

....and shall deceive many

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Introduction

In the Gospel of Matthew, 24th chapter, the apostles ask Jesus for the signs of His return. Jesus tells them what to look for, being quite specific as to the events. The very first thing they are warned to not let anyone deceive them. He explains that many will come in His name and that many will be deceived. (Matt 24:4-5). He goes on about hearing of wars, nations rising against nations, famines, earthquakes, pestilence and persecution that Christians will face. (Matt 24: 6-10) He again reiterates that there will be false prophets who will deceive many. (Matt 24:11)

Since Jesus twice speaks of the deception of many by false prophets in Matthew 24, it should make clear that the coming deception is most important. What would we be deceived about? How do we know we are being deceived? What signs are there now of those who deceive?

Deception is already happening all around us. TV, newspapers, magazines, even people who claim they are preachers. They will lie any lie to us that may take a person away from Christ to go to Satan.

Deceptors can be anything, people, institutions, cults and religions. The people range from Oprah Winfrey to Pope Benedict XVI. Institutions such as the papacy are part of this, as are cults such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, the New Age cults as well as Scientology, Islam and Unitarian Universalism. All claim to be speaking the Word of God, but are they really?

Thus, this writing will consider the people, institutions, cults and religions that are part of the deception.

The People

There are too many people out there who preach the here and now instead of the message of salvation. Media darling preachers such as Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Benny Hind and others are spreading something other than scripture. Yet, they are recognized by millions of people as the major Christian leaders of our time.

This is a time for the Christian to be aware of what is going on around them. All one needs to do is watch the events in the world; the wars, the walking toward a one world system, to a one world religion and many other clues. The media bombards us with the fore mentioned modern day preachers. But it's not just preachers, its people claiming to be religious, or spiritual, that are deceiving many. These include Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, the Dali Lama, Oprah Winfrey and even Pope Benedict. They are all about the here and now rather than eternal salvation and God's message.

Many believe that there are many ways to God besides what is stated quite clearly in John 14:6. Even Mother Teresa could be put in this category as she that her role wasn't to convert the poor to Catholicism or Christianity. Instead it was to help the poor with love and if they became better Christians, Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus, then she was happy. Never mind the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).

Are these people dangerous? To believing Christians and unbelievers, they all proclaim a heaven on earth as one can be saved through works, by merit, that all religions point to the same God and many other heresies. Take Oprah for instance. She denies Christ. She denied Christ on her own show by stating that there are many ways to reach Heaven. She also believes that a sermon message she heard in church, was telling her

that God is jealous of her! Obviously, God isn't jealous of anyone, not in the way we view jealousy. God's jealousy is at the false idols that replace Him. The molten calf at Mount Sinai is the perfect example. The people didn't believe Moses would be coming down from the mountain, and didn't really trust the God of Moses, so they reverted back to their pagan ways. In Exodus 32 we read that the making of the calf and the worship of it made God consider wiping out the people. Moses advocated on behalf of the people and God allowed him to bring the people back to Him. Unfortunately, millions are in Oprah's camp through her year long study of spirituality, which is nothing more than New Age thought replacing God's Word.

Let us consider another person. Deepak Chopra is a "spiritualist" who has written many books. He titled his latest "The Third Christ." He dares to write that the Jesus we worship is not the Jesus we think he is. He also claims that Jesus is divisive. Chopra states that Jesus is the cause of the destructive wars the world has faced through the centuries. Again, many actually believe Chopra as a great religious leader. He isn't. He's nothing more than one more in the long line of false teachers pulling Christians and others away from God, replacing Him with them selves.

Pope Benedict has recently come out with some outlandish statements. He believes that Christianity and Islam have some commonality and that by working together, they can bring peace to the world. He's held meetings with Buddhists, Hindus and other cults. He is denying the Book of Genesis by planning, in March 2009, a celebration of Darwinism on the 150th anniversary of the publishing of Origin of the Species. This alone should be of concern to Catholics and Christians alike. There are other rituals,

statements, etc by the Catholic Church that are unbiblical. Those will be discussed in the section on institutions.

Oprah, Chopra and Benedict are among the more famous heretics. Others include the followers of Scientology such as Tom Cruise and John Travolta. Jehovah's Witnesses such as Michael Jackson. The list can go on, but the message is clear: More and more people are walking away from Christianity to delve into the false teachings and beliefs of these people. Christians must take the Great Commission seriously in these times and spread the Word and show the world the Truth.

Institutions

The most visible of institutions is the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, there are some denominations, such as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod that reject the concept of the Anti-Christ being just one person at the end of time, but rather consider the institution of the Papacy as the anti-Christ that has existed now for 2,000 some years.

The institution of the papacy since the second century has brought into the Church teachings that have no Biblical authority. The list is many, but here are a few:

- The worship of Mary—431
- Purgatory—593
- Using Latin—600
- Transubstantiation
- Salvation by works and merit

What makes these teachings and rituals false teachings and deception? Let's look at each.

