

Teaching: True or False? How Can We Discern?

An Examination in the Light of 2 Peter 1 and 2

Introduction — Christians Must Wake Up

We need to wake up.

As Christians, we are often deeply concerned about opposition and dangers that come from outside the Church. Today, many ideas openly challenge the Christian faith. Atheism denies the existence of God. Religions and philosophies offer different answers to questions such as: Who is Christ? What is salvation? What is truth? We are surrounded by a secular way of life that says human beings can live perfectly well without God. Moral confusion is also increasing: what God calls sin is called normal, what God calls wrong is called a right, and what God calls holy is dismissed as outdated.

These are real dangers, and we certainly need to be alert to them. Yet, comparatively speaking, dangers that openly oppose the Christian faith are easier to recognize.

But what happens when falsehood comes dressed as truth? What happens when it comes carrying a Bible? What happens when it speaks in the name of Jesus? What happens when it does not appear as an enemy coming to destroy the Church, but as a teacher coming to teach the Church?

How do we recognize it?

That is the more subtle danger.

An enemy from outside openly opposes us, and therefore we are alert. But falsehood that enters the Church can undermine our faith from within. When we know an attack is coming from outside, we guard ourselves. But when falsehood comes clothed in the appearance of truth, it can soothe us, put us spiritually to sleep, and quietly lead us astray.

That is why the Word of God repeatedly warns us about falsehood arising among the people of God. Peter says without hesitation: “There will be false teachers among you” (2 Peter 2:1).

Among you.

Those words should shake us.

False teaching does not arrive announcing, “I am false.” It may come with an open Bible. It may quote Scripture. It may use the name of Jesus. It may even contain many true statements. That is precisely why falsehood mixed with truth is more difficult to recognize than an obvious lie.

If a genuine currency note is green, would a counterfeit note deliberately make itself bright red so that everyone could immediately recognize it as counterfeit? Of course not. The counterfeit succeeds precisely because it resembles the genuine.

This need for spiritual discernment has always existed, but it has become especially urgent in our time. There was a time when a teacher’s influence was largely limited to the place where he lived, the church

where he ministered, and the regions to which he travelled. That is no longer the case.

Today, a message preached on the other side of the world can reach our hands within seconds. We may never have met the preacher. We may know nothing about his life. We may not even understand the circumstances in which he is speaking. Yet his voice can enter our homes every day. It comes through our phones. It enters our ears. Over time, it can shape our understanding of Scripture, our thoughts about Christ, and even the way we live the Christian life.

Once, people had to go looking for teaching. Today, teaching comes looking for us.

And the amount of teaching available to us has increased beyond measure. Therefore, Christians today need more than knowledge of the Bible. We must also know how to discern, in the light of Scripture, what we hear. The great question today is not merely, “Do we have enough teaching?” The more important question is: “Among all the teaching we hear, can we discern what is true and what is false?”

This study is not only for pastors or church leaders. It is necessary both for those who teach and for those who listen.

A person is not necessarily a true teacher because he speaks well. He is not necessarily a true teacher because he quotes many Bible verses. Large crowds listening to him do not prove that he is a true teacher. A widespread ministry does not prove it. Even reports of miracles associated with his ministry do not, by themselves, establish that his teaching is true.

The standard is not the man. The standard is not the crowd. The standard is not success. The standard is not popularity. The standard is the Word of God.

There is also another danger when we study false teachers. Our fingers can very quickly begin pointing at other people: “He is a false teacher.” “That church is wrong.” “This ministry is wrong.” That is not the purpose of this study. We certainly need to recognize falsehood and protect the Church from false teaching. But the same light of God’s Word by which we examine others must also shine upon us.

If I am a teacher, I must ask: Am I saying what God has said? Or am I using the Bible to say what I want to say?

If I am a listener, I must ask: Do I want to hear what God says? Or am I looking for a teacher who will tell me what I want to hear?

Therefore, this is not merely a warning about false teachers. It is a warning for every one of us who can be deceived by falsehood. It is a warning for me. It is a warning for you.

Before examining someone else, therefore, let us place ourselves before the Word of God. Discernment becomes dangerous when it is used only as a weapon against others. Biblical discernment begins by submitting ourselves to the same truth by which we examine everyone else. Its purpose is not to develop a suspicious spirit. It is to recognize truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood in the light of God’s Word.

