
The Story of Jesus

Published By Evangelist Van Billingsley

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Beware of false prophets!

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” -- Matthew 7:15

We are often criticized when we carry out the instructions given in the context of this verse, warning the flock of the wolves among them. We are often accused of criticizing other Christians, preachers, etc. We are told we should

respect other people’s beliefs and basically we are criticized for being critical, which is pretty hypocritical in itself. The fact is we are given these warnings and instructions repeatedly in the Bible; it is stressed in almost every epistle, and we must not neglect these warnings.

We’ll deal with this subject to some degree in our message for this issue, so for now I will just remind you to “Beware!”

Featured Sermon by Evangelist Van Billingsley

“Fruit”

The sermon for this issue is compiled from a series I am doing at our mission concerning the analogies of fruit in the Word of God. Jesus made it clear to us that we are expected to bear fruit as a Christian. He said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:” (John 15:16a). This should be a lasting and continuous fruit, a fruit that remains.

There is often confusion over what fruit represents in the various texts. We should understand the context of each passage. In the broadest sense, fruit is the seed bearing fleshy growth of vegetation. It is sometimes edible but often deadly. It is in this light that our first example uses this analogy. We will first see fruits judged by their **Food Value**.

(Matt. 7:15-23)

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.
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From the Desk of the Editor



We are now well into the year 2007, and there are many fitting slogans and mottos such as one displayed across the platform in a church I was in recently, "More for heaven in 2007." We should certainly consider where our treasure is as we write this year in the history of our lives.

Since this is our first issue for this year, I'll take some time to summarize the past year for our ministries. Our mission work in my home area faced many changes this past year and we've already reported the move to the new building dedicated entirely to the mission and to my ministry office. We had a great year of events such as youth camp, VBS, wrapping up with various Christmas programs and activities. The one major change we've not yet reported to you is our name change.

When we began this mission work 5 1/2 years ago, we incorporated the name used in all our other ministry endeavors calling it "The Story of Jesus Children's Mission." Eventually, this cumbersome name was shortened to "The Children's Mission" to make things simpler and to lesson the distinction between the mission and the home church. With the growth and passing years, our mission work faced a new dilemma. Some of our children were growing into their teens and nearing adulthood as we were also trying to reach the parents of the children, so it became increasingly troublesome to refer to the Mission as "The Children's Mission." With the possibility that God could birth a local church out of this ministry, and the current changes in our makeup, we began to see the need to remove "Children" from our name and initiate a name which could follow us into whatever God does with us. We knew we wanted to keep the same theme as in our beginning. "The Story of Jesus" is the gospel and our purpose is to spread the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With this we settled on "Gospel Light Baptist Mission." This new name became official on our Fifth Anniversary Sunday, October 15, 2006. If God leads this work to become an Independent Baptist Church at any time in the future, the word "Mission" can simply be changed to "Church." At the present time, we remain an outreach ministry of Oakside Baptist Church in LaGrange, Georgia.

Our radio ministry, "The Story of Jesus Radio Broadcast," continues on and has ex-

panded in several ways through the internet. For several years our pilot station, WOAK in LaGrange, GA has offered streaming over the Web, so we can be heard around the world every Saturday at 7:30 Eastern Time at www.woak.com; in the LaGrange area this is 90.9 FM. We have also had older broadcasts archived on our own website at www.sojministries.com. Among many other improvements in progress, we have added active content containing our most recent broadcasts which is automatically updated every Saturday at airtime. This is currently available for high speed connections only since this is the actual feed sent to the radio station to be aired. The same is available as a Podcast Feed for those using that technology.

In reference to our website, I have spent much of my slower, winter months returning to my roots of computer programming to add what's called active, dynamic content to our website. As I rewrite the various sections of the site, you'll find a much more up-to-date Web Site with many things updated automatically and others made easier for me to refresh on a consistent basis. A few examples of this are the things we've done with the radio broadcast. Another is our very own "Christian/Conservative News Center" featuring over fifteen panels of active and up-to-date news from many different sources. You'll even find one of these panels of news displayed on our main page. We've also added a weekly verse which comes straight from the memory verse given to our children at the mission each week (usually based on our sermon from that Sunday morning). If you check often you should find many more exciting additions to our site as we move forward with this project.

This web programming has also opened the door for me to do some side work for a sister ministry, which has provided some helpful support during the winter months. I consider this one of my "Tent Making" endeavors as Paul relied on to aide in his missionary life (Acts 18:3 & 1 Cor. 9:6-18). It has been just over a year since we made the move to return to full time ministry from the financial point of view, and God has been faithful to meet every need just on time even through some major trials during this time. We seek your prayers as we continue in this work for our Saviour.

