

Concerning the Near Appearing or Presence of False Prophets

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon warns of the danger of false prophets who will deceive people in the end times and lead them into rebellion against the Lord.

Scripture: 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Discernment", "False Prophets"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the urgency of discerning true prophets from false ones, particularly in a time when allegiance to Jesus as Lord is increasingly challenged. He warns that false prophets will promote worldly ideals and undermine the Lordship of Christ, leading many astray with their deceptive teachings. The sermon stresses the importance of testing the spirits and adhering to the truth of Jesus' incarnation and authority. Darby encourages believers to remain steadfast in their faith and to recognize the signs of the times, as the spirit of antichrist is at work. Ultimately, he calls for vigilance and obedience to God's word to avoid falling into deception.

Transcript

1 John 4:1-6.

This little treatise is addressed to those who not only know Jesus to be a Saviour, but who know Him as their Lord, to whom their allegiance and obedience is due. Happy those who look wholly to His good pleasure as their Lord. They ought also to know that this is a time when allegiance to Him will be put to the test. It will be quite a different proof than heretofore, because Satan will deceive with far more deceivableness than heretofore. The deception will begin with unbelief in the Lordship of Jesus, and by insubjection to it; and in speaking therefore of the world and not of heavenly things, but perhaps often commending what is earthly religious, and thus enhancing the deceit.

One can hardly believe that it is not already the case, and they are not in themselves so apparent, as not to require that the spirit by which they speak should not be tried by you, that you be not misled. We are desired to try the spirits, to bring them to proof by the works of the prophets who speak by these spirits. 1st. They must be proved by their works, and their works are not holding Jesus to be come in the flesh, and therefore immediate Lord over all men; and, 2ndly, speaking of the world.

These are two very simple things, so there is no need that simple men should be deceived; it is the want of knowing Jesus as Lord that may lead even the elect into danger. Obedience to Jesus as Lord will disown what He disowns - will make a good confession of the hope. He has left, and will worship according to the power of that Spirit, that is of Him and the Father. We must not suppose, that having the spirit of antichrist is to make those, who by this spirit, speak of the world and its hopes, like men possessed so as to act violently and madly; they would in this case be quickly suspected or disregarded; but these require to be tested in the knowledge of God and of Christ, because they soberly lead from God and His obedience.

Persons would gain no credit, and that their master knows, if they were to proclaim principles that would shock mankind. In order to persuade men, they must propose some advantage, something that does honour to mankind and not dishonour, and no one is taught in the honour and reward of obedience to Christ. A condition that would need forgiveness of God they would repudiate. They will say that man in his own honour and dignity, and educated therein, has a true nobility; that death is no judgment of God; and if they acknowledge a continuance of existence after death (not a restoration of the dead to life by the power of God), it is to their own honour, and the extension of the self-importance with which they have dignified themselves.

With a future life, however, they trouble themselves but little. The mark given in addition to the denial of Christ come in the flesh is, that they speak of the world, and the world heareth them. What is now more common than these two marks? God warns us now against these. Against the world He has already warned us. The world perisheth, and the works thereof; and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are of the world, and not of the Father. The world will be judged and the works thereof, but of this those that scoff are willingly ignorant.

They have known it, or at least have heard the testimony and rejected it. No one can get rid of the judgments that God has appointed by His word. Disbelief does not alter the truth of any thing. What is, is; and what shall be, shall be. Man does not make any thing untrue by his disbelief. So nothing that is false can be made true because I am deceived by it, even if it were to my ruin; nor do my convictions make any thing true, nor bind God in His judgments, or else my judgment would bind God.

Men deceived by themselves are easily deceived by others who prophesy according to the blindness of the people; and who is so foolish as to think, that a man thinking he sees, or that he has a true mental apprehension of a thing will make it certain? God is never moved from His throne, and He will be justified in the day when all things will be judged; and if my affections are with God, I say, "Let God be true, though all be liars." Now God has revealed the resurrection of all men, and they will stand just as they now are to be tried in their present capacity of conscience, by His presence and not by their own thoughts; and their judgment will be final and righteously so, for God has not failed to make known His goodness by His word.

A true prophet believes that Jesus Christ has appeared in the flesh, and will come to blessing or judgment. Such a one therefore speaks of things to come; he speaks of the peace made by blood, and that God has loved, receives men for the sake of His Son whom He has given.

Now false prophets are in this Scripture prophesied of; they prophesy false things, and the reverse of God's judgment of the world. They will speak of the capacities of it and its greatness; of the perfectibility of man, and of the world's institutions becoming his noble condition, and the world heareth them. How quickly are the ears of man caught by the false evangelist, or these inspired pretenders! How Christ's coming to judgment, and as Lord over the world would be scorned, though the price was paid for his

deliverance from Satan in body and soul, as well as that for other men!

It is quite true, that at present some men have not gone as far as others in the denial of the Lordship of Jesus, but their words and position are in a strange contradiction one to the other. Religion is not yet always rejected by those who listen to the false prophets, but few would listen, did any do more than accidentally speak of it. Man was so formed of God, that some acknowledgment of Him is natural, and necessary to him as a right condition of his existence. Wholly to reject is to denaturalise himself; but they do not acknowledge a Lordship in Jesus, and the world heareth them. Politics, as we daily know them, are an unbelief of the Lord as Lord. Man as man, sufficient to himself, is the ground of their doctrine; and as the Egyptian said of his river, "The river is mine own, I have made it for myself." It is a simple character to try them by, and it seems a sweeping judgment; but God judgeth all things in truth, and giveth a simple rule to judge by, and all that is not in Christ will be found not of Him. A false prophet is one not confessing Jesus, and their word is about the world independently of God, and the world gives them heed; these are they that speak by the spirit of antichrist. The apostle says many false prophets are gone out into the world. If any man knows the true extent of the call that God has made by the apostle, and by those who follow the truth he delivers, he listeneth not to such at all.

