

## **Barratt Ministries Challenge**

### **Issue 57**

#### **Wolves In Sheep's Clothing - Part 2**

##### **Sermon on the Mount Series, Matthew 7:15**

*by Maurice Barratt*

"Beware", says Jesus, "be on your guard, watch out". These false prophets are in the church. They are the ministers of the broad way. The last days are the days of deception, and these are the most deceptive people in the church, ministers of Satan transformed into ministers of righteousness.

Let's just recap on some of the things we noted about the false prophets in the last issue of Challenge.

1 They are sheep with wolves' hearts. Nothing about them outwardly tells you they are wolves. Only their heart betrays them. In every other way they are like sheep.

2 Wolves don't hate sheep, they love them - for food. False prophets don't hate Christians, they love them, because they make their living out of them. Christians give them money, power, and the justification they need to carry on living as they do.

3 Signs and wonders prove that a man is a prophet, but they don't prove whether he is a false or a true prophet; so signs and wonders can never be the test of a false prophet ...

4 ... But you will always, without fail, know the false prophets by their fruit. That is a foolproof test.

I want to look at one verse from Jude's letter, which is all about the false prophets. Verse 11 says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." Here we have three manifestations of the fruit of the false prophets, demonstrated in three different characters. I want to examine them one by one.

#### **The way of Cain**

The name "Cain" means "possession". In 1 John 3:11 we read that "Cain ... was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Cain was of the wicked one, the bad seed. Cain and Abel both brought their offerings to the Lord, but the Lord had respect to Abel's offering, and not to Cain's. This was not a

problem, had Cain accepted that God wanted a lamb, not crops. But Cain wanted to offer what he chose, not what God chose. And when his ignorance turned into rebellion, it became sin. Cain went on to build the first city, his own possession, his own environment, where he would continue to do what he chose. Ignorance or weakness is not a problem to God, but rebellion will eventually send you to the lake of fire.

Why is Cain an example of a false prophet? Because he chose to serve God in his own way, the way he wanted. And the false prophets today propose the same thing. Serve God and please yourself. Worship and glorify God through your music, through your politics, through your works, through fashion, through building “a name” for yourself, through fame and reputation, through the “unity” of ecumenism ... Call it the worship of God. But remember, the Israelites called the worship of the golden calf “a feast to the LORD [Jehovah]” (Exodus 32:5). Giving it the right name does not make it right.

All these “alternative ways to worship God” are alternatives to holiness. God was pleased only with the sacrificial blood of Abel’s lamb, and only when you “present yourself to God as a living sacrifice” will you be “holy, acceptable to God” (see Romans 12:1). You cannot choose your own way; that is “the way of Cain”. The false prophets, so many of them in the churches today, tell you again and again that you can. “Let’s make Christianity more fashionable”, they say, and tell you a thousand ways to do it. It’s the broad way, and there are lots of options. But “go not after them, nor follow them” (Luke 17:23), for to worship Christ in your own way is to worship antichrist.

### **The error of Balaam**

We read about Balaam in Numbers 22. It was not unusual, or wrong, to give a gift to a prophet, but Balaam was greedy for reward, and he wanted his reward more than he wanted the truth. Balaam was a prophet; he spoke supernatural utterances, he heard from God. But Balak wanted him to curse Israel, and God told Balaam immediately, “Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed” (v 12). So Balaam now had a problem. He was a prophet, he could not prophesy lies, so he tried asking God again. Maybe God would change his mind. Especially when Balak sent more princes to him, promising more reward and honour. So Balak said to the princes, “I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more” (v 19).

And, surprisingly, God did speak to him, and allowed him to go. Balaam thought he had a “green light” from God. But here is an important lesson: this is what happens when you want your own way enough, and keep persisting, even when God has told you otherwise - God will eventually let you go your own way, apparently with his blessing. He says, “All right, have it your way.” And when Balaam did go to Balak, God showed it was not with his approval: “God’s anger was kindled because he went” (v 22).

Balaam still could not curse Israel. Whenever he opened his mouth, blessing came out instead. Balaam was as frustrated as Balak. But he devised another way to get the reward he so coveted. We only know about Balaam’s secret plan because of a few odd verses in later chapters. In Numbers 25:1 we read that “the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods ... and Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the

anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.” God sent a plague on them, and 24,000 Israelites died.

Then in Numbers 31, Israel fought against Midian, and Moses was angry that the Midianite women had been spared: “And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.” There’s the plan: it was Balaam who counselled Balak to get the Midianite and Moabite women involved with the men of Israel and corrupt them. Balaam couldn’t curse Israel by prophecy, but he could corrupt them by his counsel, and he was so greedy for reward that he did so.

The letters to the churches in Revelation also contain a reference to Balaam’s counsel. Jesus’ message to the church at Pergamos says, “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Revelation 2:14). This fills in the picture a little more. Balaam couldn’t curse Israel, but he could stumble them, cause them to sin, and bring them under God’s curse.

