

THE TWO TREES

During the month of August, we will study the final section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.7:13-29).

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five great discourses taught by Jesus Christ in the Book of Matthew.

- Matt.5-7 Sermon on Mount Discourse (Matt.7:28).
- Matt.10 Sending Missionaries Discourse (Matt.11:1).
- Matt.13 Spiritual Parables Discourse (Matt.13:53).
- Matt.18 Spiritual Instruction on Kingdom of Heaven Discourse (Matt.19:1).
- Matt.24-25 Sermon on Mount of Olives Discourse (Matt.26:1)

Our special study from the Sermon on Mount comes from the final section where Jesus stressed the importance of the application of the doctrines taught in it (Matt.7:13-29).

The final section of the Sermon on Mount closes with four metaphors that we will study in our special.

- Two Gates Wide vs. Narrow (Matt.7:13-14)
- **Two Trees** **Bad and Good** **(Matt.7:15-20)**
- Two Followers False and True (Matt.7:21-23)
- Two Builders Foolish and Wise (Matt.7:24-27)

This week we will study the metaphor of the Two Trees – “A **good tree** cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a **bad tree** produce good fruit.” (Matt.7:18)

Today’s lesson will study five aspects of the Two Trees - “So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

1. Like the metaphor of the Two Gates, the metaphor of the Two Trees opens with a Greek command: “beware (proseucho / p.a.impv.2pl) of false prophets.”

It was a warning against false prophets who propagate evil doctrines called bad fruits from bad trees (Matt.7:18).

This metaphor reminds us of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden (Gen.2:16-17; 3:3-7).

After the fall of Adam, the Tree of Knowledge became two separate trees like in our metaphor. The good tree produces good fruit (Jesus Christ and true prophets) and the bad tree produces bad fruit (Satan and false prophets).

2. The false prophets present themselves in disguise in order to deceive.

This is a strategy of Satan – “In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” (2 Cor.2:11)

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, **disguising** themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan **disguises** himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also **disguise** themselves as servants of righteousness; **whose end shall be according to their deeds.**” (2 Cor.11:13-15)

“Beware of the **false prophets**, who come to you in **sheep’s clothing**, but inwardly are **ravenous wolves.**” (Matt.7:15) Their disguise is to appear as teachers of doctrinal truth.

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the **devil**, prowls about **like a roaring lion**, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Pet.5:8)

3. **Discernment of false prophets or the bad tree comes from their bad fruit.**

But in order to discern “false” doctrines the believer must be knowledgeable of “true” doctrine.

Again we learn this from the experience of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Knowledge (Gen.2:17; 3:1-7): “But I am afraid, lest as the **serpent deceived Eve** by his craftiness, your **minds** should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” (2 Cor.11:3)

Sheep knows the difference between sheep and wolves. But it becomes much more difficult to know the difference between a sheep and a wolf in sheep clothing. Therefore the devil disguises himself and his wolves in sheep clothing.

So how can we discern the different? “**You will know them by their fruits**. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?” (Matt.7:16) [**Don’t eat bad food/ false teachings!**]

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you**, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, **speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples** after them.” (Acts 20:28-30; John 10:12-13, 16; Matt.26:31)

4. **We evaluate a good communicator of the Word of God by the consistency of his doctrinal teaching within the Scriptures regarding the plan of God.**

“As also in all his letter, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the **untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures**, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **be on your guard** lest, being carried away by the **error of unprincipled men**, you fall from your own steadfastness. But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2 Pet.3:16-18)

“Inwardly (esothern) are ravenous wolves.” (Matt.7:15b; 10:16) “Now you Pharisees clean the **outside** of the cup and of the platter; but **inside** of your, you are full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? (Luke 11:39-40)

5. **Divine judgment will be given to the false prophets.**

“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt.7:19)

“The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt.3:10) “**Time is running out; judgment is near.**” (Ryrie Study Bible/ nation of Israel)

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.” (John 15:2; 1 Cor.11:30; 1 John 5:16)

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

“If you abide in Me, and My word abides in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:7, 10)