bought. We gladly affirm that we have been redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We gladly affirm that we are bought with a price. We are gladly affirming that we have been purchased by His blood. We also gladly affirm that having been purchased we are under His sovereign lordship, we are His slaves, we are His servants, we obey His Word. You heard that, didn't you, in the baptism again tonight? The true believer gladly affirms that. The true believer gladly affirms, "I have been purchased by Christ for servanthood. He is my *despotēs*, my sovereign Lord and Master, absolute lord over all that I am and all that I have."

Listen to me, to deny the lordship of Jesus Christ is not to be relegated to second class Christianity, it is to be damned. It is to be damned if it is a true denial of His sovereign lordship. Why do you say that? Because it says in verse 1: "Denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift damnation upon themselves." It is self-inflicted by a process of persistent rebellion. Quick, sudden, soon, that's what swift means, quick, sudden, soon destruction, either by death or by the coming of Christ in judgment.

Now the idea, people, is this is very crucial. When you are identifying a false teacher sometimes you can't tell by their theology, you have to look past that to their morality. And you are not asking what they affirm, for they may affirm that Christ has bought them. You ask: Do their lives demonstrate submission to the sovereign Lord?

Now, the false teachers, they say no to sovereign lordship. They're not interested in that. All they want to do is deceive the people in the church. All they want to do as the emissaries of Satan, whether they know it or not, and some of them know it and some of them don't, some know they're deceivers, some don't, they are the pawns of Satan to carry out the ruse of deception.

They're not interested in following Jesus Christ. They're not interested in submitting their life to Him. They're not interested in virtue and holiness and righteousness and obedience and godliness. Their sacrilege, they name Him with their lips, they refuse His lordship in their lives.

Fourth point, the success of their operation. We've seen the sphere of it, the subtlety of it, the sacrilege of it; now the success of it. Would you please notice verse 2? "And many will follow." Stop right there.

Discouraging, isn't it? Many will follow. You know, there aren't even many who go on the narrow way, are there? Few go there. Many follow the deceivers. Back in Matthew 24 Jesus predicts that in the time of the end, verse 10, many will fall away, deliver up one another, hate one another, many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Jesus said basically the same thing. You can expect it. Verse 24, false Christs, false prophets.

Listen, they attract people. They attract people with their talk about Christ and their talk about belonging to Christ, but they don't want to submit to sovereign lordship. They want freedom to live the way they want to live. They want liberty to live the way they want to live. They don't want anybody impinging on their conduct. And so many people are led astray into a kind of Christianity that knows nothing about submission to the sovereign Lord. This is exactly what you have in Matthew chapter 7, exactly. "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who (what?) does the will of My Father." Many will say, but that doesn't make the point. Many will say. It's the one who does. It isn't the one who claims Christ; it's the one who does the will of My Father, who submits to sovereign lordship.

Why will they be so popular? Why will so many follow them? Because they can have Christ and they can have sin. They can have Christ, they can have sin. It takes me to the fifth point, it's the state of their operation, the state of their operation. Sphere, subtlety, sacrilege, success, now the state of their operation. Please, back to verse 2, "Many will follow (here it is) their sensuality." That is a very strong term, *aselgeia*. It means sexually immoral, depraved, debauched conduct without restraint, sexual immorality. They preach a Savior, they don't want a lord. Why? Because they want to feed their lust.

By the way, sensuality here is plural. Their sensualities. Their debaucheries. Their sexual immoralities. And the word is plural, emphasizing all the more that their sexual lewdness was habitual and came in many forms and extremes. They practiced immoralities. They are the libertines. They are what theology calls the antinomians, the...the...against any rules or standards. They don't want to accept any restraint in their fleshly desires and their sexual indulgences. Listen to what Jude says about them in Jude 4, it says, "They have turned the grace of our God into licentiousness." Now listen to that. They turned the grace of God into licentiousness. What does that mean? That means they live lewd, debauched, immoral lives and they say, "Well, it's all covered (by what?) by grace." It's all covered by grace. And Jude says the same thing in verse 4, "They deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." They may not deny His deity. They may not deny His death, His resurrection, His Second Coming. But what they don't want is Him getting in the way of their lifestyle.

Verse 7 of Jude, he says, "Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these, indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh." Homosexuality, as well as gross immorality.

They claim to represent God. They claim to be a part of the church. They claim to teach the truth. They sound okay. Go behind their theology, look at their morality. Peter describes them. Verse 7 of 2 Peter 2, right in the chapter we're in, he talks about the sensual conduct of these unprincipled men. Now remember, he's talking about teachers in the church, teachers in the church, not outside, in it.

And they are sensual, unprincipled people. Verse 10, it says that they indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise what? Authority. They want grace and salvation without obedience. Verse 13, 2 Peter 2:13, "They are stains and blemishes reveling in their deceptions, carousing, (verse 14) their eyes are filled with adultery, they never cease from sin, they entice unstable souls." Verse 18: "They are using the enticing of fleshly desires by sensuality to draw people to themselves." People who are barely escaping, people who are trying to get out of the error and perhaps moving toward the truth are enticed away into sensuality and told you can have Christ and you can still live anyway you like. Verse 19, they promise freedom, they promise freedom. Just take Jesus and don't worry about how you live. And they're slaves of corruption. Verse 22 says they're dogs that go back to their vomit and sows that return to the mire; pretty graphic.

