

# WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING AND HIRELINGS

A collection of articles exposing and warning against false evangelists, unfaithful shepherds, and treacherous religious leaders.

## Wolves in Sheep's Clothing and Hirelings

*What the Scripture has to say concerning the wolf, the false shepherd, the hireling, and others who, disguised as faithful shepherds, prey upon and ravage the flock of God.*

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### I. Introduction

In any generation, the faithful pastor or evangelist—a man who genuinely has been called by and ordained of God—is in the minority. And in every generation, false prophets and false shepherds abound, typically enjoying a large popular following and support of the ruling elite. This situation—the malevolent majority versus the faithful few—was characteristic of Israel under the Old Covenant, and it is characteristic of the Church under the New.

The Scripture has much to say concerning the false shepherd and concerning predators who feed upon the flock. The category 'false shepherd' is a broad and general category, into which the Scripture places deceivers of all sort. This is because the Scripture portrays the people as sheep, and their spiritual leaders, as shepherds.

The Lord has assigned to the shepherd a multitude of responsibilities. But the men who today stand in the pulpits of the land generally are unaware of the responsibilities of the shepherd; moreover, most of them lack the calling of God, the gift of evangelist or pastor-teacher, and the necessary equipping for the ministry, and consequently are incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities of the shepherd. Many of these men

are predators, having entered into the ministry because of lust, greed, or other sinister motivation. And, even among the men who genuinely have been called of the Lord to the ministry of the Gospel, many have demonstrated themselves unfaithful and thus unworthy of the calling.

In the animal realm, the sheep by nature is defenseless and unable to protect itself from the predator. Consequently, a primary responsibility of the shepherd is protection of the flock. So also it is with the sheep in the spiritual realm: the responsibility of protecting the sheep within the local assembly falls primarily upon the pastor of the assembly, with support of the sheep who have grown to maturity in the spiritual realm.

#### 1. The Threat of the False Prophet.

Christ Jesus warned against the false prophets, calling them 'ravening wolves' who disguise themselves in sheep's clothing, in order to prey upon the flock of God:

**15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt**

tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 **Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?** 23 **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**

– Matthew 7:15–23

## 2. The Treachery of the Hireling.

And Jesus condemns the hireling, who, having no vested interest in the flock and no true love of the sheep, flees when the wolf approaches; whereas the faithful shepherd stands up to the wolf, in order to deliver the sheep:

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11 **I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.** 12 **But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.** 13 **The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.** 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

– John 10:7–15

But few heed the warnings of Jesus. Most erroneously think that anyone who *calls* himself a ‘Christian’ indeed *is* a Christian; most accept without question the claim of anyone who purports to be a ‘pastor’ or an ‘evangelist’, despite the fact that the Scripture commands that the genuineness of such men be tested. Because of this characteristic naivety, countless sheep have been slain and devoured by false evangelists, unfaithful shepherds, and treacherous religious leaders.

## II. The Faithful Shepherd.

The true and faithful man of God typically is working in obscurity and is operating on a shoestring budget. Often he is persecuted by the Establishment, for, of all the forces which are at work in the *kosmos*, the Christian Faith alone is capable of bringing about a transformation of the *kosmos*, and thus, the Christian Faith alone poses a threat to the ruling elite. And only the true and faithful pastor or evangelist is proclaiming the unadulterated Christian Faith.

The faithful shepherd cares for the needs of the sheep which the Lord has placed under his care: he leads the flock to green pasture and to still waters; he feeds by hand the lambs;

he binds and anoints wounds; he protects the sheep from the bullying of goats in the herd; he searches out the lost sheep which has gone astray; he rescues the sheep which has fallen into a pit; he combats and drives away the wolf, the lion, and the bear when they attempt to prey upon the flock.

## III. The Unfaithful Shepherd.

Conversely, in any generation, the unfaithful shepherd—a man who has no calling of God, or, having a calling, has proven himself unfaithful—is in the majority. Typically being prominent and well-financed, he not infrequently is in the covert employ of the Establishment. Such a man works hand-in-glove with the ruling elite, being complicit in the countless deceptions which are vital to maintenance of the Establishment.