And the false prophets today, operating in the church, will never curse the church openly; but they can, and do, cast stumblingblocks before Christians and lead them into corruption, mixture and sin. They bring immorality and covetousness into the church under the name of “blessing for God’s people”; they give people what they want in order to get financial rewards. And once the false prophets have swayed the hearts of the people, God does the same as he did to Balaam: he apparently gives his blessing to what the false prophets and the people do; but in reality he is saying, “OK, have it your way”. And his anger is kindled. It is no coincidence that Balaam resurfaces in the letters to the churches, the message to Christians in the last days. Balaam is back.

### **The gainsaying of Core**

We read about Core (Korah) in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, “gainsayed” or contradicted Moses’ authority. He took 250 princes of Israel, “and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy ... wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?” (Numbers 16:3) Dathan and Abiram also contested Moses’ leadership, saying, “Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?” They resented Moses’ authority, and they supposed that Moses had exalted himself. The opposite was true: Moses was “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). In fact, in making these judgments about Moses, they only revealed their own motives - the pride and self-exaltation that was in their own hearts.

Behind Korah’s “logical argument” was a covetous heart. He wanted spiritual authority that wasn’t his. He wanted power. That’s dangerous, and, according to Jude, it is the mark of a false prophet. When the disciples of Jesus were given power over sicknesses and unclean spirits, they came back rejoicing. Jesus sternly warned them not to rejoice at having the power (Luke 10:20). Spiritual power

is dangerous, because it appeals to pride, and lust for power exists in most men's hearts. It drove Korah to rebellion - another fruit of the false prophets. God dealt with Korah very severely, to show just how serious his rebellion was: "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up ... they went down alive into the pit" (Numbers 16:32-33). So will be the end of all the false prophets. Balaam died by the sword at Israel's hand; Cain ended his days "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth"; but the meek, those who submit to God's way, "will inherit the earth", and those who enter at the narrow gate will enter into life.

## **Conclusion**

In all these three examples, we see self operating against God in a spiritual disguise. Cain brought an offering to the Lord. Balaam prophesied and sought the word of the Lord. Korah challenged what he saw as spiritual elitism. But Cain wanted to worship God on his own terms, Balaam loved money, and Korah desired power. These things are dangerous to us all. Self exists in every heart. The false prophets were once true. They had "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", but they have become "again entangled therein", and "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. It had been better for them", says Peter, "not to have known the way of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:20,21). The light that was in them has become so clouded by their own motives and hidden agendas that it has become darkness. That's bad enough, but the error is more serious because they are leading so many others astray. Unknown to themselves, they have shifted sides, and become ministers of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:15). They are the most deceptive and dangerous element in the kingdom today.

## **EXPERIENCES FROM LIFE**

*by Joanna Barratt*

### **Is There A Wolf Cub In You?**

I think everyone has the potential characteristics, which are the seeds of the false prophets, of Cain, Balaam and Core. Maurice has been talking about these people in this issue of Challenge, yet it is hard to detect what is in us without revelation, as we are all brilliant at justifying our actions. And we either come through and progress to a safer plateau or else justify what we are doing by make out that wrong is right. But as the Bible says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

I never imagined that I could have a career in singing when I was a child, it was way out of my reach. I saw people on the television and imagined myself in their shoes, but mother would say, "They had to sleep with the director to get there!", or, "They have to show their legs and body!" Consequently, as I was chubby and had moral values, I realised that showbusiness was out of bounds for me as a Christian. But it's amazing how we can substitute a church platform for a worldly stage.

## **God-given talent**

I've sung almost since the day I cut teeth, as teachers at school noticed my obvious talent and both pushed, and encouraged me into the public eye. I was genuinely embarrassed about my size and hated standing in front of people dressed in my white shirt, school tie and pleated skirt, which was so unflattering, but the teachers made me feel as though I was letting the whole school down if I made a fuss and I ended up singing solos for inter-house school festivals as well as school competitions, more often than not coming away with first prize for these events. My success at school helped enormously to overcome my inferiority complex, and I realised that I really did have a God-given talent. I teamed up with a girl at church and we were kept busy with engagements singing duets at various churches for a couple of years.

At the age of 16 I joined a band in my church. This was different to anything I'd ever done before as I now belonged to a serious group of musicians who sang as well as played. We wrote our own material and took many bookings in the UK as well as abroad and advertised with posters and handbills our availability to take engagements, and indeed were paid for our services. Because I was now working and involved with the band (all male except for me), I did something about my size and slimmed down. This had a dramatic effect on me. Instead of covering up as I had always done, I now avidly followed fashion and showed off my assets. In a way I felt that 'my public had a right' to this image. We began to go into recording studios and produce records and cassettes, and make a name for ourselves. We had big plans, big ideas of what we wanted to do and where we wanted to go.

## **The greedy way**

The bookings we received were from a variety of venues, but we particularly liked to go to large churches or concert halls because we were more likely to sell our wares, which helped tremendously to pay back the costs we had initially laid out and also buy better equipment. We would often judge a church by the amount it paid us, if they were generous they were praised, but if they were stingy they were almost despised. The greedy way of Balaam was in our hearts right from the outset and we didn't even recognise it.

