

## Lesson 10

### 2 Peter 2

#### Beware of Falsehood

**Memory verse:** “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6 NIV)

One of the most successful rackets in the world today is that of selling “fake art.” Even some of the finest galleries and private collections have been invaded by paintings that are clever counterfeits of the great masters. Publishers have also had their share of hoaxes, purchasing “genuine” manuscripts that weren’t so genuine after all. But counterfeits are nothing new. Satan is the “great imitator” (2 Cor. 11:13–15), and he has been hard at work ever since he deceived Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:1–7; 2 Cor. 11:1–4). He has false Christians (Matt. 13:38; John 8:44), a false gospel (Gal. 1:6–9), and even a false righteousness (Rom. 9:30—10:4). One day, he will present to the world a false Christ (2 Thess. 2).

The nation Israel was constantly being led astray by false prophets. Elijah had to contend with the prophets of Baal, but they promoted a pagan religion. It was the *Jewish* false prophets who did the most damage, for they claimed to speak for Jehovah God. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel exposed this counterfeit ministry, but the people followed the pseudo-prophets just the same. Why? Because the religion of the false prophets was easy, comfortable, and popular. The fact that the false prophets preached a false peace did not worry the people (Jer. 6:14). That was the message they wanted to hear!

The apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church and then passed from the scene (Eph. 2:20). This is why Peter wrote about false *teachers*, rather than false prophets, because there are still teachers in the church. It is not likely that church members would listen to a “prophet,” but they would listen to a teacher of the Word. Satan always uses the approach that will succeed.

Peter was not yet finished with the apostates! Unlike some believers today, Peter was disturbed by the inroads the false teachers were making into the churches. He knew that their approach was subtle but their teachings were fatal, and he wanted to warn the churches about them.

Remember, however, that Peter opened this letter with positive teaching about salvation, Christian growth, and the dependability of the Word of God. He had a balanced ministry, and it is important that we maintain that balance today. Some people have a purely negative ministry and never build anything. They are too busy fighting the enemy! Others claim to be “positive,” but they never defend what they have built. Peter knew that it was not enough only to attack the apostates; he also had to give solid teaching to the believers in the churches.

It is a frightening fact that many people who are now zealous members of cults were at one time attending churches that at least professed to believe the Christian gospel. They participated in the Communion service and saw the death of the Lord Jesus portrayed in the loaf and the cup. They even recited the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Yet today, these people will tell you that they “feel free” now that they have been “liberated” from the Christian faith. At the same time, you will meet people who have rejected all religious faith and now profess to enjoy a new freedom. “I used to believe that stuff,” they will boldly confess, “but I don’t believe it anymore. I’ve got something better and I feel free for the first time in my life.”

To learn in this lesson: 1) Identifying false teachers 2) Condemnation of Apostates 3) False Freedom

#### Discussion Questions:

1) Discuss the subject of false teachers in the church and how true believers can stay true as alerted by Peter verses 1 to 9. (20 minutes)

2) Why did Peter condemn the apostates for their specific sins in verses 10 to 16? (15 minutes)

3) The apostates were offering freedom to their converts. How did Peter show that such freedom is not only false but also evil in verses 17 to 22? (15 minutes)