

**False Prophets**  
by  
**David VanLandingham**

A prominent evangelical author writes, "Today's wave of crime, violence, pornography, promiscuity, venereal diseases, no-fault divorce, guilt-free sex education, out-of-wedlock births, abortion, homosexuality, bisexuality, AIDS, self-obsession, shattered dreams, and broken hearts can be laid right at the door of the Secular Humanist"<sup>1</sup>. "Venereal disease is a consequence of humanist propaganda".<sup>2</sup>

American would be substantially better off if Christians lived by the teachings of Jesus.

Most Christian denominations would take offense by my assertion that they do not live by the teachings of Jesus. All of them hold Jesus to be their God and in some manner or other incorporate his teachings into their doctrine; however, none that I have found fully accept the principles of the gospels as their fundamental belief system. All make various adjustments for a variety of reasons.

Christians believe that Jesus is God, a God sufficiently powerful to have created the universe, sufficiently intelligent to know all men even before the creation. They believe that after a short life on earth we will be rewarded or punished with heaven or hell. Heaven is eternal bliss significantly more wonderful than the greatest moments on earth. Hell is the eternal torment of being burned alive. Christians believe that the purpose of Jesus' life on earth was to make eternal life available to the faithful. Christians believe that the gospels are the divinely revealed life and teachings of Jesus. So, under what circumstances does it make any sense at all to deviate from the exact teachings of Jesus? If you were promised a billion dollars, something significantly less than eternal reward in heaven, would you follow a simple set of directions to the letter? What about if you were threatened with being burned alive? It simply defies logic to conclude that any human with the words of the incredible being such as the Christian God with heaven and hell at stake after just a year on earth.

The most common theological errors prevalent in modern Christianity involve divergence from the following:

- Interpretation of Jesus message is unnecessary. The gospels are clear, concise, and comprehensive and spell out exactly what is necessary for eternal life as well as provide the essential rule defining morality.
  
- Jesus did not authorize any other source for his theology.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mind Siege" by LaHaye and Noebel, Word Publishing, 2000, pg 105

<sup>2</sup> Mind Siege" by LaHaye and Noebel, Word Publishing, 2000, pg 148

- The fundamental Christian law as related to human behavior is to love one another and was defined as the responsibility to use ones talents to help the sick and the poor and treat everyone as we would want to be treated. All morality is based on this principle.
- Proactively helping the sick and poor was the first and foremost tenet taught by Jesus, it was his life, his commandments and his principal focus. Curing the sick was the prime mandate when he sent out his disciples to spread his word.
- Jesus said that belief and baptism are necessary for salvation but he never said that they were sufficient in themselves; rather, he listed other critical requirements.
- Worship is to be conducted in spirit. There is no value in worshiping for public recognition. Jesus was particularly concerned with the growth of hypocrisy.
- Prayer holds an important place in Jesus' Theology. He was perfectly clear on what was the only requirement for a prayer to be answered and also clear that exactly what was asked would be granted. That condition is sufficient belief. Without it, prayers are not answered, with it, anything asked for is possible.
- Prayer is between the human and God, conducted in secret and with the understanding that repetition or duration is unnecessary. Jesus often prayed alone.
- Charity should not be for public recognition and should not be rewarded; it loses its redemptive value.
- Soliciting charity for the primary purpose of paying ministers (especially making them wealthy) and for building expensive church structures is contrary to Jesus' intentions. Jesus' charity is focused on the poor, not enriching those who preach.
- Jesus did not establish a hierarchy but commanded that all are equal. He prohibited priests, ministers, rabbis, etc., commanding that access to heaven is through him alone.
- Sexual immorality opposes Jesus primarily with regard to adultery but also in how you treat another person, however, other than adultery; it did not play a significant role in Jesus' ministry. Since, other than adultery, sexual immorality was not defined it is necessary to refer to the Great Commandment, "do to others as you would have them do to you".

- Hate is absolutely contrary to the essence of Jesus' Philosophy. Even the most subtle encouragement of hate in any form, against any individual or class of individuals violates the greatest commandments and the essence of Christianity.

Christian Churches differ in the severity of theological errors but the fact that they do disagree on critical issues simply proves that some are in error.

Here I must, as an atheist, point out that it isn't crucial to debate historical accuracy, borrowing philosophy from other sources (oriental or Greek) or even the actual existence of Jesus. The gospels and the philosophy they contain exist. One can evaluate the philosophy without agreeing with the source.

Most would ask why Christian leaders would mislead on these critical issues. The gospels give sufficient reason. They say worship in spirit; pray in secret, that Jesus is the sole teacher, that none are to be recognized as rabbi or priest (minister). Christian churches cannot survive without changing these critical requirements. But then, Jesus did promise false prophets would arise and folks must be on their guard.

The value and clarity Christ's message has been guaranteed by Him. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."<sup>3</sup> Christ also promised the apostles, that following his death, "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."<sup>4</sup> "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."<sup>5</sup> Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would come almost immediately after his death, not over a period of two thousand years. "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'<sup>6</sup> He kept that promise as seen in the Acts of the Apostles, "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit"<sup>7</sup> Christ clearly promised that his message will be made clear and

---

<sup>3</sup> Lk 12:1

<sup>4</sup> Jn 14:26

<sup>5</sup> Jn 15:26

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:3-5

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:1

would even be reinforced by the Holy Spirit. The only complete source of Christ's message is in the Gospels which therefore must be the fulfillment of Christ's promise.

Christ said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"<sup>8</sup>

"Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."<sup>9</sup> We are told that all will be made clear and to watch out for the ministers who pretend otherwise. Earlier we have seen that we are required to identify the false prophets. This would not be a valid requirement if we were not given the intellectual understanding to do so. "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ."<sup>10</sup> If Christ is our teacher, cannot we rely on his word as sufficient? If none are to be called minister or teacher, are not we left up to our selves to read and understand Christ's message.

Christ said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"<sup>11</sup>

Do we have the authority to override Christ's message?

Christ proved that he was intolerant of those who would change Gods teachings, "Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'<sup>12</sup>

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."<sup>13</sup> "and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."<sup>14</sup> "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'<sup>15</sup> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside

---

<sup>8</sup> Mt 24:35

<sup>9</sup> Lk 12:1

<sup>10</sup> Mt 23:8

<sup>11</sup> Mt 24:35

<sup>12</sup> Mt 15:6

<sup>13</sup> Mt 7:15

<sup>14</sup> Mt 24:11

<sup>15</sup> Mt 23:5

of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”<sup>16</sup> We have two thousand years of Christian history from which to substantiate Christ’s warning. Greed, self-indulgence, and the desire to impress others were anticipated by Christ as the reason people will pervert his teachings.

---

<sup>16</sup> Mt 23:25