We wanted fame, recognition, and often even wondered about performing in clubs ... singing Christian as well as secular songs of course! Our idea was that if we became famous then the world would listen to our testimony and we would make an impact on society. But for some reason (God!) this never really materialised as Maurice and I couldn't feel completely free in our consciences. But we brought as much of the world as we could into our act, without actually going into it. I remember one occasion when an American evangelist watched us in concert and afterwards remarked that he enjoyed our songs, but didn't think our appearance glorified God. His remarks hurt at the time, but I knew he was right and we never did wear those particular clothes again to minister.

## **Left alone**

Unfortunately, the guys, one by one, left for various reasons and Maurice and I ended up on our own with his youngest sister who had recently joined us. His other sister and her boyfriend joined too and

the group now entertained with drama as well as music. I must admit I enjoyed what we did immensely, it was great fun. We did lots of witty, comical sketches which I threw myself wholeheartedly into, revelling in the laughter and appreciation of the congregations we performed before. It was so rewarding to have an audience to display our talents before and feed our egos. But only on the dramatic performance of 'The Crucifixion' did I ever feel the presence and awe of God, and for that reason alone we still do it to this day.

It wasn't long before this group disintegrated too, and Maurice and I were left completely on our own. But we still recorded and travelled with his father, who was an international evangelist, until he retired and then we were entirely alone. Nevertheless, we were not daunted and pursued what we believed God had called us to. All this time we were very serious about God and believed with all our hearts that we were doing His will, serving Him in spirit and truth. We even came to the place where we could see our own greed for success and felt that we had to do something to prove to God, and ourselves, that we were not in this to make money. We genuinely wanted to minister. So we agreed that wherever we performed we would give our albums away and trust God to provide for all our needs.

This sounded great and very noble in theory, but it proved to be a disaster as young kids would be snapping them up and the older, more serious and responsible people were embarrassed to ask for free goods. Then there was the problem that people thought that if we were not selling our albums, they must be of inferior quality. We couldn't win, thus we couldn't get our ministry out. It was then that we hit on the idea of selling our albums as cheaply as possible, stipulating that all our material was non-copyright, and to give them away whenever we felt led to. This has worked well ever since and God has miraculously looked after us over the years.

### **The voice of God**

But there came a day when, out of the blue, God told me to give everything up. This I did not want to do as it was my life. But I know God's voice when He speaks and He left me in no doubt that He had spoken. The invitations to minister ceased and so began a terrible void in my life. Once I was off the platform, it wasn't long before I was out of the church as the whole situation turned itself around on me and people imagined that I had stopped ministering because I was under discipline. This is the lowest point I have ever reached in my Christian walk, nothing before or since has ever matched up to this trial. I didn't want to know those who called themselves 'Christians' as I thought they were all tarred with the same brush - love you when you are in favour and ignorantly judge and accuse you when you drop out of the limelight. But I have also come to recognise this period as the greatest blessing I have ever received from the hand of God, because it was now just me and Him, and I had to find Him on my own without any props of church and ministry. I had to accept the fact that for all these years He had used me but now He was putting me on the shelf because I had served my purpose - it was now time for Him to use others. Every dog has its day, I was 30 years old and maybe God now considered me 'past it'.

## **A new start**

The pain of rejection began to ease as I found another church and built up once again my relationship with God. I found a job and threw myself into that with vigour and enthusiasm. Then, out of the blue 3 years later, I was amazed to be asked to sing at the church I was attending. The minister was so pleased with my ministry that he asked me to do a concert. The very first song I sang during the concert revealed in a dramatic way the difference between performing and ministering. I had never sung like this before. As I sang the opening bars of my first song the people disappeared from my view and I was transported in my spirit into heaven. I looked up into the very face of God as I sang 'Oh how I love Thy law' from Psalm 119, and knew that I was singing for God's ears and not the people's. This was what God had wanted all the time, my spirit to be wrapped up in His as I sang for His pleasure. For all those previous years I had been conscious of the people and of where my voice could get me - it was the fruit of my labours like Cain's, but not what God had wanted and was therefore, unacceptable. The bible says that 'those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'

## **Taking what is God's**

Years ago Maurice tried to educate me in music and took me to a concert performed by Stefan Grapelli. At the end of the 'show' (and that's all it is really - an opportunity to 'show' off talent) Stefan stood there for ages whilst people applauded and whistled, shouting for encores. As he bowed time after time, each time he lifted his head I could sense him soaking up all the praise and adulation. My spirit squirmed as I realised he was taking to himself something which was only due to God. In fact, he was making himself out to be a god, and as you know that is a very dangerous thing to do. It is another example of "the gainsaying of Core". When King Herod accepted praise from the people, after giving a speech which sounded as though a god had given it, he was struck with worms and died (see Acts 12:21-23).

We must never take to ourselves what rightfully belongs to God. Since witnessing what was really going on with Stefan Grapelli at that concert, I have determined never to accept applause in churches. My aim is to sing for God's pleasure and I must never be praised for doing that, it is my duty and privilege. Sometimes people have said they are applauding God, maybe so, but you would be amazed at how this affects the performer. It feeds pride and ego, and if you care for their spiritual welfare you would do better to appreciate God in another way.