Saying no to the lordship of Christ and infecting others with that same cheap salvation allows them to be immoral, live anyway they want to live. Whenever you see a person who appears to say all the right things and all of a sudden his life is exposed and the curtain parts and you see that he's a sensual, corrupt, lustful, immoral person, you know you've just seen the unveiling of a false teacher who on the surface says yes to the truth, but underneath says a habitual no to the lordship of Christ in his life. And very often he covers it with grace and cheapens the whole matter of salvation. We've seen plenty of that in the last few years.

The sphere of their operation, the subtlety of their operation, the sacrilege of it, the success of it, the state of it leads to the stigma of their operation; the stigma, or the reproach, or the stain, or the blot of it. Tragic, verse 2, "Because of them (listen to this again) because of them the way of truth will be maligned." Do you know why the world mocks Christianity today? Because it has been maligned by these people who claim to represent Christ but who have habitually said no to His lordship in their lives and they have been unmasked as lecherous, lewd, lascivious, licentious, immoral people. Because of them there is a stigma, a blot, a reproach, a stain on the way of truth. The way of truth is simply an expression of the true teaching, the true gospel, the true doctrine, the Christian message. It is maligned. "Maligned" means to ruin the reputation of, to defame.

Now I want you to know that's what Satan's trying to do. What he really wants to do is just defame Christianity in the world out there. Inside the church, suck people into this cheap kind of message propagated by hypocritical false teachers, suck people into that and they'll be damned in the deception. On the outside, so malign Christianity by the periodic unmasking of these phonies that people discredit the way of truth. Mission accomplished. They got in the church and they've deceived. They have been unmasked for the world and now they mock Christianity. I would say that it has been in your lifetime as in the lifetime of all Christians through the ages that we have seen this happen. People scoff at the integrity of the church; it is maligned because of the terrible immorality of these false teachers. And it's not just the ones we know on a national scandal level; it's all over the place in smaller episodes.

See, we have to live a certain kind of life to make our gospel believable, don't we? "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and (what?) glorify your Father who is in heaven," Matthew 5:16. And if you don't live life that way, they're going to mock God, they're going to mock Him. And it's because of these false teachers that the way of truth has been maligned.

In Philippians 2:15 Paul says, "You are to prove yourselves blameless and innocent children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as

lights in the word...world, holding fast to the Word of life." You've got to live a pure life. The church has to be pure. But see, Satan can get us two ways: He brings the false teachers in and they confuse and deceive people inside the church, then periodically they're unmasked to the people outside the church. The people inside don't care because they're living the same way their leaders are living if they're in that same environment. But the people outside mock Christianity so Satan gets us coming and going. Tragic, to destroy the work of Christ in that way.

I remember reading an article in New West magazine years ago and it was written by a critic of Christianity. He said, "Having read about Jesus Christ, I believe that He has more class than most of His agents." It's tragic. That was at the time of the scandalous things happening in our country with the Bakkers and so forth. There is a terrible stigma that comes from these people when Satan even for his own purposes participates in the unveiling of what they're really like.

God has called for a pure people to bring honor to His name. We are to walk worthy of the One who redeemed us. We are to manifest good works. We're to love one another. We're to live pure, godly, virtuous lives so that Christianity is not maligned. We're to walk as children of light. We're to walk wisely in the world, circumspectly in the world. We're to be like Jesus Christ. I love what Paul says to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, "Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." We're to be consistent. We're to live the life that God has called us to live so that our faith is not maligned.

But these people abuse grace. They refuse to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in a practical way in their lives because they want to live a sensual, immoral life. Consequently they bring disgrace to the cause of Christ whom they claim to represent. And they lead, can I say, millions of people into deception.

Peter has two other elements for us to consider. Number seven in my little list, the spring of their operation, the spring of it. What do I mean? The operating motive, the underlying cause. Verse 3, "And in greed they will exploit you with false words." Here's another component that you need to know about. What drives them on the inside to do what they do? Listen very carefully. They're not driven by immorality. They're not driven by *aselgeia*, sexual immorality. You can do that by yourself. That's not going to make you a false teacher. You can be immoral all alone in your own little world with just the people you choose to be immoral with. You don't need to be a false teacher to be immoral. And if all they wanted to do was fulfill their sensual desire, they wouldn't need to be a false teacher. But there's another component. What is it? Greed, greed.

The driving force of their enterprise to be teachers is not the love of the truth, it's not submission to the Lord, it's not even sexual immorality. They can do that in the pew. The driving force is money. The word *pleonexia* means uncontrolled greed. They're expert at it. They're in it to accumulate money. And watch them, they do. Verse 14 of the same chapter, "Their eyes are full of adultery," obviously, "they never cease from sin, they never submit to lordship, they entice unstable souls." Why do they do that? "Because their hearts (boy, this is really graphic) are trained in (what?) greed." They're experts at it. They can con money out of anybody. They want money. They want money. They want your money. They want anybody's money.

