

TREES AND FRUIT PART II

Matthew 7:16 *You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?*

What we believe has fundamental effects on how we live our lives, what we allow to influence us as truth has the same effect. The early church became, rightfully, protective over what was being taught as sacred scripture.

What do you allow to speak into your life as truth (TV programs, magazines, authors, commentators)?

In what you allow to influence you, what causes you to filter some things more stringently than others?

Read Matthew 7:15-17

As we learned last week, many heretics were people who would have called themselves “Christian’s seeking to clarify the full meaning of their faith.” This week we learned about two heretics; Marcion and Montanus who helped solidify the New Testament Canon through their erroneous teachings.

What do you think the danger is between separating the God of the New Testament and God of the Old Testament as Marcion did?

What do you think is the danger with having ongoing revelation that could contradict Jesus and His message of grace?

Through retaining the Old and New Testament, the church made two important points.

- It insisted that faith, for the Christian, would have to reconcile both the wrath and the love of God.
- By retaining the Old Testament the church underscored the importance of history for the Christian faith.

Christianity is historical because it stems from the belief that within history itself, in a particular place, at a particular time, God Himself took a hand in human affairs.

Do you find yourself trying to pick apart parts of the bible?

What parts do you find you have a hard time with?

Which parts make you excited?



Marcion was guilty of attempting to reduce the Gospel to simply the love of Christ. He removed all parts of the Bible that were Jewish in nature and attempted to conform the Bible to his own worldview (sounds like the culture we live in today, right?) When he neglected the wrath of God he also eliminated the need for grace. Our sin is real, and it is ugly. It is true that God loves us, but if you recall, the wages of sin are death.

Stop and read Romans 6:22-23. We are not perfect and our sin upsets God, it is so essential to realize we do not deserve the love or the Grace that God has so freely given us.

In what way are you guilty of distorting scriptures to fit into the culture we live in?

Often times Christians will still buy into Marcionite/gnostic teachings that all material things are bad and only spiritual things are good. In what ways have you done or said things that correspond to this mentality?

Montanus believed that what he felt, thought, and became emotional over was more important, and held greater truth, than what God had revealed to humanity through Jesus’ own words and the apostles words. Our culture today is a “me” based culture that takes this approach to everything. We say things like “follow your heart” and “do what you feel is right” in regards to decisions we make...yet the scriptures teach us that many times that is the worst way to make a decision.

For Christian’s, the Bible is a source of God revealed truth to our lives. How have you (or haven’t you) learned to trust the scriptures?

We have to be extremely careful what we allow to speak truth into our lives. Often times we will try to fit the Gospel into our own lives and culture, bending truths to make it align more with our beliefs. When we do this we run the risk of acting like the heretics and leading people astray despite our good intentions.

When have you given bad advice? What was the outcome?

When have you followed the scriptures, even when you were not sure, and found them to be a great blessing?