We could study true and false teaching from the whole Bible. The Old Testament prophets spoke about these matters. Jesus Christ warned about false prophets. Paul identified false teachers and false teaching in his epistles. John and Jude also gave serious warnings. In this study, however, we will deliberately limit ourselves primarily to 2 Peter chapters 1 and 2, because Peter places the true and the false remarkably close together.

Seven important contrasts emerge: Source — the Word of God versus deceptive words; Substance — the knowledge of Christ versus denying the Lord; Direction — escaping corruption versus slavery to corruption; Life — a godly life versus a corrupt life; Appeal — the Word of God versus the desires of the flesh; Fruit — a fruitful life versus wells without water; Destination — the everlasting Kingdom versus destruction.

Let us examine these one by one.

1. Source — Where Does This Teaching Come From?

A river is shaped by its source. If the spring from which it rises is pure, the water begins pure; if the source itself is polluted, everything that flows from it is affected. Teaching is much the same. Therefore, when we examine a message, we should not ask only, “What is this teacher saying?” We must go deeper and ask, “Where does this message come from?”

In 2 Peter 1:21, Peter says, “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The Word did not originate in human will. It came from God. Therefore, true teaching does not begin with human imagination, ingenuity, ambition, or desire. It begins with what God has said.

Peter makes the same point when he says, “We did not follow cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16). In other words, the apostles did not invent a story and then present it to the people. True teaching begins with revelation, not invention.

When we move to chapter 2, the picture changes dramatically. Peter warns that false teachers will secretly bring in destructive heresies and that “by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Peter 2:3). In chapter 1, the Word comes from God. In chapter 2, words are fashioned deceptively to accomplish human purposes.

We encounter this pattern on the first pages of Scripture. In Eden, the serpent asked Eve, “Has God indeed said...?” (Genesis 3:1). He did not begin by throwing God’s Word away altogether. He interfered with it. First, he created doubt about what God had said. Then he altered its meaning. Finally, he denied it.

Falsehood often works in precisely this way. It does not always begin by saying, “The Bible is false.” It may begin by asking whether God really meant what He said, then gradually alter His meaning, and finally arrive at a conclusion directly opposed to His Word.

There is another sobering example. When Satan tempted Jesus, Satan himself quoted Scripture: “For it is written...” (Matthew 4:6). That fact alone should teach us something important: quoting a Bible verse does not automatically make a message biblical.

A verse may genuinely appear in Scripture and yet be used wrongly. It may be separated from its context, while the balance supplied by the rest of Scripture is ignored. Jesus answered Satan’s misuse of Scripture with Scripture rightly understood: “It is written again...” (Matthew 4:7).

Therefore, we should not ask only, “Is this person speaking from the Bible?” We must also ask, “Is he saying what the Bible says?” Those two things are not necessarily the same.

I can take a verse and force my own idea into it. I can begin with something I want to say and then search for verses that appear to support it. In that case, the Bible may be present in my sermon, but the Bible did not actually produce my sermon.

If I am a teacher, therefore, I must ask: Am I saying what God has said, or am I using the Bible to say what I want to say? In one, I stand under Scripture. In the other, I stand over Scripture. In one, Scripture uses the preacher; in the other, the preacher uses Scripture.

That is our first test: What is the source of this message? Was it born from the Word of God, or did it originate in human desire, imagination, greed, or purpose, with Bible verses added afterward?

2. Substance — What Is at the Center of This Teaching?

The source of a river is important, but the source alone does not tell us everything. As the river flows, we must also ask what is in the water. Is it clean or polluted? Does it bring life, or does it carry poison?

Teaching is the same. Our first question was, “Where does this message come from?” Now we ask, “What is the substance of this message? Who stands at its center?”

When we read 2 Peter chapter 1, the answer is unmistakable: the substance of true Christian teaching is Christ.

Peter begins: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2). He continues that God’s divine power has given us everything necessary for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him (2 Peter 1:3).

Grace and peace—through knowing Him. Life and godliness—through knowing Him.

When Peter looks ahead, he speaks of “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Christ is at the beginning of Peter’s message, at its center, and at its destination. Christ is not merely one subject among many subjects in Christian teaching. Christ Himself is the substance of the message.

But in 2 Peter 2:1 we encounter the opposite: “even denying the Lord who bought them.” In chapter 1, true teaching leads us into the knowledge of Christ. In chapter 2, false teaching denies the Lord.