What do they do? They move into the church and because of greed they exploit you, the word from which we get emporium, which means to carry on business, to make gain from. Here's the best translation, to get rich from. They want to get rich off you. That's it. They're driven by money, greed.

And so, what do they do? Verse 3, they exploit you, they get rich off you with false words. Forgeries, phony arguments, twisted scriptures. They pervert the Scripture. They twist it to get your money. Interesting, the word "false," *plastoi*, from which we get plastic. We don't think about it anymore but plastic got that name because it was a fake. Plastic is fake, it's not real, it's not a real...it's not real wood, it's plastic we say, it's not real China, it's plastic. It's not real gold, it's plastic. Look at your car, it's not real metal, it's plastic, it's fake. Nobody ever makes plastic look like plastic. It has to look like what it isn't. That's what *plastoi* is, it's a fake. It's fabricated, it's molded to deceive. It's molded to deceive.

I was carrying a little black case the other night when I was down in Texas, a guy said, "That is beautiful leather."

I smiled. I said, "Thank you, but it's plastic."

"Oh," he said, "it looks like leather."

I said, "That's it, you got it, it's supposed to, that's the point, it's a fake, it's a forgery." I was into this text, by the way, so... It isn't real.

So they come along with fake arguments, plastic theology. It isn't really God's truth. It isn't really Christ's truth. It isn't really what the Bible says. It's molded to deceive you. And they're into immorality because they've never submitted to the lordship of Christ. He's not the Lord of their life. And they're in the business they're in to get money out of your pockets, to make themselves rich. They are dangerous.

We've seen their sphere, in the church. Their subtlety, they come in under cover. They say enough right things for us to believe them. Their sacrilege, the major point, they will deny the sovereign mastery of Christ over their life and they'll live any way they want. Their success, oh, millions follow them. Their state is a state of *aselgeia*, sensuality. Their stigma, they cause the church to be maligned because the world mocks at our claim for holiness when it sees them unmasked. The spring of their operation, greed.

Peter's got one more point, the sentence on their operation. Verse 3: "Their judgment from long ago is not idle." The verdict, the *krima*, the judgment, the sentence on them, you can translate it sentence, their sentence set long ago, compare Jude 4, their sentence established long ago.

You say, "What do you mean established long ago?" Look, the principle that God is going to damn false teachers was set in place long ago, long ago. That is a permanent principle by which God has always dealt with false teachers. It's always been so; Old Testament, New Testament, today and in the future. And he says that sentence set long ago against false prophets is not idle. What does he mean by that? It hasn't run out of gas. It isn't so old it's now worn out. It hasn't been weakened by time. It isn't ineffective, it isn't inert. It is still valid. It is still operative. It is still potent. And their destruction, he says, their eternal damnation is not asleep. And he personifies destruction as if destruction were an executioner and he says their executioner hasn't fallen asleep, He is fully awake, fully awake.

It's quite a sketch, isn't it? We're going to see much, much more as the color is filled in. And by the time we're done with this chapter, you will recognize a false teacher, if you don't already have a pretty good idea now. How alert...let me ask you this, how alert are you to those who claim to belong to Jesus Christ, claim to teach on His behalf but who will not acknowledge Him as Lord, who will not submit to His law, willingly, happily, joyfully, who will not obey His Word and His Spirit but are literally given to a liberated theology in which their lust can run rampant? The reason they desire to be teachers is so they can get rich by exploiting the people they deceive. How alert are you to them? Oh my, how many people are deceived! How many are deceived.

Satan's goal, deceive as many as possible. God's goal, destroy them all, destroy them all. They're all around us. They've always been all around us. We need to be discerning. And I believe before we're done, as I said, in this chapter, you'll have the tools of discernment.

Father, thank You again for Your time in the Word, time when we turn to You and ask You to teach us. Said some strong things tonight, but I've said them because You said them. Help us to understand that we just can't accept everybody at face value by what they say as if they spoke truth. It's not that simple. Oh it's easy to recognize the ones who teach error. They're not very subtle, really, who teach that blatant denying kind of error. It's the ones who speak about Christ, speak about His death and resurrection and who get into the church and are spies, who are doing spiritual espionage for the sake of the satanic enemy. They're so subtle. They say all the right things. They encourage people to even identify with Christ as Savior but not as Lord. People to feel comfortable with freedoms and liberties, to live anyway they want, it's all under grace, such people are deceived into thinking they're saved when they're damned. Lord, this is so difficult and we can't even tell the wheat from the tares, we can't rip them up, but we know the deception is going on. We can't separate the good from the bad, only the reapers in the end can do that. But, Lord, help us to keep our eyes open and be alert to those who are false teachers, who lead many astray and whose wretched life maligns the purity of Your truth. Give us wisdom in Christ's name. Amen.

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