

The Parable of  
The Wolf  
in Sheep's Clothing  
*Matt. 7:15; Matt. 10:16*



## ***The Parable of the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing***

**Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:15; Matt. 10:16**

- ⇒ **Introduction:** Bro. Roberts, in *The Parables of Christ*, presents the parable of the wolf in context with (or as a subset of) the parable of the Good Shepherd. This is appropriate, as it will be found that the good shepherd will be vigilant and unwavering in his defense against the wolves that are set on ravaging the flock. However, due to heresies flooding the Community of Christ at this time, with many Christadelphians being won over by false brethren (*pseudadelphos*—**2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4**), either through tolerance, the bonds of fellowship or actual belief in a false gospel (which is no gospel, **Gal. 1:6-7**) we believe that it is pertinent to look closely at his parable on its own merits. For as nature teaches us of the extreme enmity that exists between sheep and wolves, so the believer should ever be aware that a discerning of the true brethren of Christ, as distinct from those who would ravage the flock, is a matter of life or death.
- ⇒ **The wolf in sheep's clothing** is a danger that cannot be underestimated nor emphasized enough. On the principle of "first the natural, then the spiritual" we can better frame our appreciation of the apostolic warning to the ecclesia of Christ concerning this eminent danger. Consider the following characteristics of this animal in comparison with men who act as such (Source: [www.alaska.net](http://www.alaska.net)):
- ◆ In comparison with similar species, wolves will travel far distances in their daily activities to seek their prey (**Matt:23:15**).
  - ◆ Wolf tracks are often indistinguishable from those of a lion .The enemies of Israel used by Yahweh to punish them are so described (**Jer. 5:6; Hab. 1:8**).
  - ◆ The wolf howl is described as "deep and mournful," changing directions within a single howl as many as five times making it difficult to discern the position (distance or direction) from which the howl emanates (**Jude 1:13**).
  - ◆ It is nearly impossible to discern how many wolves are howling when more than three or four join in, calling the pack together. Thus the danger is difficult to discern as the sound is uncertain (**James. 5:12; I Cor. 14:8-11**).
  - ◆ Wolves will usually attack on the fringes, taking animals down from behind (hindquarters, legs, tail) but sometimes the nose. Wolves will look for the weakest or unsuspecting of the flock as to expend the least amount of energy for the kill (**Deut. 25:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:6**).
  - ◆ Wolves prey primarily upon hoofed animals (ungulates; **Acts 20:29**), concealing themselves (sheep's clothing) until it is too late for the prey to escape. Attacks are made by separating the herd (division) and then isolating the prey (**Rom. 16:17**).
  - ◆ Wolves will hunt throughout the day alone or in packs, with attacks becoming more ferocious as the day wears on. The enemies of Yahweh who have persecuted true brethren are described by the prophets as "evening wolves," an indication of their desperate attacks upon the Truth (**Zeph. 3:3-4**).
  - ◆ Often wolves will sometimes isolate their prey and simply wear them down with their relentless attacks until the prey can no longer resist (**I Peter 5:8-9**). Such is the way of false brethren, unrelenting in their attacks upon the truth and those who will hold to it.
- ⇒ **Given these natural characteristics** of the stealthy and relentless wolf, in contrast with that of the meek and trusting sheep, the thought of a spiritual wolf appearing to believers as a sheep presents a serious warning and need for careful discernment. A

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wolf will kill, even as the apostles warned of those who were a hazard to the eternal welfare of the flock, drawing disciples after them through deceit, knowing not the narrowness of the way of life (**I Tim. 1:18-20**).

◆ Bro. Carter writes:

“ The majority follow the broad way which leads to destruction. Jesus is clear and emphatic on this unpopular view of the destiny of men. Human philosophy nowhere clashes more with divine teaching than on the subject of man’s duty and his future. False teachers, putting forward human speculations in place of God’s revelation and leading men away from God’s truth, are dangerous. They are destroyers of the flock when they beguile to false doctrine or to a way of life contrary to Christ’s teaching. Beware of them, said Jesus. It is a call for caution, for scrutiny of professors who would teach, and for discernment and judgment...”

⇒ **Going forward**, the place of the spiritual sheep in this brief review of the spiritual wolf is to remain vigilant in the application of **caution, scrutiny, discernment, and judgment** in spiritual matters (**Matt. 7:13-20**). The wolf in sheep’s clothing is not obvious to the brother or sister who lacks discernment, and therefore may be overlooked or unwittingly tolerated. This is a great danger when such brethren are in positions of eldership or respectability, yet lacking the spiritual tools to “*judge righteous judgment*”.