The religion which the unfaithful shepherd proclaims and teaches is a counterfeit of the Christian Faith of the Scripture, a counterfeit which, through extensive adulteration, has been rendered benign, and thus poses no threat to the Establishment. The false Christianity which he has espoused and which he propagates is a comfortable religion which provides assurance while making no demands, a religion which stimulates the emotion while soothing the conscience. Consequently, the false shepherd typically enjoys popular acclaim:

26 Woe unto you, **when all men shall speak well of you!** for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

– Luke 6:26

## 1. The Path to Infidelity.

There is a variety of ways in which a man may become a treacherous minister:

- In some instances, a man genuinely is called by the Lord, but subsequently falls into temptation and betrays his trust.
- Ofttimes, a man has no genuine calling, but nevertheless enters the ministry by an accident of circumstance, or because of the misguided urging of family and associates. For example, the son of a minister erroneously may think himself to have a calling to the ministry, as a matter of family heritage.
- A man having no calling of the Lord may enter the ministry because he has a mistaken view of the role of the pastor with respect to the local assembly. Such a man often is a retired corporate executive or military officer, who erroneously thinks the primary responsibility of the pastor to be that of planning and implementing a course of action, and the responsibility of the congregation to be that of rendering to the pastor unconditional allegiance and unquestioning obedience. Once in the pulpit, such a man typically leads his congregation into heresies—such as patriotism, veneration of the military, and psychology—which are adaptations of practices found in the realm of business or the military. And of still greater concern is the fact that a man who, in the military, has rendered loyal service unto Caesar—looting, destroying, wounding, maiming, and killing at the command of Caesar—is a criminal, and is not fit to

shepherd the flock of God, apart from exit from the military, repentance, and conversion.

- In many cases, a man enters the ministry because he is motivated by a lust for prestige and power, or out of the love of money. Such a man, easily being compromised, typically becomes a hireling in the willing employ of the Establishment, or finds himself blackmailed into doing the bidding of the Establishment.
- In not a few cases, a man enters the ministry because, being incompetent and slothful, he is incapable of holding gainful employment. Such a man sees in the ministry a easy way to obtain for himself the necessities of life.
- It not infrequently is the case that a man is a wolf in sheep's clothing, entering the ministry with the specific purpose of opposing the cause of Christ, by teaching and proclaiming a false gospel. In almost every case, such a man is a covert Jew, or a Jew who falsely claims to have been converted to the Christian Faith.

Irrespective of the reason for which a man enters the ministry of the Gospel, if he has no legitimate calling, he is treacherous. Lacking the spiritual gifts which accompany the calling of God, such a man is incapable of caring for the needs of the sheep; he is incapable of leading the flock to green pasture and to still waters; he is incapable of hand-feeding the lambs; he is incapable of binding and anointing wounds; he is incapable of protecting the sheep from the bullying of goats in the herd; he is incapable of searching out the lost sheep which has gone astray; he is incapable of rescuing the sheep which has fallen into a pit; he is incapable of combating and driving away the wolf, the lion, and the bear when they attempt to prey upon the flock.

Even should such a man think himself devoid of sinister intent, if he has no legitimate calling he nonetheless is treacherous. His treachery lies in the fact that he misrepresents both his calling and his competency. By his representation, he beckons men to rely upon him to minister to their needs, and in doing so he promises that which he cannot possibly deliver.

## 2. A. D. vinely-Ordained Double Standard.

While the Scripture commands tolerance for the Christian brother who is immature or weak in the Faith, at the same time the Scripture declares that there is to be no tolerance for the unfaithful shepherd who leads astray the sheep, turning them from the Way of Life. When speaking of the false shepherd, the language of the Scripture, both Old Covenant and New, is, by any standard, harsh. Several passages of the Scripture give specific commands to the local assembly regarding the false teacher:

- According to I Timothy 5:19–20, the elder who sins (false teaching being a sin) is to be confronted in the presence of the entire local assembly, and rebuked. The Greek word translated 'rebuke' is *elegcho*; it denotes a rebuke which is harsh to the extent that it strikes fear into the heart of all who witness the rebuke and all who subsequently hear of the rebuke.

<sup>1</sup>The tradition of the elders repeatedly was condemned by Jesus. The tradition was codified early in the Christian era, and today is known as the Babylonian Talmud. It is the Talmud, rather than the Pentateuch, which is the basis of the modern-day Jewish religion, which properly is called Talmudic Judaism.

