

Summary

Many today operate in spiritual power, prophesy in Jesus' name, and perform miracles—yet Matthew 7:21-23 warns that some will stand before Christ only to hear, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

This message explains how Balaam's story is a prophetic warning for today—a cautionary example of those who misuse spiritual gifts for personal gain. From false prophets to prosperity gospel preachers, many are falling into the same traps: craving influence, seeking financial gain, and compromising truth for honor.

We'll explore what Jesus meant in Matthew 7:21-23, how powerful ministries can still operate in spiritual gifts while being in rebellion, the five possible sources of supernatural power, the temptations modern messengers face—including money, honor, and influence, and the real lesson from Balaam—faithfulness over favor.

Don't be deceived by outward power and miracles. Just because someone prophesies, casts out demons, or heals the sick does not mean they walk in obedience to Christ.

Read Matthew 7:21-23

a) Jesus taught:

21 Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?"

23 And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."

b) Your soteriology determines how you interpret this passage.

My Beliefs About Salvation

Note: The doctrine of salvation—soteriology—is a deep, complicated, nuanced subject. That's why I'm writing a 300-page book to explain it. Therefore, I can't explain every nuance of it in this message.

a) What Is Saving Faith?

- It's not mental assent.
- It's not a one-time event or for a season.
- It's a continuous trust in Jesus Christ from the beginning to the end that should produce the fruit of obedience.

b) Justification Saves You

- You are justified by a one-time act of faith and by continuing in faith.
- If you are in Christ by faith and continue in faith, Christ's righteousness is imputed to you, and you are justified—declared righteous.
- If you are justified, God doesn't count sin against you (Rom. 4:8).

- Justification is more than a pardon for past sins—it's a declaration that you are righteous in Jesus Christ.
- Legally speaking, if you are in Christ, your past, present, and future sins are forgiven.
- If justification was only a pardon for past sins, you would have to spend your life in rigorous confession to stay saved.

c) Confident Security, Not Eternal Security

- Salvation is like being on a plane—guaranteed to reach the destination unless one jumps out.
- You can be 100% of assured of your salvation without wondering if you are in or out—a roller coaster of emotions that produces deep anxiety and a fear of hell rather than a fear of God.

d) Apostasy Is Possible in Four Ways

1. Rejecting Christ for another god or religion.
2. Departing from the apostolic faith.
3. Denying Christ's deity or work on the cross.
4. Persisting in unrepentant sin.

e) Don't Cross the Line into Apostasy

- Sin itself isn't what removes you from Christ; it's rejecting Christ for your sin.
- If one practices a sinful lifestyle, they are rejecting Christ for sin and self.
- This is not by profession but by actions.
- Without repentance, one's in danger of God removing them from Christ (Jn. 15:2).
- If this happens, they cross the line from defiant disobedience into apostasy.

f) Encouragement and Warning

- To someone struggling with sin but desiring to overcome: You can't out-sin God's grace. The Father will run to meet you the moment you turn back to Him—like he did with the prodigal son.
- To someone defiantly practicing sin and unwilling to repent: Beware that you are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and fall away from the living God.

g) The Key Issue: Rejecting Christ for Sin

Operating in Power Doesn't Mean Divine Approval

a) False Prophets in Matthew 7:21-23

- They called Jesus "Lord."
- They performed miracles, prophesied, and cast out demons in His name.
- Yet, Jesus rejected them because they practiced lawlessness.

b) Were They Ever Regenerated?

- Scripture consistently shows that people can channel demonic power to perform miracles, signs, and wonders to deceive people (2 Thess. 2:9-10; Exo. 7:11-12; Acts 8:9-11; Acts 16:16-18; Rev. 13:13-14; and Rev. 16:13-14).
- But Jesus was clear about deliverance: Satan would never supply power to cast out demons (Matt. 12:25-26).
- Nor do demons flee when Jesus' name is invoked by those without a true relationship with Him (Acts 19:13-16).
- All of this points to these false prophets being genuine believers who fell away by practicing lawlessness.

