

THE GREAT DECEPTION

BY

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The story of mankind began with Satan deceiving two people in the garden, and according to Revelation, it will end with Satan successfully deceiving all the nations. One only has to consider the fact that practically every facet of society today embraces the idea that one may “do evil that good will come” in order to see how widespread the deception is at the present stage.

However, people who have access to the scriptures, have no excuse for their delusion. Throughout the Bible God indicates that Satan is a deceiver, seeking to turn men away from God by prompting him to disbelieve, to manufacture his own salvation, to worship false gods and accept half truth. Satan is called “the deceiver of the whole earth” (Rev. 12:9). What he is called in the end he has been from the beginning.

Ultimately, before the whole experiment ends Satan is to be so successful that he will have almost the entire world worshipping him thinking they are on the right track, carrying out a rebellion against God and setting up a man as the true and proper King of Kings (Rev. 13:8–14). Judging from the present condition of politics, economics, morals and religion, we are not far from that point.

The direct effect of such global deception is to set the forces of the world against the saints so that warfare ensues, with the saints encompassed about by the satanic forces. This much of prophecy is being fulfilled at this very moment, with all-out war being waged by unbelievers and militant anti-Christians against everyone who lays hold on the promises of God and clings to the cross of Jesus.

It is to the credit of the arch deceiver himself that so many in the churches do not recognize the nature of the warfare that is going on. Satan has convinced the world that the purpose of Christianity is merely to reform and improve the world. From this viewpoint it seems correct for the Christian to be as much a part of the world as possible, for him to join in worldly pursuits, to align himself with influential men of the world and try to gain the love of the world. Under this delusion, the idea of warfare with the world is the last thing to be considered Christian.

But this is a deception. The purpose of Christ is to entirely cleanse the universe of every trace of Satan and all who follow him. At the very outset, God said, “I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed (Christ); he shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). The seed of Satan are those who deny Christ, especially those Jews who are militantly opposed to him and who are trying to destroy Christianity and Biblical faith (John 8:44, I John 3:10). The bruising of Satan’s head is to come only at the end of time, at the final judgment and destruction of all evil. Therefore, the warfare between Satan and Christ which began in the garden will continue on until the final blow is struck by Christ at the end of time.

This warfare is worldwide and includes all of humanity since everyone is aligned either with Satan or with Christ. Jesus said that if we are not with Him we are against Him (Mt. 12:30). If one is not in Christ he is in the world and the whole world lies in the evil one (I John 5:19). Furthermore, Jesus named Satan as the prince of this world (John

14:30). The struggle that is taking place today is a warfare between those who rebel against Christ and those who trustingly follow Him. Jesus said, “if you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, for I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19). Such hatred may not be that of a howling mob like that which witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, nor like that which stoned Stephen or Paul, but underneath the sophisticated attacks against Christian morals, beneath the winsome smile of the liberal architect in politics and religion, beyond the facade of love parroted by the hippies and beneath the surface of the witty professor who makes biblical faith the butt of his sarcasm, there lies smoldering a bitter antagonism against the divine mission of Jesus, against the eternal purpose of God and against those who hold to His revealed will.

The fact that men cannot see the diametric opposition between the world and Christianity, that they do not readily see that the world opposes them when they embrace the GOSPEL, is due to Satan’s prime talent, that of deception.

Paul admits that he was deceived into persecuting the church before his conversion (Titus 3:3 and Phil. 3:6). The “god of this world” blinds men’s minds for the single purpose of keeping them from seeing the “light of the gospel” of Christ (II Cor. 4:4). Paul writes that “Satan fashions himself into an angel of light” and that his ministers masquerade as “ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:14–15). Revelation 2:9 speaks of the “blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, but are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.” The deception is universal. It is no wonder then that millions of church members go along daily under the banner of Christianity, thinking they are in some way serving God, but so thoroughly deceived that they actually support and assist the works of Satan in the world. Therefore, if we are fighting Satan and his forces we often find ourselves in conflict with the very ones who claim to be a part of the church. Such is the bitter reality of the warfare that is going on.

The Bible says, “that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies” (I Tim. 4:1–2).