1. The worship of Mary and praying to her.

There is nothing in the Bible that says Mary stayed a virgin, never had more children, ascended into Heaven without experiencing death and that there is no Biblical authority that allows people to pray to her (or the dead saints or anyone else but God), praying in front of a statue of her (idolatry).

2. Purgatory

There is no Biblical authority on purgatory, a place where the dead go for further cleansing from their sins. This was done by proclamation of Pope Gregory the Great in 593. Those who have received the gift of salvation during their lifetime,

will not go anywhere except to be with the Lord. Those who die without accepting the salvation will be forever separated from God. For once you are dead there is no more that can be done as far as salvation is concerned, you're either with God or you're not.

3. Using Latin in the mass

Despite the fact that 1 Corinthians 14:9 clearly says that speaking in a strange language is prohibited, Gregory the Great, in 600, introduced Latin as the language of prayer and worship. What guarantee, in the year 600, was there one in which priests were actually saying the mass instead of something else? It was just another example of the RCC search for control over its adherents.

Somewhat related to using Latin is that the Bible was once forbidden to be read by laymen. In fact, once it was translated into many languages, the lay people could finally know just what the Bible says. However, for many years, laymen were not allowed to interpret what the Bible says because only Catholic clergy have the knowledge to do so. The papacy apparently forgot what happened at the Tower of Babel. God wanted many languages, nations and kingdoms, so He took action at Babel and all there were speaking in different languages, unable to understand each other.

4. Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation is the process in which a priest somehow changes wafers into the actual Body of Christ. In the same manner, the priest changes wine into Christ's blood. And then, he and the parishioners eat and drink Jesus.

Jesus died for our sins so that all who believe in Him are saved from not only eternal separation from God and the eternal torment in Hell . He needed to do that just once. However, because of this “miracle,” Jesus has been eaten and drank billions of times since Pope Innocent III decreed it in 1215.

The Lord’s Supper is a reminder of the great sacrifice Christ did for all of us. We eat the bread and drink the wine in tribute of the death and resurrection of Jesus. And we do it without giving a thought that we are not eating and drinking Jesus.

5. Salvation by faith and merit

Jesus spoke many times that one must go through Him and Him alone to get to God. He also spoke of salvation as a gift from Him, something we come nowhere close to deserving. However, the RCC brought in merit or works into the salvation plan.

This was one of the reasons that Martin Luther wrote his 95 thesis. The passage that woke him up to the fact that salvation is by grace alone was Romans 5:1.

One doesn’t need a priest or the mass or the sacraments or the Eucharist or even the Roman Catholic Church itself. Salvation is by faith in Jesus as the Son of God who was sent to earth to die for our sins and rise again to conquer death.

There were other reasons Luther protested the RCC. One was indulgences. The Church told the people that they could get their departed loved ones out of purgatory by donating money to the church. Of course, people believed it. The only thing it accomplished was more money in the Church’s coffers for gold and

icons, statues and large, beautiful churches and cathedrals that would surely impress the peasants into becoming Catholic.

Indulgences still occur today. Maybe not in the monetary sense, but by praying. Growing up Catholic, we would always hear the priests or the catechism teachers say we need to pray for the “poor souls in purgatory.”

In summary, the Roman Catholic Church along with the institution of the papacy have long deceived their followers into believing that salvation depended on the people doing things that just aren't Biblical. All one needs is faith in Jesus.

False Religions and Cults

The most familiar of the many false religions are the Mormons and Muslims. Both began by a visiting angel giving the book to the founder of the sect.. In the case of Mormon, Mormon was the angel's name. In Islam, it was the angel Gabriel who gave Mohammed the Qur'an over many years.

There are several others that can be described as false religions. These are Jehovah's Witness's, Hinduism, Buddhism and other far-east religions. Currently, the most visible are Mormons and JW's in the United States and Islam in the Middle East and other parts of Asia.

These religions contradict the Bible. For example, in both Mormonism and Islam, the founders believed that the Bible was incomplete and needed more. Hence the respective texts. Right away, that contradicts the Bible as being the final authority on God's revelation to humans. Jesus said on the cross that it is finished, which means that nothing else is needed after that point for our salvation.

Mormonism

- The Bible is the word of God, but the Book of Mormon reveals more of what is needed for salvation.
- There are several planets where gods and goddesses live. These gods and goddesses were once humans on various planets
- Three gods make up the Trinity and were born at different times. The Father begot the son and the Holy Spirit through a goddess wife in heaven. (Martin 192)

As one can instantly see, these beliefs have no Biblical bases. We definitely do not become gods or goddesses in the after life on various planets. The Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit combined as one person. Granted, the theology of the Trinity can be quite confusing to many, but that is the truth as revealed.