This denial does not necessarily mean that every false teacher openly declares, “I deny Jesus Christ.” The danger can be more subtle. Christ’s name may remain while the truth about Christ is altered, diminished, displaced, or denied.

Paul therefore warns about “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4). The name may be the same—Jesus—but the person being proclaimed can be different. A teacher may speak continually about Jesus and yet present a Jesus shaped according to human desires rather than the Christ revealed in Scripture.

The Old Testament gives us a powerful example. When Israel made the golden calf, Aaron proclaimed, “Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD” (Exodus 32:5). The name of the LORD had not disappeared, but the truth about Him had been corrupted. They attempted to attach the name of the true God to an image produced by human hands.

The name can remain while the truth is changed.

There is an even more subtle danger. Christ may genuinely appear in the message, yet Christ may still not be its substance. He may be presented primarily as the One who gives us health, wealth, success, solutions to our problems, or the fulfillment of our dreams. God may certainly give many good things according to His will. The problem begins when what Christ gives becomes more important to us than Christ Himself.

The problem is when we do not really desire Christ; we desire what we hope to receive from Him. Christ then ceases to be our goal and becomes merely the means by which we hope to achieve our own goals.

But Christ is not a tool for accomplishing our ambitions. Christ Himself is our goal.

One useful question is this: If Christ were removed from this message, would the message still stand almost unchanged? Could it just as easily be a motivational speech—“Believe in yourself,” “Dream bigger,” “Success belongs to you,” “Change your life”? If the essential message remains intact when Christ is removed, then Christ was never truly its substance.

The center of true Christianity is not merely a doctrine, a blessing, or an experience. It is a Person. His name is Jesus Christ.

A true teacher does not make himself the great figure at the center of the message. Neither does he place the listener at the center. He magnifies Christ. John the Baptist expressed the heart of genuine ministry beautifully: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

When people leave after hearing a message, our attention should not stop with, “What a wonderful preacher!” The deeper response should be, “What a wonderful Christ!”

So the second test is this: Is the Christ revealed in Scripture truly at the center of this teaching?

3. Direction — Where Is This Teaching Taking Us?

We have looked at where the river begins and what is in its water. Now we ask: In what direction is it flowing?

Teaching is not merely information. It shapes our thinking, influences our desires, affects our decisions, and eventually moves our lives in a particular direction. Therefore, we should not judge teaching merely by whether it sounds good, comforts us, excites us, or gives us hope. We must ask, “Where is this teaching taking me?”

Peter describes the direction of genuine Christian life as “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). Sin corrupts a person from within—his thoughts, desires, conduct, relationships, and eventually the whole direction of his life.

Notice Peter’s expression: “having escaped the corruption.” Not learning to live comfortably within corruption. Not making peace with corruption. Not finding biblical reasons to justify corruption. Escaping it.

When we come to 2 Peter 2:19, however, Peter says, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption.” They promise freedom, but the result is slavery.

This is one of the most dangerous characteristics of false teaching. The promise and the destination can be completely different. Something may be presented as freedom while actually strengthening the

bondage from which Christ came to deliver us.

Jeremiah confronted the same problem. The people needed repentance, but the false prophets offered reassurance instead: “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). The wound was deep, but the treatment was superficial.

True ministry does something different. God says in Jeremiah 23:22 that if the prophets had stood in His counsel and caused the people to hear His words, they would have turned them from their evil way. God’s Word turns people. It turns them from sin toward God.

We must therefore understand grace correctly. Christ receives sinners as they are, but He does not leave us where He found us. Grace comes to the sinner and leads him out of sin. Paul says that the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11–12).

Grace forgives. Grace teaches. Grace changes.

Therefore, a teaching that leaves us comfortable in sin and calls that condition “grace” is not teaching biblical grace.

After hearing a message, do not ask only how much comfort it gave you. Ask where it is taking you. Is it leading you toward Christ, holiness, obedience, godliness, and freedom from sin? Or is it giving you biblical-sounding reasons not to change?

Then the question becomes personal: Do I want the Word of God to change me, or am I searching the Word of God for reasons why I do not need to change?

That is our third test: Does this teaching lead me out of corruption, or does it make me comfortable within it?