c) These False Prophets Were Apostates

- Peter and Jude—who likely drew their teaching from Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount—reveal they were once believers in Christ and born again.
- Peter describes them as:
 - Denying the Master who bought them (2 Pet. 2:1).
 - Escaping defilements of the world through Christ but returning to sin (2 Pet. 2:20).
 - Having known the way of righteousness but turned from it (2 Pet. 2:21).
 - Turning away from the holy commandment given to them (2 Pet. 2:21).
 - Similar to Balaam—initially followed the right way but strayed because of greed and unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15).
- Jude describes them as:
 - Denying the Master by teaching hyper-grace (Jude 1:4).
 - Similar to the Israelites—saved out of Egypt (the world) but destroyed later due to unbelief (apostasy) (Jude 1:5).
 - Similar to the fallen angels—once dwelled in heaven but were sentenced to eternal judgment due to rebellion (Jude 1:6).
 - Twice dead—once dead in sin but made alive; however, they have experienced spiritual death a second time (Jude 1:12).

d) In Summary . . .

- These false prophets operated in God's power in Jesus' name.
- But they later fell away due to a lifestyle of practicing sin.

What Was the Source of Their Power?

a) Relevant Questions

- Was the power they operated in genuinely from the Lord, or could it have come from another source—demonic influence or soulish power?
- Were these false prophets shocked by Jesus' words because their ministries had real supernatural results?

b) Five Possible Sources of Power

1. God – through the Holy Spirit.
2. Satan – counterfeit signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9-10; Exo. 7:11-12; Acts 8:9-11; Acts 16:16-18; Rev. 13:13-14; and Rev. 16:13-14).
3. Soulsh Power – unusual cognitive or sensory abilities, heightened intuition, or even seemingly “psychic” abilities.
4. Fake Miracles – deception or manipulation, using social media or geological software for words of knowledge or staging fake miracles.
5. Mixture – a combination of genuine, soulsh, demonic, and fake power.

God's Gifts and Callings Are Irrevocable

a) Why Can Sinful People Still Operate in Spiritual Gifts?

- Romans 11:29 – “The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”
- God doesn't revoke His gifts or calling, even when someone falls into sin.
- A preacher can still minister powerfully while living in compromise.
- A gift in operation does not equal divine approval.

b) Gifts Operate by Grace, Not Merit.

- Teaching, prophecy, leadership, healing—these are given by grace, not merit.
- Once bestowed, they continue to function, regardless of the vessel's condition.
- History is filled with ministers who led massive movements yet struggled with hidden sin.
- Their influence remained, not because God endorsed their lifestyle, but because He does not retract what He has sovereignly given.

c) A Calling That Stands—Even in Failure

- When God calls someone—whether to ignite a revival, raise up messengers, or lead a prayer movement—that calling is anchored in His purpose, not their perfection.
- Even if they fall into sin, the calling remains, waiting for possible redemption.
- Personal compromise opens the door for mixture.
- A person in compromise can still exercise their gifts to preach, prophesy, teach, or lead. But they have opened a door to demonic power and soulsh mixture.

- Left unchecked, sin eventually brings discipline, exposure, or even removal from their position.

Balaam: A Cautionary Tale of a Gifted but Corrupt Prophet

a) Balaam's Prophetic Gift

- Balaam started out as a true prophet—not a soothsayer. He genuinely heard from God.
- His prophecies were Spirit-inspired, including a Messianic prophecy: "A star shall come forth from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel" (Num. 24:17).
- This prophecy pointed directly to Jesus, and some scholars believe it helped guide the Magi to Bethlehem centuries later.

b) Balaam's Fatal Flaw

- Despite his prophetic gift, Balaam loved money and influence more than obedience.
- When he couldn't curse Israel outright, he found another way—enticing them into sin through sexual immorality and idolatry.
- His legacy became one of compromise, corruption, and ultimate judgment.

c) Warnings Against Following Balaam's Path

- Peter and Jude warn believers about Balaam's error:

They have gone astray, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. (2 Pet. 2:15)

For pay they rushed headlong into the error of Balaam. (Jude 1:11)

- Jesus rebuked those who held "the teaching of Balaam," which led people into immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:14).
 - This was a warning not to be a stumbling block—a theme Jesus repeated often.

d) The Lesson from Balaam

- Despite being gifted, Balaam sold out his calling for personal gain—and it destroyed him.
- His story serves as a cautionary example that gifting does not equal divine approval.
- Those who prioritize wealth, influence, honor, positions of power, or any personal gain over obedience risk the same fate.
- When he couldn't curse Israel directly, he found a loophole—he advised King Balak to lead Israel into sin through idolatry and immorality.
- Though he still spoke truth, he became a stumbling block rather than a true servant of God.
- Balaam's legacy: A prophet who sold his soul for selfish gain.

