

Be on Guard (Week 3) - Counterfeiting God

1. Introduction
 - a. Sum up last week
 - b. With the internet, we live in a world where fact and counterfeit is blurred
 - i. What is healthy? What is safe?
 - c. This becomes increasingly complex when we apply it to the spiritual/miraculous
 - d. Should we pursue the “spiritual” and supernatural like so many do?
 - i. People see fortune tellers, spiritual leaders, buy mood crystals, etc
 - ii. Books like the Shack, Embraced by the Light, Oprah Book Club
 - iii. Do these carry true spiritual value?
 - e. How would God have us respond to these things?
2. *And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. (Acts 19:11-12, ESV)*
 - a. Paul didn’t do anything, God did
 - i. Paul was God’s workmanship, a tool in God’s hand → Ephesians 2:10
 - ii. Not using power objects like Paul’s amulet or something he made
 - iii. Using worthless items → underscores the power of God, not Paul
 - b. This is in line w/ the true, biblical purpose of miracles
 - c. Miracles are designed to bring Glory to God → Not a person
 - d. Miracles exist to confirm the WORDS of God (c.f. John 10:38)
 - i. In Gospel of John: preaches, then confirms w/ a miracle
 - ii. Jesus even discouraged miracle seekers (eat my flesh, drink my blood)
 - e. Many people who call themselves Christians pursue the supernatural/miracles
 - f. When you diminish the HS to just being a miracle man, you offend him
 - i. HS’s job and joy is to glorify the Son
 - ii. Like the lineman blocking so that the running back can make a great play.
 1. The running back gets the glory, not the lineman
 - iii. The miracle is a means to an end.
 - g. Be on guard that you **Don’t pursue the miraculous. Pursue the miracle worker**. Jesus is the goal, not the miracles that can be performed.
3. *Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. (Acts 19:13-14, ESV)*
 - a. Here you have guys who wanted the supernatural, but didn’t want God
 - b. Spiritual hucksters, snake oil salesmen, counterfeit miracle workers for \$\$
 - i. Used lengthy ceremonies to “cast out” demons
 1. c.f. The Exorcist, witchdoctors, seance
 - ii. Weren’t very effective cf to Jesus who did so with “authority and power”
 - c. When people do what these guys were did, they treat God like he is a pagan god

- i. In Pagan beliefs, superstitious systems, there are magic formulas, magic words, certain actions that you have to do to get a desired result
 - ii. The Jews fell into this trap, treating God like a god of their neighbors
 - iii. This idea is called syncretism. Take a pagan belief and slap God on it
 - d. People do this in today's world too - not just back then → mystic influences
 - i. Televangelists → buy this magic water; put hand on TV; my magic words
 - ii. Syncretistic Catholicism in Central & South America → paying Mary
 - iii. Welton: reclaim mystic practices like divination, aura reading
 - iv. Churches that use fringe psychological practices of memory therapy
 - 1. None of this is in the Bible, but people do it in the name of God
 - e. Just because someone who is or claims to be a Christian writes a book or has an experience doesn't mean it is founded in truth or from God
 - i. Most of the times it is founded in a "new revelation" that someone received from God, but the Bible says that God speaks in His Word and if what someone says doesn't line up 100% w/ the Bible then it's heresy
 - ii. If it were that important, God would have taught it in the Bible
 - iii. But Pastor Bill there's nothing wrong with this stuff...
 - 1. It's seductively close to the truth - the best counterfeit
 - 2. To worship God as anything other than truth is idolatry
 - f. Be on guard b/c **just because someone slaps God's name on something doesn't mean that it's from God**
 - i. Whether it's these itinerant exorcists trying to make a buck or the multitude of snake oil salesmen blaspheming the name of Jesus
4. *But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:15-16, ESV)*
- a. This is like a reverse exorcism
 - b. They thought Jesus name was enough like a power word, magical phrase
 - c. Problem is that the name of Jesus isn't magical, like their pagan beliefs taught
 - i. True FAITH in the name of Jesus that has the power to save, deliver, free, cast out demons, etc
 - ii. And it is ALL that is needed. Jesus is sufficient.
 - d. There are people that claim you should use these mystic practices to draw closer to God and tap into his power (like these exorcists were doing)
 - i. Ms. Young, author of Jesus Calling, says in the introduction "*I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more. I wanted to hear what God had to say to me personally on a given day.*"
 - ii. In an article on CNN a blogger wrote a piece entitled "I'm Spiritual Not Religious" he says "*[This] attitude fits with the message we are receiving more and more that "feeling" something somehow is more pure and perhaps, more 'true' than having to fit in with the doctrine, practices, rules and observations of a formal institution that are handed down to us.*"

