

CAMOUFLAGE CHRISTIANS?

Some people prefer camo as a fashion statement. But hunters and other outdoorsmen carefully select camouflaged clothing and gear to give them an edge in their sport. And if you're the prey, you're not so keen on camo. The apostle Peter takes this stance in his vigorous defense of the authority of God's written-down Word, and his denouncing of false prophets. Take a true-or-false quiz: 1) Do false teachers camouflage their destructive heresies? 2) Do false teachers flaunt the flesh not the Spirit? 3) Will false teachers and false converts face God's judgment? What's your answer? How do you know?

BEWARE COUNTERFEITS - Hunters gain an edge with camo, covering scents and reflective surfaces, climbing trees, positioning downwind, etc. Such tactics conceal the presence of predators from their prey. 2Peter 2 warns about camouflaged false teachers who disguise themselves in order to beguile people away from the truth. *"False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them."* In a recent video, an elk hunter in Washington was so well-camouflaged that a large herd came within a few feet of him. In the same way, false prophets and teachers can be right in the same pew with you.

The Old Testament denounces false prophets too, including in Ezekiel 13. He says they saw false visions, lying divinations, and uttered falsehoods, saying "*peace, peace*" when there was no peace, "*those who prophesy from their own hearts and follow their own spirit*" rather than the Spirit of the Lord. That's the opposite of 2Peter 1:16-21 and 2Timothy 3:16-17. God's words in the Bible are breathed out by the Holy Spirit who guided the human authors of Scripture like wind in the sails of a ship. The God-breathed written and spoken Word of God emanates from the breath of God's mouth. Not God breathing into man's words, but God breathing out through men who then write the very words of God. False prophets merely claim to speak God's Word, but instead speak what people want to hear.

BEWARE CONTRADICTIONS - Peter's words echo Jesus in Matthew 7:15, "*beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*" The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29, "*fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*" Like wolves, they're hard to spot, and they're devious. Peter says "*they bring in destructive heresies in secret.*" Undercover, camouflaged, yet they are right here among you. In Matthew 24 Jesus said "*many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.*" 1John4:1 says, "*beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*" Just as 2Peter 1 explains, we test everything by the written Word of God, as the ultimate standard.

Do you think you or someone else has heard from God? How can you know? Only by comparing it to God's already written-down Word. It's an echo of Moses in Deuteronomy 13:1, saying you'll know false prophets because they contradict the commandments God has already written. That's why their heresies are destructive. "*Even denying the Master who bought them*" means their walk and talk don't line up. They claim to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and may talk about the Master in holy terms, and claim to speak for God. But they really aren't, if they don't keep His commandments. In John 15 Jesus said the mark of His disciples was obeying His words and bearing His fruit. False teachers are carried along not by the Holy Spirit, but by a false spirit, speaking heresies from their own mind, and bearing the fruit of the flesh, not the Holy Spirit. RC Sproul says, "God is not just annoyed or mildly displeased, but furious at false teachers, because when the truth is distorted, it reaps devastation and destruction in people's lives."

BEWARE CARNAL SENSUALITY - 2Peter 2:2 says of false teachers, "*many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.*" To blaspheme is to speak irreverently of God or sacred things. Instead of following the Spirit, false teachers follow the flesh. Carnal appetites prevail. With our camouflage example, perhaps you've heard of hunters who give the sport a bad name, by not following safety rules or hunting regulations, not practicing good ethics but more interested in shooting, or records or even getting antifreeze in their systems, than actually harvesting game for good management. Romans 2 similarly notes "*the name of God is blasphemed*" because those who claim to belong to God don't live for Him or according to His commands. Counterfeit teachers lead to counterfeit followers. □