“Seducing spirits”—the deception of those who claim special spiritual powers and gifts and special revelations by the spirit but which are contrary to scripture. “Doctrines of demons”—false ideas prompted by Satan, but which are claimed to be from God. “The hypocrisy of men that speak lies”—the learned men of religion who speak of Christianity but reject the simple and absolute truth of the gospel. Since all such false religion is conducted in the name of Christ and embraces at least the appearance of piety and good will, millions are deceived into accepting it instead of resisting it. Satan’s weapon of deception is highly effective.

What is the effect of such deception? Millions of men leave the ministry because of the frustration of appearing to fight on two sides. Millions of people leave the church because of the hypocrisy “of men that speak lies.” Millions of other without a firm hold on the truth actually do the work of the enemy while claiming loyalty to Christ. Also to be considered is the effect this has on the faithful: the constant struggle to sift truth from error; the facing of bitter criticism from those who are deceived; the fatiguing strain to hold up under the constant pressure to give into the trend.

What can we do about it? Since the chief weapon of the enemy is deception and falsehood, we must counter attack with the truth. **Nothing can remove a lie but the**

truth. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Of course, this truth does not refer to technological truth nor all truth in general, but the truth about God’s revealed purpose. One may know the true purpose of God and yet not know about a lot of other things of no consequence. The Christian knows that he is to reflect the image of God, that he is to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and that God’s purpose is to have him “holy and without blemish before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). The strategy of Satan is to turn us from this purpose so that we compromise with sin.

Furthermore, we know the truth about how the whole business will end: that the wages of sin is death. This truth strikes at the very heart of Satan’s work, for from the beginning he has deceived the world on this point. He deceived Eve in the garden by convincing her that death was not the penalty for rebellion against God—“You shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). He has convinced the race that everyone will live forever, that each person has an inborn immortal quality, and that he cannot die ever. The choice which the religious word gives is not one of life or death, but one of a place of residence in eternity, either in bliss with God’s angels or in sorrow with hell’s angels. No wonder men do not see the meaning of Christ’s atoning death—they simply do not believe in death! But we know better. We know that Christ will destroy the unbelievers and disobedient at His coming (II Thess. 1:8–9). In contrast to such an end, the Christian will be given a glorious life that is fitted for a new and wonderful creation “wherein dwells righteousness.” It is just this knowledge that we are redeemed from death so that we may live forever that gives us the incentive to fight with the faithful minority of Christians.

As in any warfare the best defense is an good offense. Wars are not won by defense and retreat. We are told to “resist the devil.” But more than that we are told to put up a fight.

I would suggest three steps in our aggressive warfare: (1) By deliberately seeking our objective. This objective is to be godly; to please God and exercise total faith in Him. This is probably the hardest part of the battle. It means to deny one’s self; it means to humble one’s self in recognizing sin, then deliberately give up that sin. It means to lay one’s life at God’s disposal. It means total subjection to Christ who is our master and commander-in-chief. (2) By knowing the word. Our only offensive weapon is the sword of the spirit which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17). If we want to put up a fight, we must be girdled with truth, with our sword of the word ready at hand (Eph. 6:14). When Jesus was engaged in conflict with Satan in the wilderness, there times He quoted the Bible to defeat the enemy. “It is written,” He said, thus demonstrating that our knowledge of God’s word is essential if we are to hold our ground when Satan come to deceive us and draw us away from God. This means studying the word continually. It is the bread which God has given for the purpose of producing in us His own image. (3) By aggressively witnessing to the world concerning our faith in Christ. This doesn’t mean inviting people to the church house. It means taking the truth to the individual, going to him and telling him how Christ took his place by dying for his sin, so that he might be given life that is eternal. This is the heart of the issue: God’s righteousness versus man’s sin; life versus death! These are harsh issues, but as we said before, it is war. We must wrest the minds of men from Satan’s grasp that they receive the truth of Christ and be made free. This is not a task that can be accomplished at the 11:00 o’clock hour on Sunday Morning. It is done by the Christian by his personal efforts in the world throughout the week.

Jesus said, "That which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). James wrote that "whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). Be not deceived. If Satan has deceived the world, we had better carefully examine that which the world recommends!

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give unto you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). That is the promise of Jesus. It is not a lie!

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