A Servant of Christ,
Evangelist Van Billingsley

“Fruit”

(continued from cover) --

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.”*

This passage is often taken out of context as though it speaks of Christians in general and how to know if they are truly born again. The context declares otherwise. This passage refers specifically to prophets, or preachers and teachers of scripture. I heard a preacher on the radio say there are not numerous kinds of religion, but only two; there is true religion and there is false religion. How true this is! This passage teaches how we are to distinguish the two. Ye shall know them by their fruits.

A common misconception of this passage is that fruits refer to their results or the sincerity and efforts of their works. Verse twenty-two rules out this error. These false prophets will achieve great results and many will follow them. They will accomplish much. This is not how we know the truth about them. Do we judge a physical fruit by its color or size. Is it safe to eat if it is pretty. At this point we are determining the tree or plant from which the fruit comes. If the fruit is an apple, then it is an apple tree. We are not looking for whether the fruit is fresh or rotten or its general quality, but whether the tree produces edible fruit. Fruit is the product of the tree. The product of the prophet is teaching and doctrine. You know a false prophet by their doctrine. Just as you must know something about plants if you are to identify a fruit tree, you must know something about God’s Word to identify a prophet or a false prophet. Just as the fruit of a tree can be

beautiful, yet deadly, the flowery speech and wonderful appearance of the false prophet are the seeds of destruction.

Next we’ll see fruit judged by its **Fertility**. Jesus said, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8). Scofield points out three degrees of fruit-bearing in this passage: “Fruit,” John 15:2, “more fruit,” John 15:2, “much fruit,” John 15:5,8. This is the pattern of spiritual growth expected of believers. Remember, its in this text that Jesus states “your fruit should remain.”

We understand an important purpose of edible fruit is food consumption, but since all fruit is not edible, there must be another primary purpose for fruit. It takes no profound enlightenment to realize this purpose is reproduction. An apple tree produces apples in order to produce more apple trees which will make more apples and the cycle goes on. It’s the analogy with this cycle that pictures the fruit expected of a Christian. If an apple tree is to produce apples and a fig tree figs, then a Christian is to produce Christians. The following parable reveals the seriousness of this requirement:

(Luke 13:6-9 AV)

6 *He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

7 *Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*

8 *And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:*

9 *And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

We see serious consequences here to an unfruitful tree. Space will not permit me to cover the many texts dealing with chastisement and judgment to disobedi

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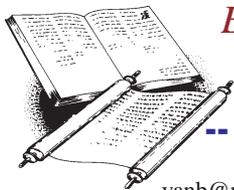
ent and unfruitful believers, but the final stage in this parable is death. Why bother with a child of God being blessed and cared for on earth by the Heavenly Father when this believer does nothing to further the gospel of Christ and through testimony is doing more to hinder this cause? Why cumbereth it the ground?

The dresser of this vineyard reveals some possible causes for this problem. Requesting another year, he wishes to address this cause. Lack of nourishment will cause a fruitless condition. Many Christians become fruitless because of not being fed, either by no personal study, no faithful church attendance or by incompetence in the pulpit. This feeding period also demonstrates the pruning, feeding, and extra care afforded us by a longsuffering God. This time of mercy is too often mistaken for approval or lack of the judgement of God. With all this said, we can see the picture in the fruit of the believer being reproduction of believers, or leading others to Christ.

Fruit from the believer is not limited solely to reproduction in the scriptures. There are other things expected to proceed from the life of the believer. This fruit is produced by the Spirit dwelling within us. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. 5:9). There are certain attributes that should be evident in the believer's life. With these, this fruit is judged by its **Fidelity**. To what is the

believer true? Does the believer's lifestyle represent truth and righteousness? Is the Christianity expressed by these believers real? More details of this fruit are given to the Galatians. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22,23). Notice these are not nine different fruits to watch for. "The fruit of the Spirit" is singular. It is one fruit portraying nine different attributes. All these things are expected from the fruit of the believer. We can't pick out two or three and say, "Those are 'my' fruits of the spirit." This fruit is the life of the believer showing forth all these attributes.

Examining and inspecting fruit can tell us a great deal about its source. Without being an expert in horticulture, you may not know what that tree is in late winter and early spring, but by the time you find apples or figs falling to the ground you'll know with certainty. In the winter you may not know a live fig tree from a dead one, but when harvest time comes you'll know if something is wrong. At this time, you may also determine the quality and variety of this fruit. In the scriptures we must consider what is to be determined by the fruit; are we looking for its variety, its quality, or simply the presence of fruit? The Word of God uses all these analogies; we must be conscious of the context and rightly divide the Word of Truth.



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proclaiming

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