

What's the deal with the sheep outfit?

Why do the wolves dress like sheep? **And why** does the Bible use this specific language when warning us about false teachers?



■ Ravenous wolves dressed in sheep's clothing ...

- (Matthew 7:15–16 ESV) Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

■ Fierce wolves from among your own selves ...

- (Acts 20:17, 26–32 ESV) Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.
- Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. **I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Why are false teachers hard to recognize?

- **Because they dress like sheep to deceive.** We tend to follow the the old "if it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, must be a duck" logic.
- **Except ...** we are given biblical insight into the disguise with which false teachers use to infiltrate our churches.
- **So no excuses.**

EPHESUS: THE STRONG BUT LOST CHURCH!

SMYRNA: THE POOR BUT RICH CHURCH!

PERGAMUM: THE FAITHFUL BUT COMPROMISED CHURCH!

As opposed to the church at Pergamum, **the church at Ephesus** rightly handled the false teachers, but lost their way as they forgot their first love. The church at Pergamum was commended for their faithfulness in the midst of the great evil which shrouded the city from emperor worship, but now Christ calls them to repent as they have compromised his words with the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

- **Ephesus ...** (Revelation 2:2 ESV) I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.
- **Ephesus ...** (Revelation 2:6 ESV) Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- **Pergamum ...** (Revelation 2:14–16 ESV) But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam ... some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Error will never be suppressed by compromising with it. Today's [non-confrontational] church is largely repeating the error of the Pergamum church on a grand scale, and faces the judgment of the Lord of the church. [MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1999). *Revelation 1–11* (p. 90). Chicago: Moody Press.]

Rebuke for compromise. In spite of these many tokens of faithfulness in a time of temptation and trial, the Lord indicated that all was not well with the church at Pergamos. Two blots on their record labeled them as the compromising church. According to verses 14 and 15 they held the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. [Walvoord, J. F. (2008). *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (pp. 67–68). Galaxie Software.]