4. Life — What Does the Teacher’s Life Say?

So far, we have examined the teaching itself. Now we move from the teaching to the teacher. What does the life of the person who teaches this message look like?

Peter describes genuine Christian growth in 2 Peter 1:5–7: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These are not merely doctrines to be explained. They are qualities that should increasingly become visible in the life of a person who knows Christ.

But when Peter turns to the false teachers in chapter 2, the contrast is striking. They walk according to the flesh in unclean lust; they are presumptuous and self-willed; their eyes are full of adultery; they entice unstable souls; and their hearts are trained in covetous practices (2 Peter 2:10–14).

In chapter 1 we see self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. In chapter 2 we see lust, pride, adultery, deception, and greed.

False teaching, therefore, is not merely a problem of wrong ideas. It can also reveal a problem in the teacher’s life.

Peter gives us Balaam as an example. He says that the false teachers followed “the way of Balaam”, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15). Notice that Peter does not speak only about Balaam’s

teaching. He speaks about Balaam's way.

Balaam could speak remarkably spiritual words. He told Balak that even if Balak gave him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of the LORD his God (Numbers 22:18). How spiritual those words sound: "The LORD my God." "I could not go beyond the word of the LORD."

Yet what was happening in his heart? Peter tells us: "He loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). The Word of God was in his mouth, but greed was in his heart. His mouth was moving in one direction while his heart was moving in another.

That is the danger we must recognize. A person may speak the right words, know the Bible well, use spiritual language, possess remarkable gifts, and exert tremendous influence over people. But we must still ask: What does his life say?

The Church sometimes makes a serious mistake: we become so impressed by a person's gift that we stop looking at his life. "He speaks wonderfully." "He explains the Bible brilliantly." "Miracles are reported in his ministry." "Thousands of people follow him." All these things can impress us, but none of them can substitute for character.

Gift cannot replace character.

The platform cannot replace godliness. Eloquence cannot replace holiness. Influence cannot replace integrity. Spiritual ability does not give anyone permission to live contrary to the Word he preaches.

At the same time, we must maintain biblical balance. Does a true teacher never sin? Does he never make a mistake or fall? No. Consider Peter himself. He denied the Lord. He fell terribly. But he broke down and wept. He repented, and the Lord restored him.

Therefore, we should not take one failure in a person's life and immediately label him a false teacher. The important question is not simply, "Has he ever fallen?" The deeper question is, "What is the direction of his life?"

When sin is exposed, does he repent? When he is corrected, does he humbly receive correction? Does he submit himself to the Word of God? Or does he conceal sin, justify it, use his influence to silence others, and deliberately continue in the same pattern?

What we expect from a true teacher is not sinless perfection. We look for a heart that can be corrected. A genuine servant of God can fail, but he does not make peace with his failure. He can sin, but he does not construct a theology to justify his sin. When God's Word exposes him, he bows before it.

Therefore, do not look only at a teacher's platform. Look at his life. Do not listen only to his words. Look at his way. Is there self-control, godliness, humility, brotherly kindness, and love? Or do we see greed, lust, pride, deception, and a craving for power?

This, then, is our fourth test: Do the teacher's words and his life agree with one another?

5. Appeal — What Does This Teaching Use to Attract Us?

We have examined the message itself and the life of the teacher. Now we come to another important question: What does this teaching use to attract people?

A message may attract us strongly. We may enjoy listening to it and want to hear it repeatedly. But attraction by itself is not evidence that a teaching is true. We must ask what it is in the message that attracts us. Does it draw us through the truth of God's Word, or does it appeal primarily to desires already present within us?

Peter describes the appeal of true teaching when he writes, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). The believer's attention is directed toward the Word of God. Like a lamp shining in darkness, the Word exposes what is hidden, shows us where we are, and gives us light for the path ahead.

But in 2 Peter chapter 2, we find a completely different kind of appeal. Peter says that the false teachers entice people "through the lusts of the flesh" (2 Peter 2:18).

On one side: Pay attention to the Word of God.

On the other: People are enticed through the desires of the flesh.

Think of a fisherman. He does not throw a bare hook into the water and expect the fish to come because the hook itself is attractive. He places on the hook something the fish already wants. The fish does not come because it sees the hook; it comes because it sees the bait. Yet hidden inside the thing it desires is the hook that captures it.

