

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

Evangelist W. Paul Redmond Sr.

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The Proper Reaction to Those Who Oppose the Gospel (Part 3) Acts 13:6-12

Last month we left off considering The Description of The Root of the Problem. This man in verse 6 is described as a *“false prophet.”* We are warned many times in both the Old and New Testaments about false prophets. God told Moses to teach the people how to discern if a prophet was real or false (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22). In II Peter 2:1 we find this warning: *“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.”* I John 4:1 says, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* Much could be said about these two verses, but we will try to limit our thoughts. We, as believers, must realize that there are false teachers and false preachers who are proclaiming a false religion that gives a false hope. Many millions, yea billions, are deceived by these false prophets. We readily admit that the Muslims and Hindus can be classified among these, but we cannot forget that Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and many more teach a false salvation as well. You can add to that some Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Charismatics, and others that either deny the true Gospel or add their own ideas to the true Gospel. You may wonder what a false prophet is. Peter describes it in the above verse, but to sum it up it is anyone that teaches salvation is a way other than Jesus Christ. They may not deny the deity of Christ as the Muslims, Hindus, Mormons, and Jehovah Witnesses do. They may teach like the Catholics that Jesus is not enough by adding penance and baptism and mass. However they teach it, whether by taking away from it or adding to it, any

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message other than “Jesus alone provides salvation,” is a false Gospel, and the ones who teach it are false prophets.

We must be careful, as true believers, not to support with our prayers or finances anyone who preaches a false gospel. But we must also warn others of the error that is being taught. Please be careful. Just because someone calls himself a preacher does not mean that he preaches right. Just because someone calls himself a Baptist does not mean he is right either. As John wrote, we must *“try the spirits.”* Only by comparing what they say with the Bible will we know if what they are teaching is right or not. Some are real smooth, and sometimes it may be hard to detect, but the Holy Ghost will open your eyes to what is right.

There is something else to consider about the Root of the Problem. I call this The Deception. The last part of verse 6 says that this man was *“a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus.”* The name itself means son of Jesus, and in the time period in which it is used, it is not blasphemous. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. It was a very common name in this time period. Many people named their children after Joshua, the great leader of Israel. Using the Greek form of the name, Jesus, many people would have still named their children after this great man. Now, because our Savior was named Jesus, we hold a special reverence for the name, and rightly so. No one in 2010 would name their child Jesus, but we often use the same name in its Hebrew form Joshua. I mention all of this to say that by itself the name does not carry a bad connotation. The man is not wrong because his name is Bar-jesus. Please do not look at this passage and think that this man is a complete and utter blasphemer simply because of his name. Again, in this time period, the name was commonly used.

But there is an application that we can make from this name—names and labels do not mean anything. Notice again, he was *“a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus.”* Some might think because he was a Jew that he would be a great help to the Apostle Paul. But as

it turns out, he was a foe to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Some might think that because his name was Bar-jesus, he would try to support the efforts of Paul. But he did just the opposite—he tried to hinder Paul from preaching.

Let us put these thoughts into the 21st century. Someone hears a person say that they are a Christian. But that does not mean that they are a Christian according to the Biblical definition of being a Christian. As the world sees it, the word Christian has a broad meaning. They would identify the word as meaning anyone who follows in any general manner the teachings of Christ. But their idea of the teachings of Christ differ greatly from what the Bible says. The Bible has a narrower definition. Biblically, a Christian is one who has trusted in Christ alone for salvation and who lives their life in obedience to the Word of God.

Please allow me to say it as plain as possible. If you were to look in an almanac at the followers of religion you would find that over 32% of the world claim to be Christians (Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year, 1988). However, 32% of the world are not saved and are not going to Heaven. Names by themselves do not mean anything! Do you see how deceptive names can be? I mentioned this earlier in the message, but it is so important that I must mention it again. Included in that percentage are Roman Catholics. But Roman Catholics do not believe and practice Biblical salvation. They teach that Christ alone is not sufficient for salvation. They add works to their salvation. But they call themselves “Christian.” They are far removed from the Biblical definition of Christianity.

The same goes for Mormons. They have over the last twenty years tried to identify themselves as Christians and will often use the term Christian. But they are not Biblical Christians. Their doctrine teaches that Jesus and Satan at one time were brothers. That is blasphemy! There is much more about Mormonism that is completely contrary to the Bible. But unless you know their teachings, to hear them talk, you would think that they believe the

same thing that you do. But they do not! Do you see how deceptive the wiles of Satan are?

Much more could be said about other so-called “Christian” religions. They will use the term, but they are not Christian. You can add to that the teachings of the mainline denominations such as Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. One hundred years ago, if you heard that denominational name, you could be assured that they believed right. But liberalism and unbelief took over these mainline denominations, and now you cannot be sure what anyone believes. Some Baptist pastors do not even believe in the inspiration of the Bible or in the deity of Christ. They will call themselves Baptists and will probably call themselves Christians, but they are not Christian at all. They deny the inspiration of the very Book that teaches all that we know about God, Jesus, and salvation. They deny the only hope for sinners—that God became man and died for us.

There may be even some today among Independent Baptists who are beginning to deny major truths of Scripture. I have not personally come across or heard of any who deny truths of Scripture, but it would not surprise me if some did. Names and labels do not mean anything. They may have a good name. They may be the children or grandchildren of great Christians and preachers of the past, but their name does not mean anything. We must be careful! Deception is real! We must be watching!

The third aspect of this Root of the Problem is The Display. Acts 13:8a says, “*But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them.*” The word withstood means “to stand against; to oppose; to resist; to set one’s self against.” As we have seen from the reading of the entire story, this man Elymas was a very wicked man. We spent some time speaking about his description and deception. Now we come to what he actually did—he was opposing the preaching of the Gospel. Exactly how this display took place the Bible does not say. It could have been agitation. Elymas could have been saying to Paul and Barnabas something like this: “You are

wasting your time. These people here are not going to listen to you. Why don't you go somewhere else." There are many preachers who have heard this. It is a common tactic of the devil and those on his side. This agitation, if listened to, could lead to discouragement and an abandonment of what God has called one to do. Perhaps that is why many missionaries have left the place where they thought that God had called them. Someone was opposing them by agitation—trying to discourage them to stop preaching. Sadly, some listened and stopped preaching. Thankfully, Paul did not give in to this agitation. He kept preaching even when Elymas withstood him.

What about you, dear friend? Have you faced opposition in the form of agitation? Have others begun to mock you when you tried to preach the Gospel in public or witness in private? Perhaps it even took the form of ridicule or mockery because of the way you dressed or because you listened to the right kind of music. The agitation that the ungodly will heap upon the godly will take many forms. We must recognize that it will come. We are at war with the devil and "*spiritual wickedness in high places*" (Ephesians 6:12). The enemy will use any thing he can to defeat us. Do not give up! We will continue with this thought next month.