- According to Titus 1:7–16, the mouths of “*unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision*” must be stopped (*epistomizo*, to bridle, meaning to silence). The fact that the offenders are unruly, together with the fact that no means is specified by which they are to be silenced, suggests that such individuals must be driven out of the congregation. From the context, it is apparent that the command for sharp rebuke (*elegcho*) found in verses 13–14 does not apply to the offenders; rather, it is given with respect to members of the congregation who have been swayed by the deceivers; they are to rebuke, “*that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men [that is, the tradition of the elders]<sup>1</sup> that turn from the truth*”.
- According to II John 1:7–11, the Christian is not to be courteous, polite, or even civil in his behaviour toward one who does not abide in the ‘doctrine of Christ’—that is, toward one who does not confess that Jesus (as the Christ) is come in the flesh. The Christian is not to allow such an individual to enter into his dwelling, nor is he even to give a greeting or salutation (*chairo*, to rejoice) to such a one—for to do so would be to give the deceiver encouragement, and to encourage the deceiver is to become partaker in his evil deeds.

## 3. Repentance Not an Option for the Unfaithful Shepherd.

The case of Saul—the king of Israel whom the Lord deposed—appears to be applicable to this matter. As king, Saul was shepherd of the nation Israel. When Saul betrayed his trust, he was deposed and was refused reprieve. When dealing with a false teacher, false shepherd, or predator who, after being exposed, claims to have repented and asks forgiveness or even restoration, the elders of the local assembly should ask themselves whether the risk to the sheep allows them to consider the possibility of forgiveness and restoration. They should ask themselves whether the individual in question truly is a Christian; perhaps he is nothing more than talented actor. To extend mercy to the wolf is to place the flock in jeopardy. Both secular history the Scripture record instance after instance in which just men have suffered greatly and others have been slain because they failed to discern the true character of an individual who subsequently proved to be an adversary.

## 4. Naivety of the Sheep toward the Predator.

As with the literal sheep, so also with the Christian: the sheep inherently lacks discernment, and thus is unable to recognize the predator. Accordingly, the Lord has given to certain men the spiritual gift of pastor and teacher, that, through the teaching of the Word of God, they may impart discernment to the flock, and thereby protect the flock from the predator. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the pastor to drive from the local assembly such predators as may gain entry.

With respect to his understanding of the wolf, the Christian falls into one of several categories:

- There are Christians who, because of spiritual immaturity, lack the discernment to recognize the wolf.
- There are Christians who, having a measure of discernment regarding false teaching, recognize the wolf, but foolishly refuse to expose and oppose him, because they find the wolf attractive or entertaining, or because they consider the teaching of the wolf to have value, despite the error contained in the teaching.
- There are Christians who recognize the wolf and reject his teaching; but, for fear of 'judging', refuse to expose and oppose the wolf.
- There are mature Christians who recognize the wolf, and, understanding their responsibility, expose and oppose him.

Sadly, the Christian generally has been indoctrinated with the false notion that it is sinful to judge, and that blind tolerance is a Christian virtue. This indoctrination comes both from the pulpit and from the secular world. While every Christian has heard again and again from the pulpit the warning of Matthew 7:1, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged,*" few have read the context of that verse, which shows that Jesus was speaking with respect to the self-righteous hypocrite; and few have heard from the pulpit the admonition of John 7:24, "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*" Consequently, those within the local assembly who expose and oppose the wolf often receive criticism and condemnation from fellow members of the assembly, rather than encouragement and expressions of gratitude.

But the Christian who has been instructed in the Scripture understands that the Scripture *commands* the Christian to judge (in the sense of discernment and discrimination), and that the only form of judgment which is sinful is that of unjust condemnation.

#### IV. Scriptural Warning and Admonition Concerning False Teaching, the False Shepherd, and the Predator

Many passages of the Scripture contain warnings, admonitions, and specific instruction regarding false teaching, the false teacher, the false shepherd, wayward sheep, and predators.