False teaching can work in exactly the same way. It does not necessarily attract a person with something he dislikes. It places before him something he already desires and then uses that desire as the means of capturing him.

When Peter speaks of the lusts of the flesh, we should not think only of sexual desire, although sensuality is clearly part of the immediate context. Human desire can be appealed to in many ways: money, wealth, health, recognition, position, power, success, comfort, or the feeling of being greater than others.

Some of these things are not evil in themselves. God may give them according to His will. The problem is using a person's desire for them as bait to draw him toward a message.

The danger, therefore, does not lie only with the teacher. Scripture also turns the light toward the listener. Paul warns Timothy that a time would come when people would no longer tolerate sound doctrine. Instead, according to their own desires, they would gather teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Notice where the problem begins: their own desires.

People seek the message they want; the teacher supplies it; and the message strengthens the desires that created the demand in the first place. False teaching, therefore, does not grow merely because there are mouths willing to speak falsehood. There must also be ears willing to hear it.

This brings the issue very close to us. We should not ask only, "Why is this teacher saying these things?" We must also ask, "Why do I enjoy hearing them?"

False teaching can offer a crown without a cross, blessing without repentance, promise without obedience, and discipleship without self-denial. Such a message is naturally attractive because it appears to offer the benefits of Christianity without the cost of following Christ.

God's Word does not always tell us what we want to hear. Sometimes it comforts us; sometimes it confronts us. Sometimes it assures us; sometimes it corrects us. Sometimes it strengthens us; sometimes it exposes us. But whether comforting or correcting, it tells us what we need to hear.

True teaching does not take our desires and bend the Word of God to fit them. It does the opposite: it brings our desires under the authority of God's Word.

So the fifth test is this: Does this teaching attract me by the Word of God, or by the desires of the flesh?

6. Fruit — What Does This Teaching Produce?

The fact that a message attracts people does not prove that it is true. A tree is ultimately known by its fruit, and teaching must also be examined by what it produces.

Therefore, the sixth question is: What kind of fruit does this teaching produce? What kind of people are being formed by it?

Peter gives us a clear picture of fruitfulness in 2 Peter chapter 1. After speaking of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, he says that if these things are ours and abound, we will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:8).

True spiritual fruit, therefore, is inseparably connected with knowing Christ and increasingly reflecting His character.

When we turn to chapter 2, Peter uses a striking image for the false teachers: "These are wells without water" (2 Peter 2:17).

A well creates expectation. A thirsty traveler sees it and approaches expecting water. From a distance, everything may appear promising.

There is a well—but there is no water.

There is appearance—but no life.

There is promise—but no satisfaction.

There may be much noise and activity—but no spiritual fruit capable of satisfying the thirst of the soul.

This is why we must be careful about what we call fruit. A crowd is not necessarily fruit. Popularity is not fruit. Activity is not fruit. Emotion is not fruit. People crying during a meeting is not, by itself, fruit. Applause is not fruit. A preacher becoming internationally famous is not proof of spiritual fruit.

Some of these things may accompany a genuine work of God, but none of them is the biblical standard by which the truth of a ministry is finally measured.

The deeper question is: Are people becoming like Christ?

Fruit cannot always be measured immediately after one meeting. We need to look over time. What has been produced after years under this teaching? Are those who have listened to it for years knowing Christ more deeply and loving Him more? Are they becoming rooted in the Word? Are they growing in self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love?

Teaching does not merely produce ideas; teaching produces people.

What we repeatedly hear shapes the way we think. Our thinking shapes our desires, and our desires shape the way we live.

Therefore, look at what those people are seeking. Are they seeking Christ, or merely the next blessing? The Word of God, or the next new revelation? Christlikeness, or the next miracle? Godliness, or the next spiritual experience? Are they increasingly dependent upon Christ, or increasingly dependent upon a particular preacher?

We should also ask: To whom is the teacher gathering the people? A true teacher does not bind people to himself or create the impression that they cannot live spiritually without him. He does not make his own name, ministry, revelation, or uniqueness the center. He gathers people around Christ.

Again, John the Baptist gives us the spirit of genuine ministry: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

And once more, we must turn the test toward ourselves. What fruit has the Word of God produced in me after all the years I have heard it? Do I know Christ more deeply? Do I love Him more? Am I becoming more submissive to His Word and more like Him?

So the sixth test is this: What fruit does this teaching produce? Does it give life?