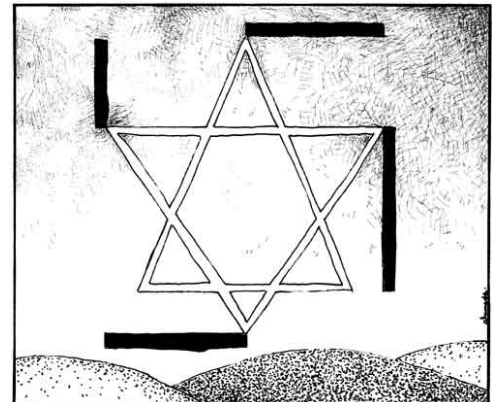
◆ All too often such “spiritual matters” as effecting the members of the ecclesia are ignored or swept under the rug, as it were, for fear of offenses (**Luke 7:23**), respect of persons (**James 2:1**), apathy (**Rev. 3:15-16**), and so forth. Under these conditions the spiritual wolf is left alone to do as he wills, even emboldened by the lack of vigilance among the would-be shepherds of the flock. The wicked princes of Israel acted as such and are described as wolves (**Ezek. 22:27-31**) because, through apathy, ignorance, faithlessness, and out right rebellion, they led the flock into national destruction.

◆ Those of Christ’s day repeated the offense in slaying the prince of life, bringing swift destruction upon the whole of the Jewish nation (**Matt. 27:24-25; John 19:15**). The remaining sheep of Christ’s ecclesia were scattered throughout the Roman world at that time and took with them the Truth which they held more dear than their lives. What ever their surroundings, the spiritual sheep were taught by the apostolic writers to remain steadfast in the faith and vigilant in their defense of the Truth against the wolves (**I Thes. 5:21; 2 Thes. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 3:6; Heb. 10:23; Rev. 2:24-25; Rev. 3:11**), in their separation from error (**2 Cor. 6:17**), and in keeping their garments unspotted from the world (**James 1:27; 1 John 2:15**). Such spiritual sheep then, as now, will be sought out in the day of judgment and saved into the Kingdom of God (**Ezek. 34:11; Matt. 25:32-33; John 10:27**).

⇒ **The Wolf and the Lamb:** It has already been mentioned that the national enemies of ancient Israel were characterized as wolves. So it is today as the nations continue in their relentless political and literal attacks upon the tiny nation of Israel.

◆ The howling of anti-Semitism is particularly ripe with desire to take Israel for a spoil and a prey (**Isa. 42:22; Ezek. 38:12**), but this will not always be so. The Spirit speaking through Isaiah presents a beautiful picture of the

*This political cartoon caricatures Israel as the equivalent of Nazi Germany; a viewpoint held or tolerated by the Nations of the world. While these same nations sheepishly speak of “peace,” what they desire is Israel’s ravaging and destruction.*



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Kingdom Age when the nations, that before ravaged Israel as wild beasts, will thereafter lie down with her in pastures prepared by the Saints in places of rulership over the nations. These rulers are depicted as a "little child" (those who in their probation displayed a childlike faith and trust in God), who will lead the nations in their attendance to spiritual matters (**Isa. 11; Isa. 65:17-25**).

- ◆ While the picture that the prophet paints for us in these passages is indeed beautiful to imagine, the emphasis of the doctrinal teaching is not upon the literal, but the figurative, that is, the nations depicted as beasts in subjection to one of higher spiritual capacity. Bro Clarence Roth, in his exposition of Isaiah 11 writes:

"On the surface this is a very beautiful picture. It depicts the once wild animals and poisonous snakes in a harmless state, no longer to be feared which in itself is a notable condition. However, to accept this as the primary teaching would be a gross mistake. We ask, **what animal—tame or wild—or what reptile ever hurt or destroyed in the Lord's holy mountain?** There is no record in the Scriptures of literal animals or snakes ever hurting Jerusalem. If they had, could we not expect to find such? What do we gather from these words then?

...We find the same prophet at another time describing the joyful flourishing of Christ's Kingdom stating, *'an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it... **No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall be there'*** (Isa. 35:8-9). Here we have wild beasts and the Saints spoken of in the same passage... [what power could any beast have over Saints? None. The language, therefore, is figurative.]

...We search a little more and we find the prophet Jeremiah saying, *'I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased'* (Jer. 5:5-6). Shall a literal leopard watch over the cities of Israel? We begin to appreciate that animals must be figurative of something else. The same prophet in the 50th chapter eliminates all doubt as to what the underlying animal teaching is when he says, *'Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away; first the King of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon hath broken his bones'* (50:17). The animals that have hurt in [Yahweh's] holy mountain then are the surrounding Gentile nations who have plagued and taken captive God's people Israel.

...The beauty and peacefulness of Isaiah's picture now shines forth in all their brightness. In fulfillment of God's promise made to the fathers, Jesus, the Branch shall reign in Jerusalem over the Kingdom of God with righteous judgments. Both Israel's and the Gentiles power to hurt and destroy having been broken by the Branch, they are then in complete subjection to him, dwelling peacefully with the tame animals being led by a little child, the saints... (**Matt. 18:1-4**)."

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