

Bad Shepherds

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Recently, I read a passage of scripture in Jeremiah and was immediately stuck by how accurately the verses portrayed the characteristics of the apostate shepherds, teachers, and prophets, so prevalent in the church today. It drove me to pull out other scriptures to see if I could get an overall picture of what GOD considers to be a bad (or false)shepherd. I should not have found it surprising that God so accurately described over two thousand years ago, those I would run across in my trek through the wilderness of false doctrine.

This is in no way a comprehensive list and if you find other scriptures that address these false shepherds, teachers, pastors, teachers and prophets, I would be grateful if you pass them along. I have first given a list of characteristics then backed them up with scripture, adding a short personal commentary.

Read Jeremiah Ch 23

Characteristics of False Shepherds, Teachers and Prophets According to Scripture

- They appear harmless but are not
- They are extortioners and robbers
- They come to extract a price from the sheep
- They are capable of showing signs and wonders
- They are able to deceive
- They bring a slow and gradual introduction of heresies
- They cause people to despise and speak ill of the truth
- They use false emotion and pretend to be affected by their own words
- They cleverly craft their words to have an effect in order to deceive
- They traffic in sheep and use them for the personal gain
- They use false and deceptive visions
- They claim to hear and speak for God but fail to uncover sin in the flock.
- They do not truly loose the captives but fill them with false hope and delusions
- They are greedy and never have enough
- They teach things that they do not understand
- They are territorial
- They lead people along a difficult path instead of leading them to a place of rest
- They feed themselves but do not feed the sheep
- They feast on the very ones they are supposed to be feeding
- They do not strengthen the weak
- They do not truly heal the sick
- They do not bind up the broken
- They do not seek after those they have driven away
- They do not seek the lost
- They lead the flock with force and cruelty
- They do not care about sheep who have wandered off
- They leave the sheep open to attack from beasts of the field
- They prophesy lies and false visions
- Their words are empty, worthless and deceitful
- They speak that all is well to people who are clearly in sin and at enmity with God
- They say they speak for the Lord but they don't
- They say the Lord has sent them but He hasn't
- Their visions come from their own heart and not from the Lord's
- They prophesy witchcraft and divination

- They are hirelings and only in it for themselves
- They make people vain
- They falsely tell people that no harm will befall them instead of warning them
- They destroy and scatter the sheep
- They commit adultery
- They walk in lies
- They reinforce sin by telling people what they want to hear
- They claim their dreams are from the Lord
- They cause people to prefer to be led by dreams and visions rather than the word of God.
- They cause people to exchange true worship for pagan worship

List of Scriptural References

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Matt. 7:15)

The word “ravening”, comes from the Greek word “harpax”, which can also mean an extortioner or a robber. These false prophets have literally come to extract a price from the sheep.

They appear one way but are really another, in other words they are duplicitous. They have a voracious appetite; inwardly they would tear the flesh from our bones and devour us, but outwardly they pretend to be harmless, docile and righteous.

For false Christ's and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the upright. (Matt. 24:24)

They are capable of performing signs and wonders that are virtually indistinguishable from the real ones.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (II Peter 2:1-2)

The word pernicious means having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual or subtle way. In other words false teachers, will have a slow destructive effect in a subtle way. They will cause people to despise and speak ill of the truth because of their negative example.

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. (II Peter 2:30)

To feign means to pretend to be affected by (a feeling, state, or injury): Plastos means to mould or form. The word for “make merchandise of”, is the Greek word “emporeuomai” which means to deal in, or to use for personal gain. In other words, these wolves will mold or form their words carefully, even using false emotion and pretending to be affected by them, in order to deceive. Their ultimate goal is money; they want to use the sheep for their own personal gain.

Your prophets have seen for you

False and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity,

To bring back your captives, But have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions

They are not able to loose those held captive but have filled their listeners with false hope and delusions.

(Lam. 2:14)

Their visions are false and deceptive; they claim to hear and speak for God but fail to uncover the iniquity of those to whom they prophesy!

Yes, they are greedy dogs

Which never have enough.

And they are shepherds

Who cannot understand;

They all look to their own way,

Every one for his own gain,

From his own territory. (Isaiah 56:11)

They are greedy and no matter what they have it is never enough. They are supposed to be shepherds but they cannot teach when they themselves do not understand. They are looking to their own way instead of THE Way. They are out for their own gain, and are Territorial.

“My people have been lost sheep.

Their shepherds have led them astray;

They have turned them away on the mountains.

They have gone from mountain to hill;

They have forgotten their resting place. (Jer. 50:6)

The people that they are supposed to be shepherding are lost because THEY have led them astray. They have led them by way of a difficult path instead of leading them to a place of rest.

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who

feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. (Ezek. 34:2-3)

They are supposed to be feeding the sheep but instead feed themselves. They are clothed with wool provided by the sheep themselves and are actually feasting on the very ones they are supposed to be leading!

The sheep are being sacrificed so the wicked shepherd can have the very best. In contrast, the Good Shepherd feeds his sheep, and is willing lay down His life for them.

The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. (Ezek. 34:4)

They have not strengthened the weak, or healed the sick and broken, nor have they bound their wounds. They do not care about the ones they have driven away, nor do they care about the ones who have wandered off. They rule the flock by force and by cruelty.

‘Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: “As I live,” says the Lord God, “surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock” therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.” (Ezek 34:7-10)

The apathy of the shepherd causes the flock to be at the mercy of every meat-eating beast. The false shepherd is a hireling and is only in it for his own gain.

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. (Jer. 14:14-15)

The false prophets prophesy lies, false visions, and empty deceitful words that are their own and not God's. God has not sent them, nor has he spoken to them. They prophesy witchcraft and divination and are speaking peace when there is none.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, [and] not out of the mouth of the LORD. 17 They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. (Jer. 23:16)

They speak that no evil shall befall the ones who are following God instead of warning them. Clearly it is never the Lord's heart to placate people in their sin, but rather to implore them to turn from their wickedness to avoid coming judgment. It is obvious that these prophecies originate within the wicked hearts of the false prophets and do not come from the mouth of the Lord.

I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (Jer. 23:21)

God has not sent them (although they claim he has) and he has not spoken to them (yet they claim He did). If they were truly speaking for the Lord then they would have turned the people from their wicked ways but they did not.

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the Lord. (Jer. 23:1-3)

These wicked shepherds destroy and scatter the sheep, drive them away and refuse to tend their needs.

Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem:

They commit adultery and walk in lies;

They also strengthen the hands of evildoers,

So that no one turns back from his wickedness.

All of them are like Sodom to Me,

And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

They commit adultery, they lie, instead of calling out and dealing with the sin in the lives of the sheep they reinforce the sin by telling the sheep what they want to hear (Jer. 23:14)

They lie and commit adultery and instead of dealing with people's sin they actually reinforce it by telling them what they want to hear.

"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets

of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. (Jer. 23:25)

They claim their dreams are from the Lord, yet they lie and are prophesying out of deceitfulness of flesh. They cause the people to prefer being led by their dreams and visions instead of by the Lord and His Word. They deceive people in exchanging true worship for pagan worship

Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” says the Lord, “and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,” says the Lord. (Jer.23:32)

They lie and prophesy false dreams and because of their recklessness people are led into sin. They do not profit the people whatsoever because the Lord did not send them.