Now the spirits and prophets that speak by them are prophesied of; and because they do the reverse of what true prophets do, they are false prophets, and they are spoken of as to appear in these latter times, when all things are hastening to the time of God's interference in the world by His judgments against the rebellious; and the spirit is called the spirit of antichrist, because it is set against the Lordship of Jesus over the world, and will fully exist in antichrist when he is manifested. Those that are of God overcome the seduction and turn away, because they have a spirit in them that is greater than the spirit that is in the false prophets. But let us not conceal from ourselves how plain the distinction is made by the Word of God between one spirit and the other. Nor let us think less of the grace of God to man in Christ, or to ourselves who believe, for Christ is made of God to us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption"; we are possessors of Christ, and own the Lord of whose glory we are partakers, but separate by a clear undeniable separateness from all the false prophets speak of. "Come out and be ye separate, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." Doing good to all men, and loving one another for God and for our hope's sake, and our works will be owned of Him when He shall come, and they shall be judged for all "the hard speeches they have spoken against Him."

It is unbelief in us to have any thing to say to any of these matters. We return as the dog to his vomit when we do so. We must not be deceived by words of honour and of noble sentiments. When men do well to themselves, men will speak well of them, as is said in Psalm 49. Your rule is, "Whom the Lord commendeth;" but for us they are condemned, though we confess ourselves always sinners saved by grace. The Lord cometh to judgment.

But if the spirit of anti-Christ is at work, the same will produce a false prophet far above the rest. How wise is the arch-enemy! Will he let the world see this all at once? None were ever wicked at once. No man ever gained his fellow-men by proposing a thing as evil, but as good; but you have here, in the description of the false prophets and their works, the sure marks of the beginning; and they lead surely to the end. Those we speak of speak of the world, and the world heareth them. Men, again, now perhaps dispute about religion, and about this or that being the right one. God says, "True religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is to keep yourself unspotted from the world;" and His commandments are to believe on the Son of God, and to love one another in this faith. Now, beloved, everything is slipping from its place. Everything that is not founded on Christ and His word, and to the exclusion of everything else, will

soon be in the enemy's camp. Take with you a single eye, and your whole body shall be full of light; otherwise you will slip away into the dominion of evil, and at last of Satan. Do not be deceived by the name of religion. The weak, the crucified One, is the power of God unto salvation. It is a matter of faith and of holding fast. Disbelieve the false prophets. Believe God, and the devil will flee from thee, and thyself be left to the rejoicing of hope, and to you belong rest (with those that have from the first declared the salvation of God) when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, and you, perfected by trial, because you hold fast; they who have troubled you, righteously receiving tribulation, and punished with everlasting destruction from that presence which is become yours in joy for evermore. Let us now be fain to pluck out of destruction those in whom we discover that God yet keeps a conscience to the Lord alive in their breasts.

This then is the present state of things, or one we shall see presently accomplished; but there will be a great FALSE prophet. The power he will receive of Satan will be very great: his business will be to commend him to whom Satan will give his power and throne and great authority, by the permission of God; and the great false prophet will commend him to mankind by signs and wonders, and miracles, and fire from heaven, to cause men to obey him whom Satan has set up, as the glory and boast of man.

It is one fashion of the unbelief of the present day to deny the existence of Satan, the adversary. There can be no greater cause of any falling into his toils, because when miracles and wonders are now done they will be ascribed to God, and thus they will give credit to Satan and be deceived. But Scripture (and a sad woeful sign of the power of Satan is it when the Scripture is kept from the hands of the people) is express on the subject, that as miracles were performed at the beginning of Christianity, that the miracles at the close of the dispensation will be from the Evil One, and not from God. Such then will have no eyes to discover the deceit, but wonder and worship. This false prophet will without doubt find his representatives, who by the same deceit will commend the same lie to those that are subject to them and not to God; and indeed, all those whose names are not written in the book of life through faith of the Son of God. And it is a sure word, that Christianity falls not into forget-fulness or into the ignorance of heathenism again, but is apostate from God in the fulness of human intelligence and in hatred of Christ.

The false prophet will receive his doom with the great king and power who is yet to be manifested, as we learn from the Apocalypse, Rev. 19:20, and other places of Scripture in the New and Old Testament. If you will compare this with Rev. 13:10, the description of his working miracles to deceive is the same as in Rev. 19:20. The false prophet in Rev. 13:10, has the character of a worldly power; this he apparently loses, before he is finally destroyed. It is not said that the prophets mentioned in the text at the head of this tract do any miracles - their task is more ordinary: their character is, that they do not confess the coming of Christ as man, and they say, "Who is Lord over us?" - and they speak of the world, and may be, its religion too. But the time comes; the world, through hearing of them, is ripe in the deceivableness of unrighteousness to fall into the last snare of the enemy; and the great false prophet, and those who are connected with him, will bring men into the last measure of deception and rebellion against the Lord. The time is not afar off. The signs of the last times abound on every side. It is written, that in the last times false prophets shall come on the earth, and speak by the spirit of anti-Christ. And this is written to warn and quicken you who confess the Lord, that you be not also deceived.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net