



[Matthew 7:15-20](#)

(15) "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (16) You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? (17) Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

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The description here is very apt—wolves in sheep's clothing. They appear on the outside to be something they are not. When [Jesus](#) uttered this, He was probably thinking of false ministers who would insinuate themselves into the church by appearing to be sheep within the sheepfold.

Jesus uses this terminology in regard to His relationship with the church. He was the Shepherd, and we are His sheep. Here we have wolves (false ministers) who look like sheep, but it is hypocrisy. They only look that way on the outside. He tells us we will know them by their fruits. The fruit that is produced will not necessarily appear quickly. But Christ guarantees that over a period of time the church will be stripped of its true spiritual vitality in terms of the character that will be produced within the flock, making the rise of wolves in sheep's clothing more likely.

What is He saying? The implication is that Jesus is connecting belief with practice. If we believe a certain set of doctrines, we will practice something because of the teaching. A religious creed or the dogma that a group is following will produce a certain kind of conduct by the people. Belief and practice, creed and conduct—Jesus is saying they are vitality connected. In other words, the teachers cannot hide what they are going to produce. Eventually it will come out. Their false philosophies, no matter how attractive they may appear at first sight, will in the long run be exposed for what they really are.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Satan \(Part 2\)](#)



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