



## Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew: By Their Fruits!

July 1, 2018

Text: Matthew 7:16-20

### A DISCUSSION OF FRUIT:

1. “In a general sense, fruit is whatever the earth produces for the nourishment of (people), animals, or for clothing or profit.” (Webster 1828)
2. In Scripture, the term fruit is often used as a metaphor for, “that which originates or comes from something, an effect or result.” (Thayer)
3. This is the sense in which our LORD uses the term in Matthew 7. He’s saying that we will know false prophets by what they **produce**. In short, we will know them by the lives they *live* and *results* of that which they teach.
4. “Results” should be understood in light of what God values rather than what the world values. The world values “nickels and noses” above all else. While numbers are significant, God also values **truth** and spiritual fruit. Often this will manifest as holiness over happiness and faithfulness over form or fashion (2 Tim 3:5; 1 Cor 7:31)
5. Fruits that are commended in Scripture:
  - Repentance (Matt 3:7-8)
  - Righteousness (Phip 1:9-11; Jam 3:18)
  - Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
  - Eternal fruit by working to save souls! (John 4:34-36)
  - Good Kingdom works (John 15:4-5)
  - Worship and praise (Heb 13:15)
6. There is also a kind of fruit that leads to death (ex. Rom 7:4-5; Jude 1:11-12).

### BY THEIR FRUITS!

1. There are three primary fruits or characteristics of *false prophets and false teachers*:
  - They **Add** to the word of God. This is an attempt on the part of the false teacher/prophet to go beyond the Text and (knowingly or unknowingly) place a man-made burden on God’s people.
    - Rev 2:18-19
    - Mar 7:5-9
  - 2. They **Subtract** from the word of God. This occurs normally when the false teacher attempts to lesson the “sting” of the Text, removing the fear of God, and increasing the propensity of sin in the lives of God’s people.
    - Rev 2:20
    - *This “subtracting” or attempting to lesson the “sting” was a common theme in Jeremiah’s day for example (ex. Jer 6:13-14, 14:13-14, 23:14-17).*
  - 3. They **Change** the word of God. This is an attempt on the part of the false teacher to remove the offensive parts to be more “inclusive and acceptable.” Paul sums up this sin with very harsh words in Gal 1:6-10.
  - 4. All of this false teaching is normally done with great subtlety (like a sheep not a wolf) and with “wide gate” approval. Remember that this warning is given in the context of the “strait gate” and “narrow way.” This is one of the environments (a distaste for hard truths) where a false prophet can flourish and is indeed one of the fruits we need to watch for.

5. According to our LORD, just like one cannot harvest grapes and figs from thorn-bushes and thistles (prickly shrubs and plants), likewise false prophets will eventually manifest the fruits of a bad tree.
6. The result of all the adding, subtracting, and changing of God's word will be bad fruit:
  - Unbiblical burdens placed on God's people, or...
  - A **lowering** of God's standards to be more acceptable to those who love the wide gate and broad way
  - A **celebration** of sins like fornication and idolatry
  - Less true **worship** (according to God's precepts)
  - Less reliance on Jesus (and a subsequent reliance on man)
  - Deceptions concerning true Christian fruit like biblical love, Gospel-based joy, long-suffering during trials, self-control and defeat of the flesh, faithfulness to Christ and to one another, etc.
7. The good news is that our LORD is the ultimate husbandman and vinedresser! He declared that such people and their works would be "hewn down and cast into the fire."
  - Peter said such individuals would bring upon themselves "swift destruction." (2 Pet 2:1)
  - He went on to say...

*2Pe 2:2-3 (ESV) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

PLEASE REVIEW LAST WEEK'S EXHORTATION ON HOW TO RIGHTLY "BEWARE:"

1. Be students of Scripture! (2 Tim 2:15)
2. Grow up in doctrine! (Eph 4:11-14)
3. While not despising prophecies, test everything! (1 Thes 5:19-21; 1Jn 4:1-3)
4. Allow your overseers to protect you. (Acts 20:27-31)

May the LORD cleanse His church of anything false. May our King drive error from our midst. The words of the Apostle Peter seem very appropriate in closing...

Please read 2 Peter 3:8-18

APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT:

1. Discuss the concept of spiritual fruit and being a fruit-bearing believer.
2. Search your own life for Kingdom fruit. In other words, what kind of "tree" are you? Are you reasonably satisfied with what you discover?
3. What prayerful and Godly steps might you take to bear more healthy fruit for Jesus?