

# WHY WE HAVE FALSE TEACHERS

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In 2 Peter 2:1-3, we have an actual promise from God that we will have false teachers among us in the churches of Christ. *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not.”* There is a direct comparison made here between the false prophets among the Israelites in the Old Testament and the false teachers that we have (and will have) among us in the churches of Christ today. As the former existed, so will the latter.

## **A test for God’s people**

There have always been false teachers among God’s people and there always will be. From the beginning of Israel’s occupation of the land of Canaan, Gentiles remained among them and were never completely driven out (Judg 2:20-21). These Gentiles followed false religion and thus produced false teachers to try to corrupt Israel. This was God’s will. He said he left these people in the land *“that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua”* (Judg 2:22-23). These false teachers became a test for Israel. Would Israel continue to walk in God’s ways, or would they turn away from Him to follow some other way? That was the test. Without false teachers, God’s people could not have been tested. That is why Satan is necessary and why his servants, the false teachers, are also necessary. God does not tempt any man with evil (Jas 1:13). Only Satan, via his willing servants (false teachers), tempt men with evil. Therefore, for the people of God, the main purpose of having false teachers is as a test.

## **How much do we love God?**

God also points out the purpose and necessity of false teachers in Deuteronomy 13:1-5: *“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the*

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*sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proves you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he has spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.”* From the test that false teachers bring, God finds out whether His children love them with *all* of their heart, mind and soul. If they only love God partially (anything less than with all their heart), then the people will be willing to go astray after some other doctrine. If we pass all of these tests that the false teachers bring, and refuse to go any other way than God’s, then the Lord knows that we truly do love Him with all of our heart, mind and soul. That is why Jesus said that “it must needs be that offenses come” (Matt 18:7), and that “it is impossible but that offenses will come” (Luke 17:1). God pronounces woe upon the false teachers who bring these “offenses” (not speaking of insults, but literally of trapping Christians in sin; Matt 18:7; Luke 17:1). Again, the Lord says, “*For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*” (1 Cor 11:19). Resisting heresies is the way that it becomes revealed who truly and completely loves God (and they are the only ones of whom God approves). The sad reality is that “many” Christians follow the “pernicious ways” of these false teachers (2 Pet 2:2). This says that many who become Christians ultimately fall short of loving God with *all* of their heart, mind and soul (Deut 13:3). Both the false teachers and their many followers will reap eternal destruction (2 Pet 2:3-9; Deut 13:5-11). But may all of us refuse to ever depart from our Lord. “*Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul*” (Heb 10:38-39).