

Blind Leaders Of The Blind

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Matt. 15:12-14

Who can you trust regarding religious matters today? Many religious people of the world trust their preacher, priest, or pastor. They assume that “a man of God” must be trustworthy.

Yet, the Bible does not always speak highly of religious leaders.

Paul warned about “savage wolves” not sparing the flock of God. Acts 20:29-30, *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”*

Peter wrote of “false teachers” bringing in destructive heresies. 2 Pet. 2:1-2, *“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.”*

Such men would knowingly destroy the people of God. Not all those who mislead do so knowingly.

Jesus told His disciples about “*blind leaders of the blind*”. Matt. 15:12-14, *“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”*

Being “*blind*” themselves, they may not be aware of how they mislead others. The end result is still the same, however. Those misled still “*fall into the ditch*” and are destroyed. Matt. 15:14, *“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”* Isa. 9:16, *“For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.”*

Whether led by a “*false teacher*”, or by a “*blind leader*”, they are destroyed.

That we ourselves might not blindly follow a blind leader; what are some of the characteristics of a blind leader? How can we be sure not to be misled by a blind leader?

These are the questions we hope to answer in this study.

While Peter had much to say about false teachers (2 Pet. 2), Jesus had much to say about blind leaders.

Characteristics of a blind leader

Holding to the traditions of men.

This was the case of the Pharisees in Matt. 15. They were willing to put their traditions above God's word. Matt. 15:3, "*But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*" Matt. 15:6, "... *Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*" Matt. 15:9, "*But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*"

Blind leaders today will do the same:

- Teaching as doctrine their traditions
- Not knowing that what they teach comes from man, not God.

Making distinctions where God has made none.

This was the case of the Pharisees in Matt. 23, where they are called "*blind guides*" five times. They made fine distinctions between the types of oaths one could swear. Matt. 23:16-22, "*Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*"

Blind leaders will often do the same today; making fine distinctions so that one need not keep God's word; saying some commands of God are essential to salvation, and others not (baptism).

Leaving commands of God undone.

Again, the Pharisees were guilty of this, for which they were called "*blind guides*". They left undone the "*weightier*" matters of God's law. Matt. 23:23-24, "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,*"

hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

They stressed tithing, but neglected justice, mercy, faith; thus they would strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel.

Blind leaders today often do the same, but in reverse. They are quick to stress the “weightier” matters, and leave what they consider the “lighter” things undone.

But Jesus said we should do both, leaving neither undone!

Focusing only on the outer man.

The “blind Pharisee” worked only on the outside.

Matt. 23:25-28, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

They were concerned with keeping the traditions of ritual cleansing, willing to put up with extortion, self-indulgence, hypocrisy, and lawlessness.

Today, blind leaders are happy with the appearance of success, such as having big buildings, large crowds, and accepting people into the church services who have not obeyed the gospel.

Other characteristics.

From this passage (Matt. 23) in which Jesus assails the Pharisees, we glean some other characteristics of those who were blind leaders. Summarizing these quickly:

- Matt. 23:1-4, “*Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”*

- Matt. 23:5, “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,”
- Matt. 23:6-7, “And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”
- Matt. 23:8-10, “*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*”
- Matt. 23:13, “*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*” (They fail to truly show the way to the kingdom of heaven).
- Matt. 23:14, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*” (They use their religion to make money and impress others).
- Matt. 23:15, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*” (They don’t make people better, they make them worse!).
- Matt. 23:29-31, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*” (They honor the men of God who went before them, but are more like those who persecuted the people of God).

Sadly, this sounds like many religious leaders today, especially some on TV! If we are not careful, we can easily be led astray by them.

This leads to our next point...

How not to be misled by “blind leaders”

Listen to them carefully.

We need to have the same attitude as the Bereans. Acts 17:11, *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

When Paul came to town, they *“received the word with all readiness”*. This describes how they listened to Paul — paying close attention to the things he was teaching.

We must first give all teachers a fair and careful hearing and seek to understand exactly what they are saying. It requires that we be good listeners.

Many are misled because they have never learned to listen carefully to what is being taught them! (How well do you listen?).

Search the scriptures daily.

This was another noble quality of the Bereans. Acts 17:11, *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

Having listened carefully, they then went home and compared what Paul said concerning the Scriptures. They did not simply accept whatever Paul said.

Unfortunately, many today are Biblically illiterate. They do not follow along in their Bibles when someone is teaching or preaching. They do not read their Bibles daily.

Failure to do these things leaves one in a blind condition, unable to discern what is the word of God, or some teaching and tradition of man!

Conclusion

What will be the end of blind leaders, and those who follow them? Like plants, they will be “uprooted” by the Heavenly Father. Matt. 15:13, *“But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”*

Together they will both “fall into a ditch”. Matt. 15:14, *“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”*

Though very religious, they think that they serve the Lord, but Jesus will tell them: Matt. 7:21-23, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Who are to blame, if people are misled by blind leaders? The blind leader will be held accountable, but not totally.

If people are blind, it is because they have closed their own eyes. Matt. 13:15, *“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”*

May the example of the Bereans remind us of what is necessary not to be misled by blind leaders, and may we so see and hear that what Jesus said will be true of us: Matt. 13:16-17, *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”*