Common Temptations for Messengers Today

a) A Warning to Modern Messengers

- Balaam's story is a prophetic warning.
- More than ancient history—it warns of dangers still present today.

b) Money

- Balaam was enticed by the riches and prestige offered by King Balak.
- Many modern prophetic voices face a similar temptation—if they speak the true word of the Lord, calling for repentance, they risk financial loss and exclusion from influential platforms and not being invited to popular conferences.
- Instead of standing firm, some adjust their message to be more palatable to maintain financial support and influence.
- Balaam's downfall was not his ability to hear God but his willingness to manipulate his gift for personal gain.
- Prosperity gospel preachers are a great example:
 - These are modern-day Balaams—especially those who weaponize prophecy to manipulate offerings.
 - They say things like: "The Lord gave me Jeremiah 33:3. If you will sow a donation to this ministry for \$333, the Lord will do Jeremiah 33:3 in your life. He will show you great and mighty things that you don't know."
 - Just as Balaam used his prophetic gift for profit, prosperity gospel preachers manipulate prophecy to extract money from their followers.
 - This is spiritual manipulation, conditioning people to believe that financial giving can coerce God into action.

c) Honor and Influence

- Many messengers are driven by a craving for honor, recognition, and social influence.
- With platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, there is immense pressure to gain followers, leading some to:
 - Exaggerate revelations.
 - Manufacture dramatic prophecies.
 - Focus on sensationalism rather than biblical truth.
- Paul Cain used genealogical software to data mine for prophetic words. Both Shawn Bolz and Chris Reed used social media to data mine for prophetic words. This is an egregious sin.
- Balaam longed for the prestige of advising a king, just as some today crave influence over political leaders, celebrities, and large audiences.

- When a prophetic voice becomes more about building personal brand and prestige rather than faithfully declaring God's word, it mirrors Balaam's error—choosing self-promotion over obedience.

d) The Lure of Power and Proximity to Influential Figures

- Balaam was drawn to the prestige of being an advisor to King Balak.
- His temptation was not just money but also the status that came with being close to a ruler.
- Many prophetic voices today attach themselves to political leaders, celebrities, or mega-church pastors, believing that access to power validates their ministry.
- I often see ministers post social media pictures of them with a famous leader after ministering. I sometimes wonder: if they were to minister here, would they post a picture of them with me? Probably not. Why? Because they are doing it for one reason—to establish their credibility so they can build their platform.
- While ministering to leaders is not inherently wrong, the danger arises when prophetic integrity is compromised to maintain relationships.
- Some modern prophets:
 - Prophecy victories or blessings that align with a leader's desires rather than God's actual message.
 - Soften their message to gain favor and maintain influence.
 - Align their words with political or social trends rather than biblical truth.

e) Becoming a Stumbling Block to Others

- Jesus warned, "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to the person through whom the stumbling block comes!" (Matt. 18:7).
- Balaam's counsel led Israel into idolatry and immorality (Num. 31:16).
- Jesus said that Balaam was a stumbling block—warning us not to emulate him (Rev. 2:14).
- Some modern prophets justify sin, embrace worldliness, or distort grace in ways that encourage their followers and listeners to compromise.
- Jesus warned that leading others astray invites severe judgment (Mark 9:42).
- When messengers seek power and influence over obedience, they become stumbling blocks to others.

A Modern-Day Example of Temptation for Messengers

a) The Privilege of Meeting a President

- In 2007, my dad and I met President Museveni of Uganda.
- We were honored to visit Uganda's version of the White House.
- This was one of the highlights of my life.

b) A Hypothetical Offer

- Imagine President Museveni made an incredible offer:
 - Lifeschool would become required training for every pastor in Uganda.
 - The government would cover all costs, including translations.
 - No financial burden or effort on our part.
- However, there were four major conditions:
 1. Remove teachings about the end times that cause fear.
 2. Change our stance on apostasy to eternal security.
 3. Teach a pre-tribulation rapture instead of post-tribulation.
 4. Affirm that every believer will be the eternal wife of Christ.

c) The Weight of the Temptation

- Accepting these conditions could open doors for massive influence.
- Lifeschool could reach every pastor in Uganda and beyond.
- The potential honor, financial security, and global impact would be immense.

d) The Justifications That Could Be Made

- Many respected pastors already avoid discussing end-times judgments.
- Eternal security and pre-tribulation rapture are widely accepted doctrines.
- Most churches teach that all believers are already the bride of Christ.

e) The Right Response

- Despite the great opportunity, compromising truth is never an option.
- The temptation to trade biblical integrity for influence must be resisted.
- Honor, financial gain, and wide acceptance should never override faithfulness to God's Word.