##### 1. Be Ware the Leaven

In some cases, the more extravagant and fanciful the lie, the more readily it is believed. But often the most effective lie is that which consists of error hidden within a body of truth, with the error being so subtle that most hearers fail to detect it. The Scripture compares doctrinal error to leaven: even as it takes but a little leaven to leaven a large lump of dough, so also it takes but a tiny amount of error to do great damage within the local assembly:

<sup>2</sup>There never has been, nor ever shall be a rebellion in the angelic realm. All angels are obedient servants of the Creator, and there are no 'fallen' angels. Within the pages of the Scripture, the meaning of the terms 'Satan' and 'the Devil' varies with the context, but the terms generally refer to

Your glorying is not good. **Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?**

– I Corinthians 5:6

##### 2. Prove All Things

The Christian is commanded to inspect that which is taught, lest he be deceived. He is to prove all things, from the Scripture:

**Prove all things;** hold fast that which is good.

– I Thessalonians 5:21

##### 3. Test the Teacher

Moreover, the Christian is commanded to test the teachers (literally, 'every spirit'); this testing has to do primarily with teaching which presents a false Christ:

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, **but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.** 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

– I John 4:1–3

##### 4. Be Ware of Traitors

While some predators come from without, others arise from within the flock:

29 **For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.** 30 **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.** 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

– Acts 20:29–31

##### 5. Be Ware Disguised Agents of Human Government

Paul, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, portrays the Christian Way of Life as a warfare which is waged against enemies of a spiritual nature:

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

– II Corinthians 10:3–6

Having been indoctrinated from the Pulpit with Jewish myth concerning a supposed 'angelic conflict' and 'fallen angels', Christians generally have taken this passage to mean that

the Christian is struggling against angelic beings, and that the terms 'strong holds', 'imagination', and 'every high thing' refer to entities in the spiritual realm. But such a fanciful interpretation has no correspondence with reality.<sup>2</sup> The declaration of Paul simply reflects the fact that human government is a system which transcends the individuals who serve as its human operatives. Even were it possible in one stroke with weapons of the flesh to eliminate every human operative and every physical vestige of human government, the spirit of rebellion which characterized Adam in the Garden would persist and would result in the regeneration of human government.

The term 'angel' (which in the Greek is *aggelos* does not necessarily refer to a spiritual creature; the basic meaning of *aggelos* is 'messenger'. And, contrary to popular notion, the term 'Satan' is not a name, nor does it refer to the spiritual creature commonly known as an angel; rather, taken from the Hebrew, the word means 'adversary'. In the following passage, Paul personifies the spirit of human government, which is the antithesis of the Kingdom of God:

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

– II Corinthians 11:13–15

## 6. Rebuke Sinful Elders

Elders who, upon examination, are found guilty of sin are to be rebuked before the entire local assembly:

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 **Them that sin rebuke before all**, that others also may fear.

– I Timothy 5:19–20

## 7. Silence the Deceiver and Rebuke the Deceived

One of the responsibilities of the overseer or pastor of the local assembly is to 'stop the mouth' of deceivers who, for the sake of money, subvert the assembly with lies, commandments of men, and Jewish myth. Moreover, the overseer is to rebuke sharply members of the assembly who have given heed to such false teaching:

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 **For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.** 12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their

human government as the adversary of God and of the righteous. The concepts of angelic rebellion and fallen angels are central to a clever strategy by which false teachers as agents of the Establishment seek to obscure the adversarial relationship between the governments of man and the ruling authority of the Lord God. Once a man has been indoctrinated with the Jewish mythology by which an angelic conflict is raging in the realm of Heaven, it is almost impossible to convince him that the terms 'Satan' and 'the Devil' actually refer to human government.

own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. **Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;** 14 **Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.** 15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. 16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

– Titus 1:7–16

## 8. Reprove, Rebuke, and Exhort the Straying

Reproof, rebuke, and exhortation is required in addition to teaching; for the sheep have a tendency to stray from the truth:

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.** 3 **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;** 4 **And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.**

– II Timothy 4:1–4

## 9. Impart Discernment

It is sound teaching, leading to a perfect knowledge of the Christian Faith, which prevents the believer from being carried about by every wind of false teaching crafted by deceitful false teachers:

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;** 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

– Ephesians 4:11–16

## 10. Feed the Flock

The shepherd is to feed the flock, and to do so willingly and with humility:

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,

and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 **Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;** 3 **Neither as being lords over God's heritage,** but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

– I Peter 5:1–4

## 11. Give Neither Support Nor Encouragement to the Deceiver

The Christian is not to give even the least support or encouragement to the false teacher; even to utter a civil greeting to such a one is to partake of his evil deeds:

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 **If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:** 11 **For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.**

– II John 1:7–11

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*These, having put the world in commotion, are also here present...and these all do contrary to the decree of Caesar, saying another to be king—Jesus.*

– Acts 17:6–7

*We ought obey God rather than men.*

– Acts 5:29