

NBTS
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CHRIST'S ADMONITION ON FALSE PROPHETS IN MATTHEW 7:15-20 AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH IN NIGERIA

A thesis in the department of THEOLOGY
Faculty of Theological Studies

Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies University of Jos,
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF
DIVINITY of the UNIVERSITY OF JOS

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2013-0622

NBTS09/0097

June 2012.

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ABSTRACT

Prophecy provided humanity with divine messages. Prophecy could be foretelling or forth-telling. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ was not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. Hence He is the greatest prophet who brought God's message to the whole world. Because of the benefits attached to the gift of prophecy many people have been disguising to be prophets. They capitalize on the inevitability of problems in the world and thus make merchandise of people. This is the reason why Jesus Christ forewarned his disciples to be watchful. The writer employed historical, exegetical and expository methods in addressing the stated problems. Information used in this study is derived secondary sources which include: books, Bibles (of various versions), commentaries, concordances, Bible dictionaries, periodicals, pamphlets, journals, and unpublished materials. The writer adopted lexical, syntactical and grammatical analysis as his method of operation in this study. This study revealed that the gift of prophecy will help Christian ministers to adequately minister to their church members without unnecessary delay which can worn out both the minister and those who are being ministered to. This paper discovered that prophecy reveals the mysteries of God's kingdom to humanity. Contemporary Christians have to examine prophecies whether they are truly of God or not. More so it is imperative for them to check the motive behind their messages whether it is for their personal gains or fame. It is glaring that false prophecy will definitely throw its carrier into the hell.

he/she is a true prophet or a false one so as to stay away from deceit and cling to the truth of the Word of God.

Having defined the meaning of prophet/prophecy, this presents the various characteristics of true prophets which distinguish them from the false ones. These include the fact they are messengers of God; they minister under God's authority; they minister in absolute obedience; they are totally committed; they are compassionate; they are patriotic; they are not cowards; and they are people of faith. Distinguishing between false and true prophets is very difficult but it is discovered that the following measures could be taken in such difficult exercise: The true prophet must be loyal to the biblical faith directing one to worship Yahweh alone; the words of the prophet must be fulfilled; words of the prophet must not contradict previous prophecies in the Scriptures; and true prophecy must not disregard moral realities.

The exegesis reveals that false prophets are ravening wolves. In their true nature, they are rapacious; voraciously devouring; hungry to rage. These false prophets assume the appearance of holiness in order that they might the more readily gain the property of the people. They are full of extortion and excess. They are out for self and personal gains, ego recognition, fame, prestige, position livelihood, career and comfort. However, their terrible future is severe judgment from the Lord of the church.

5.3 Conclusion

This paper has successfully solved the problems of "Who is a prophet?" "Who is a false prophet?" "What is a wolf?" "Why will a Wolf appear in sheep clothing?" "How can a wolf in sheep clothing be identified?" "How can the sheep be prevented from the

invasion of wolves?” Having presented prophets as the spokesmen of God this paper also presents false prophets as rapacious; voraciously devouring and hungry to rage. These false prophets assume the appearance of holiness in order that they might the more readily gain the property of the people. They are full of extortion and excess. They are out for self and personal gains, ego recognition, fame, prestige, position livelihood, career and comfort. The major way to identify them is their fruit. And finally this paper presents the contemporary Christians with the surest way to prevent false prophets from invading them. It says, “Test all spirits whether they are of God.”

5.4 Recommendations

Having understood the in-depth meaning of Matthew 7:15-20 and challenges facing contemporary church from the devil incarnate prophets the writer of this paper hereby recommends that:

1. Prophecy should be identified as a ministry gift from God which is very crucial for the body of Christ.
2. Because of the possibility of misconceptions church leaders should be devoted to sound biblical teaching which will guard church members from the deadly arrows of false prophets.
3. Contemporary Christians should always test every spirit (cf. 1 John 4:1) if they are truly of God.
4. It is recommended that contemporary ministers of the gospel should be well rooted in theological education. However feels that God is calling him/her into the

Christian ministry should see to it that he/she is adequately trained as the Lord of the church trained His disciples before He sent them out on their ministries.

5. Theologians should be more committed to providing sound biblical theology to theological students. This will provide them with adequate knowledge to withstand the challenges of false prophets of their time.
6. Christian denominations should encourage theological institutions by raising adequate financial resources for the smooth running these institutions.
7. Pastors in training should learn to apply their theological exposure to everyday life in their context.
8. Further studies should carried out on this subject matter especially in the area of using divine message in solving contemporary threats of false prophets/false prophets.