The Lesson from Balaam: Faithfulness Over Favor

a) Catering to the Audience's Desires

- Jeremiah 5:31 states, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?"
- In Jeremiah's day the people preferred comfortable lies over hard truths.
- The Lord said, "My people love it so!"
- They embraced falsehood because it allowed them to continue in sin without conviction.

- Many today flock to prophets and teachers who downplay sin, promote hyper-grace, or mix worldly ideologies with Christianity.

b) A Temporary Illusion of Security

- The people of Jeremiah's day loved false prophecies of peace, but judgment eventually came.
- False teaching may offer temporary comfort, but it ultimately leads to spiritual ruin.

c) False Prophets Spread Deception

- In Jeremiah's time, prophets told people what they wanted to hear rather than what God actually said.
- Today, many preachers prioritize popularity over truth, offering feel-good messages while avoiding calls to repentance.

d) Religious Leaders Abuse Authority

- The priests in Jeremiah's day ruled by their own authority rather than submitting to God.
- Likewise, some modern church leaders seek power, wealth, and influence instead of faithfully shepherding God's people.

e) The Coming Reckoning

- God asks, "But what will you do at the end of it?"—a warning that deception will collapse when judgment comes.
- Those who reject truth for convenience will face accountability before God, whether in this life or on Judgment Day.

f) A Prophet's Role Is to Speak for God, Not Seek Favor

- Balaam compromised his integrity for power, honor, financial gain, and status.
- True prophetic ministry is not about access to kings but faithfulness to the King of Kings.

g) Jesus' Judgment Against Stumbling Blocks

- Jesus warned in Matthew 13:41 that He will remove all stumbling blocks from His kingdom.
- Those who prioritize political alliances, influential connections, or personal advancement over obedience will eventually face judgment, just as Balaam did.

h) The Call to Uncompromised Prophetic Ministry

- True prophetic ministry must remain faithful to God, regardless of financial, social, or political pressures.
- A genuine prophet:
 - Is not for sale.
 - Does not crave recognition.
 - Does not twist God's word for gain.

- Those who fear the Lord more than they fear losing followers or income will be the ones who truly carry His message.

The False Prophets in Matthew 7: A Parallel to Balaam

a) The Pattern of Falling Away

- The false prophets in Matthew 7 appear to have started on the right path as regenerated messengers, exercising genuine spiritual gifts in Jesus' name.
- However, they eventually turned away through lawlessness, self-serving motives, and sin.

b) Spiritual Power Does Not Equal Divine Approval

- Just as Balaam's gift remained even after he turned to wickedness, the false prophets in Matthew 7 continued operating in supernatural power despite their rebellion.
- A person's initial relationship with God may have granted them access to genuine spiritual power, but if their heart turns from Him, they begin using that power for personal gain rather than God's glory.

c) The Danger of Spiritual Mixture

- Over time, a fallen leader may operate in a mixture of:
 - Genuine gifting.
 - Demonic influence.
 - Soulsh power.
 - Even faked prophecy or miracles.
- What starts as a true calling can become corrupted by greed, pride, or moral failure.

d) The Key Issue: Lawlessness

- The issue in Matthew 7:21-23 is that these false prophets practiced lawlessness—ongoing rebellion against God's commands.
- They knew the truth but refused to submit to it.
- This aligns with Balaam, who still had a gift from God but used it for selfish purposes, leading to his ultimate downfall (Num. 31:8).

e) Final Warning: Gifts Are Not a Guarantee of Final Salvation

- The false prophets in Matthew 7 were once genuine believers who operated in God's power but later turned to sin and lawlessness.
- Like Balaam, they continued using their God-given gifts while living in rebellion, mistaking their supernatural success for divine approval.
- This passage serves as a sobering warning: Spiritual gifts are no guarantee of final salvation—only a continuous, obedient relationship with Christ secures entrance into His kingdom.