

# Hold Fast - May 24th - The Sword & The Trowel, False Teachers - Part 2 - Troy Knight

## Key Scriptures:

2 Peter 2:3-9 NLT

2 Peter 2:10-22 NLT

## Start reading

### 2 Peter 2:3-9 NLT

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. He is especially hard on those who follow their own twisted sexual desire, and who despise authority.

### 2 Peter 2:10-22 NLT

These people are proud and arrogant, daring even to scoff at supernatural beings without so much as trembling. But the angels, who are far greater in power and strength, do not dare to bring from the Lord a charge of blasphemy against those supernatural beings. These false teachers are like unthinking animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed. They scoff at things they do not understand, and like animals, they will be destroyed. Their destruction is their reward for the harm they have done. They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals. They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed. They live under God's curse. They have wandered off the right road and followed the footsteps of Balaam son of Beor, who loved to earn money by doing wrong. But Balaam was stopped from his mad course when his donkey rebuked him with a human voice. These people are as useless as dried-up springs or as mist blown away by the wind. They are doomed to blackest darkness. They brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. With an appeal to twisted sexual desires, they lure back into sin those who have barely escaped from a lifestyle of deception. They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you. And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before. It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life. They prove the truth of this proverb: "A dog returns to its vomit." And another says, "A washed pig returns to the mud."

## TALK IT OVER

### Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Have you ever had a conversation with a cult member or someone who was teaching false teaching? Did you feel adequate to defend your faith? What did it do to motivate you to grow in your knowledge of God's word?

### Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- Read 2 Peter 2:3-9. Why did Peter feel it was necessary to give a history lesson on the judgment of God in the past? What's the big idea of verse 9?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were around wickedness all the time? How did it affect your walk with God? What advice would you give to someone who finds him/herself in that situation?
- Read 2 Peter 2:10-22. What's the primary motivation of false teachers?
- If you are not familiar with the story of Balaam and his talking donkey, read Numbers 22. According to verse 15, what was Balaam's stumbling block?

### Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- What would you do if Troy got up on the stage this Sunday and asked the church for \$65 million so he could buy a jet for his "ministry". Why aren't people in Creflo Dollar's church outraged?
- Verse 14 teaches that false teachers "lure unstable people into sin". Have you observed this tendency of cults and false teachers to prey upon people who struggle with addictions, hurts, and poverty? What false hope do they provide?
- Troy said that we have to be like the people of Israel during the time of Nehemiah. We must have a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. What does that look like in your life?
- There isn't always a way to know when a casual conversation with someone will lead to a verbal witnessing opportunity. Answering general questions is one thing, but every now and then, casual conversation will lead to pointed questions about the differences between specific beliefs and why you believe your version of the Christian faith is the right one. Spend some time thinking about how you will respond using the truths from scripture, history, etc. and draft a brief, coherent defense. (Troy mentioned one resource in his sermon, Essential Christianity by Walter Martin.)

### Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Commit to the step above that Troy challenged us with to spend some time thinking about how you will respond using the truths from scripture, history, etc. and draft a brief, coherent defense.

### Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, thank you for your word that always directs us toward truth. Help us to be prepared to respond with truth to people who are being led astray. Keep our eyes fixed on You. In Jesus Name - Amen.

### Start digging. For further study.

- Read the article on the 2nd page and discuss it.

## **Question: "What does it mean that there will be false christs in the end times?"**

Answer: A false christ or a false messiah is a pretender who claims to be the One sent from God to save humanity. In Matthew 24:23–24, Jesus says, “And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.” This is part of a larger teaching about what to expect in the end times. In Matthew 24, Jesus repeats this teaching, adding, “So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (verses 26–27).

The “end times” means several things in the Bible. According to Hebrews 1:2, the “last days” is the New Testament era, starting with the first coming of Jesus Christ. This is also the sense in Acts 2:16–17, 1 John 2:18, and 1 Peter 1:20. In this sense, we are living in the “end times”; that is, we are in the final dispensation before the second coming of Christ. In Matthew 13:49, the “end of the age” refers to the time of judgment at the Lord’s second coming. The Lord’s return and the events leading up to it (see Revelation 6–16) are commonly referred to as the “end times” today. Although the “end times” may have begun 2,000 years ago, there will be a rapid escalation of the signs Jesus gave as time draws nearer to His return. We believe the “end times,” as commonly understood, will begin with the rapture of the church.

False christs have come and gone since the first century (Mark 13:22; 2 Peter 2:1). They arise when someone claims to be the Messiah or when a branch of Christianity veers from the clear teaching of God’s Word and tries to define Jesus as other than He is. The apostles dealt with false doctrine in many of their letters to the churches, warning believers about the false christs and false prophets in their midst (2 Corinthians 11:13). John gave a clear definition of accurate Christology: “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:2–3).

False christs have continued to make their appearance. Even within the last century, certain men such as Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon, and David Koresh have risen to prominence by claiming to be God or His right-hand man. They often started with the Bible but then seized one verse or idea and built their own theology around it, turning their group into a self-affirming cult. Cult leaders often attract their victims by presenting themselves as Bible-believing Christians. Groups such as the Fundamentalist Latter-day Saints Church, the Church of Christ, Scientist, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses all claim to be Christian, but they all deny the deity and work of Jesus, the Son of God, as our only path to forgiveness and eternal life (see John 14:6).

Closer to home, a proliferation of false christs has arisen in unexpected places: Christian church pulpits. When a teaching reinvents Jesus as someone other than He is or intentionally minimizes the more difficult truths of His gospel, it presents a false christ. With the surge of hyper-grace teaching and Your Best Life Now theology, the glory of Jesus Christ has been minimized in favor of self-worship. Jesus, when mentioned at all, is often presented as merely the ticket to receiving God’s blessings. In this generation of biblical illiteracy, many hearers eagerly swallow this man-made version of Christ, never challenging the twisted doctrine that conceived it. Even when people are given an opportunity to “make a decision” for Jesus, one must wonder: to what Christ are they committing themselves?

Second Timothy 4:3–4 warned us that a time was coming when people would not tolerate sound doctrine. As the days grow darker and sin escalates, a more palatable christ becomes attractive to those who “loved the darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19). Second Thessalonians 2:11–12 explains why so many are attracted to false christs. Verse 10 says, “They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” When people refuse to love the truth, the real Jesus, or God’s holy Word, God gives them over to their own ideas and their false christs, none of which have any power to save (Romans 1:21–23).