7. Destination — Where Does This Teaching Finally Lead?

We began at the source of the river. Now we come to the end of its journey. Just as a river has a source, it also has a mouth. Teaching begins somewhere and eventually arrives somewhere.

Teaching is not merely an idea. Teaching is a path, and every path leads somewhere.

At the end of 2 Peter chapter 1, Peter describes the destination of the path he has set before believers: “For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11).

What a destination—the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The path of chapter 1 begins with knowing Christ, continues in a life transformed by Christ, and looks forward to the everlasting Kingdom of Christ. Christ is not only at the beginning and center of the journey; He is also at its destination.

The destination in chapter 2 is entirely different. Peter says that the false teachers bring upon themselves “swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1), and then warns that “their destruction does not slumber” (2 Peter 2:3).

On one side stands the everlasting Kingdom of Jesus Christ. On the other stand judgment and destruction.

Different paths lead to different destinations.

One of the most sobering warnings Jesus ever gave appears in Matthew 7. He said that not everyone who says to Him, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). These are not people unfamiliar with the name of Jesus. Their language sounds explicitly Christian.

Jesus continues by saying that many will speak of remarkable works done in His name: prophecy, casting out demons, and many wonders. Outwardly, this can look like extraordinary spiritual success.

Yet Jesus finally declares: “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:23).

They used His name, but He said, “I never knew you.”

Therefore, the final question is not merely, “What have I done in the name of Christ?” The deeper question is: “Do I know Christ? Do I belong to Him?”

We must also remember that apparent success does not determine the final outcome. A ministry may presently appear enormously successful. There may be great crowds, wide influence, large numbers of followers, and reports of extraordinary things taking place.

But the crowd cannot change the final outcome. Popularity cannot change it. Influence cannot change it. Human approval cannot overturn the judgment of God.

In the end, God’s assessment is the one that stands.

Now think again about all seven tests. Like a river, teaching begins somewhere: What is its source? Something flows within it: What is its substance? It moves in a particular direction: Where is it taking us? A person carries that message: What does his life say? The message attracts people through something: What does it use to attract them? It produces a result: What is its fruit? And finally it arrives somewhere: What is its destination?

Look at the source.

And look at the mouth of the river.

Does this teaching ultimately lead me to Christ—to know Him, belong to Him, obey Him, become like Him, and walk toward His everlasting Kingdom? Or can it use the name of Christ while gradually leading me away from Christ Himself?

True teaching finally brings us to Christ. False teaching can use the name of Christ while leading us away from Him.

That is our seventh test: Does this teaching finally bring me to Christ, or does it lead me away from Him?

Conclusion — Do Not Be Deceived

Peter’s warning is not that false teachers will exist somewhere far away in the world. Remember his words: “There will be false teachers among you” (2 Peter 2:1).

Among you.

That is why the Church must remain awake.

But being watchful does not mean becoming suspicious of everyone. Suspicion and spiritual discernment are not the same thing. We are not called to live in fear, constantly looking for someone to condemn. We are called to discern in the light of the Word of God.

Love and discernment must remain together. We can love everyone, but that does not mean that everyone should be accepted as a teacher. Welcoming someone into the fellowship of the Church is not the same as giving that person influence to shape the Church through teaching.

At the same time, concern for truth must not turn us into people who condemn every minor disagreement as false teaching or immediately label a teacher false because he has made a mistake.

Biblical discernment is neither gullibility nor suspicion. It is learning to judge teaching faithfully by the Word of God.

And once again, before pointing our finger at someone else, we should turn it toward ourselves.

If I am a teacher, I must ask: Am I saying what God has said, or am I using the Bible to say what I want to say?

If I am a listener, I must ask: Do I genuinely want to hear what God says, or am I looking for a teacher who will tell me what I want to hear?

And finally, there is an even deeper question:

Do I merely know the truth, or do I know the One who is the Truth?

Truth, in the final analysis, is not merely a collection of correct doctrines. Jesus said:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” — John 14:6

Christ stands at the center of truth.

Christ stands at the destination of truth.

Therefore, discernment is not simply about becoming skilled at identifying error. Its purpose is to keep us faithful to Christ—to know Him, love Him, obey Him, and remain in Him.

So do not be deceived.

Know the truth. Love the truth. Stand firm in the truth.

And above all,

hold fast to Christ, who is the Truth.