Jehovah's Witnesses

- The Jehovah God is not Jesus
- Jesus was raised from the dead but as a spirit, not bodily
- The second coming of Jesus happened in 1914 by his invisible presence
- The dead exist only in God's memory (Martin 48)
- Michael the archangel is the only begotten son of God, who is now in the form of Jesus (Bible Chart JW)
- Only 144,000 will make it to heaven, the rest of the redeemed will stay on Earth after Armageddon (Bible Chart JW)

I have yet to read a Bible that says any of this. These are nothing but deceptions, all of them. The biggest question I have with these beliefs is how they know and just why Jesus returned in 1914 and is orbiting the earth? I believe that comes from Matthew 24:34. Somehow, the Witnesses came to believe that this generation is defined as the generation born in 1914 or during World War I. When the last of these people pass away, then the end will come.

The number 144,000 comes from Revelation 7:1-8. 12,000 from each tribe of Israel will be sealed. The JW's believe that "sealed" means it is them that go to heaven. Most Christians believe that the 144,000 are sealed as a means of protection from the forces of the Anti-Christ so they can go out among all the peoples of the world and bring the news of the free gift of salvation.

Islam

Since 9/11, one of the more dangerous things to do was criticize Islam in any manner, but still the differences between Christianity and Islam are quite clear:

- Denial that Jesus is the Son of God
- Christ really didn't die on the cross
- Allah doesn't love those who do wrong (Ridenour 75-87)
- Allah is unknowable and cannot be known personally
- Allah chose Hagar's son Ishmael for his covenant, God chose Sarah's son Isaac
- Allah of Islam is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Moses

Muslims believe just the opposite of what Christians believe for the most part. The Bible clearly states many times that Jesus is the Son of God, who did die on the cross and rose on the third day. God loves all, no matter how grave the sin. God is very knowable and personable to all. The one that seemingly concept that no one either Christian or Muslim will admit is that Allah was actually a local moon god, one of the many deities of Mecca. The tribe of Mohammed was very devoted to Allah. Once Mohammed founded Islam, the same Allah became the true god of Islam. (Carlson, Decker 102-116)

Is Islam really a peaceful religion? Within hours of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush said they are. I think on that day, most Americans would say they're not anywhere near peaceful, as many do today. The Qur'an tells Muslims to kill non-believers. Converting to Christianity is a capital offense. On 9/11 we saw clips of Hamas, Hezbollah,

Palestinians as well as Arabs and Muslims around the world, even those who live in Deer borne, MI dancing in the streets in celebration. With all this, how is the typical American supposed to think of them? Not very highly. And that's the problem with the deceptions of Islam. They have deceived many in this country. If you don't go the PC way, you suffer from Islamophoa.

Cults

Lastly, we'll take a look at cults. There are many groups one can label as a cult. More familiar ones of the past would include the Branch Davidians and Jim Jones in Jonestown. There are more to be sure. Most have one thing in common: there is no absolute truth. (Martin 404) This gives the adherents a way out on how they act.

Christianity has absolute truth. Man is born into sin, man needs Christ to be saved, Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus rose again, and the Ten Commandments are not suggestions. That is just a few of the absolutes of Christianity.

What are some of these cults? To name a few there is Theosophy, Christian Science, New Age, Spiritism, Scientology and more. Most, if not all, delve into the occult. This is especially true in the neo-pagan movement. Then there are the various UFO cults or the flying spaghetti monster cult. All of these do one thing, draw people away from the Lord God, the one real God, through deception and playing off people's fears over the beliefs of mainstream Christianity. The fear is that they can't handle the absolute truths and need a spiritual place where they can worship without the fear of going to Hell. Sadly, they're mistaken.

Conclusion

Deception has been with us since the sin of Adam and Eve. Satan is responsible for this as he is in a continuing battle with God over us. Satan finds weaknesses in us or in groups that he feels he can successfully prey on. It doesn't work all the time, but plenty have been deceived, knowingly or unknowingly.

As we come nearer to the final days, Christians have a responsibility to bring the Word of God to all. God wants all saved, He doesn't want anyone to perish. More and more are being led astray the closer we get to the end. That's the battle we're up against. The lies and the deceit of the people, organizations, false religions and cults are very difficult to turnaround away from these and walk in the Lord.

How do we reverse this? Here are some suggestions:

- Know your Bible
- Study the different deceptions
- Find a common ground of understanding
- Use the Word of God in prayer
- Be patient, but persevere
- Talk to them lovingly, do not be judgmental
- Always remember that anything a cultist says or does, he does it out of spiritual blindness. We are the light.

There have been thousands or more cults, false religion and deceptions since the beginning of the world. Most have died out, but many more have appeared. They deceive many who are in search of something more and tell them that all religions are the same, that we worship the same God you do. Most often, that's wrong.

The best way to defeat deception is by knowing the Word of God. With the Word as our guide, and ammunition, we can't lose. All need to hear God's.

Remember that the Bible is the either Word of God or it isn't. It can't be both.

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