- iii. You don't need all these extra-biblical practices
- iv. You don't need a divine Word from God
- v. You don't need to audibly hear God's voice
- vi. You don't need to pursue God through ritual to twist his arm
- e. You don't need these things because Jesus and the Bible are enough b/c it's not a religion, it's a relationship w/ Jesus and he talks through his Word and we talk to Him through prayer.
 - i. **I'm not saying some people don't need counseling, medicine, etc**
 - ii. But when it comes to drawing closer to God, Jesus has done the work on the cross and it is finished!
 - iii. And a lot of these practices are not only unneeded, they are unbiblical
- f. Intimacy with God is found in trusting in Jesus Christ to restore a severed relationship and it grows deeper as you read the Bible, pray to God, and obey his commands by the strength and power of the Holy Spirit
- g. Power from God is found in surrendering to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and obeying the Word of God, not in some magic formula
- h. Be on guard that you **don't rely on extra-biblical things to draw you closer to God when Jesus has already done the work.**
 - i. The alternative is that you play with fire
- 5. *And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. (Acts 19:17, ESV)*
 - a. The false power, in light of the power of the One True God, led people to worship God, but also led them to fear.
 - i. Why to fear? B/C they realized that their "power" was counterfeit and when they saw it in light of God's power they were terrified
 - b. Look what happens next
- 6. *Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. (Acts 19:18-19, ESV)*
 - a. Those who used to put their stock in the mystical powers of the world realized the value of Jesus
 - b. Satan is the great counterfeiter and all of the counterfeiting that he had been doing in their divination and magic, as seductive as it was, was nothing compared to the power of KNOWING Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection
 - c. Once they realized this, they voluntarily burned their books and artifacts totalling what would equivalent of 50,000 days of work or between \$6 to \$10 million
 - d. Don't be flippant w/ the spiritual world
 - i. "Ouija boards, books of witchcraft, etc aren't a big deal."
 - ii. Don't toy w/ these things acting like it's just another way to be spiritual → it's from Satan because Satan is the great counterfeiter
 - iii. God detests astrology, fortune telling, divination, spirit guides, tarot, and attempting to gain secret knowledge through occult ritual

- iv. Bible says not to give the devil a foothold, that he roams around
 - e. Be on guard to realize that **the “spirit” world is real, is counterfeit, and is offensive to God.** Don’t mess with it. Turn and flee.
- 7. *So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. (Acts 19:20, ESV)*
 - a. The Gospel prevails because Jesus died to free us from the kingdom of Satan and to destroy the works of the devil (c.f. 1 John 3:8)
 - b. The WORD OF THE LORD triumphs. Truth.
 - i. Like we said last week: Truth encounter > power encounter
 - c. God and his word get the glory rather than any human skill, knowledge, or miracle
- 8. Satan works overtime to counterfeit God
 - a. The Spiritual World is real and it is dangerous and it doesn’t always look like people gathered around a pentagram wearing goat masks
 - b. There are things that look godly, but they aren’t from God and you need to discern one from the other. How?
 - c. If you do not stand on truth by faith, you will not stand at all**
 - d. You don’t need to pursue lesser things (sozo, God’s audible voice, divination and all these mystical practices) because GOD’S WORD IS SUFFICIENT
 - e. Do you want to hear from God? Do you want to connect with him? Do you want to know what he wants to say to you? Read his Word
 - f. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13, ESV)*
 - i. It’s ALIVE. It divides. Nothing is hidden.
 - ii. The SPIRIT will illuminate your heart, convict you w/ the Word. You don’t need a spiritual mediator to charge you money to discovery secret truths
 - iii. So exposing that we are are naked and before God as we read the Bible
 - iv. It reveals truth that will break you, change you, tear your world apart...
 - v. If you will only read it, allow the Spirit to convict you, and obey it.
 - vi. The Word is enough. Don’t pursue lesser things.
 - g. Bottom line: The world is filled with counterfeit spirituality and the only way you can discern what is from God and what isn’t is by standing on the truth of the Bible.
 - h. Action Step: Hear the Word, Embrace the Word, and Live the Word
 - i. Sunday morning, underground, discipleship group, origin, read, pray, obey
- 9. Jesus came to break every chain of spiritual bondage. Be on guard lest you voluntarily re-submit to a counterfeit god.**