

OVERCOMING THE DECEPTIONS

By

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The loosing of Satan for the deceiving of the nations is becoming more evident day by day. What is not so obvious, but nevertheless true, is that Christ has provided His disciples with adequate means to defeat such deception.

The evil influence is everywhere. As it was in the days of Noah, “every imagination of the thought of men’s hearts are only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5, Luke 17:26–27). As in the days of Lot, sodomy is now defended instead of condemned, flaunted instead of shamed, advocated instead of shunned, and the wicked are given “rights” over the rights of other citizens. As Isaiah said, “They declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not! Woe unto the, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves” (Isa. 3:9).

“The whole world lies in the evil one” (I John 5:19). Yet we know Christ has been given authority over all. Then how can it be said that the world is in Satan’s power?

1. First, having authority does not require that one exercise power to enforce such authority. For example, a policeman may have authority to direct traffic and stop your car. Yet, as the driver of that automobile, you may defy him and drive on. The policeman can use his authority to issue a citation, which results in a penalty for disobeying his authority. Jesus has authority over this world, but we have the power to defy that authority if we choose. The penalty will come in the day when God will judge the world through Christ. At that time all will be powerless to resist the penalty, which God has already announced. In that day people will seek to flee and hide from God, rather than face the penalty for rejecting Christ’s authority. But there will be no place to hide, and by the Creator’s power such rebels will “suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord...” (II Thess. 1:9).

2. “World” is a term with several meanings in Scripture. It may describe the earth, the universe, all mankind, or the new creation to come. But it also refers to the world system which rejects God. That’s what is meant when we speak of “worldliness.” Christians are told to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides for ever” (I John 2:15–17). It is this system of mankind, guided by their own purposes and desires rather than the purpose and desire of God, which “lies in the evil one.”

3. Although Satan has neither the authority nor the power to rule the world, he is able to exercise control over this world system through deception. This is his nature. Jesus said that he is a liar (John 8:44). He is described as “the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). Paul wrote that Satan works “with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (II Thess. 2:10).

In every facet of modern life, the deception is being carried out wholesale. Wherever you work, whatever you do — in business, in entertainment, in education, in politics, and in religion — the deception is dominant. Dishonesty and greed is the way to success; lust and impurity is the way to happiness; false theories is the way of wisdom; lies and broken promises is the way of statesmanship; counterfeit signs and imitation faith is the way of religion.

Those in the camp of Satan continually bombard us their judgments, moral values and conclusion about every issue and activity in the world. Their opinions and ideas permeate the world through TV, newspapers, public education, radios, court decisions, churches and from person to person. And while they are pronouncing their judgments and conclusion on every subject imaginable, they are making sure that the judgments and conclusions based upon God's revelation are considered out of place and unacceptable. When a Christian speaks of immorality, he is considered judgmental, opinionated and a bigot. Such is the course of the deception.

The false light of deception is at its brightest when it comes in the guise of religion. Under the umbrella of "church growth", the world is made to feel at home in the church. All of its corporate machinery is used to bring in new members by appealing to their pride and lust for recognition. Godly standards are exchanged for whatever stimulates, excites, and satisfies the natural desires. God's image is forgotten, and you can be what you want to be by positive thinking.

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

With the world given over to such deception and gross immorality, many believers tend to withdraw from normal contacts with the world and busy themselves in their church organizations. Eventually their energy, time and money is exhausted in the corporate "church", so that they are insulated from the world.

But this is not the answer to the problem of deception. When Jesus prayed for His disciples, He said, "I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou should take them from the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil one...Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:14–17).

Those who love God love the truth which He has revealed, including truth about creation, the purpose of life, good and evil, morals and ethics, salvation, judgment and the ultimate destiny of all. Every line of truth one learns from God's word is a building block in the defense system against Satan's deceptions. We are not to remove ourselves from the world but to protect ourselves from the evil one by the word of truth.

Jesus recognized this when He said to His disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shines unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14–16).

Rather than withdrawing from the world, disciples of Jesus are to demonstrate to the world what it is to "walk in the light" (I John 1:7), which is the same as "walking in truth" (II John 4, II John 3–4).

The first century Christians at Philippi also lived in a sophisticated but deceived world. Paul encouraged them to live in that world as "blameless and harmless children of

God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you are seen as light in the world, holding forth the word of life..." (Phil. 2:15-16).

To this deceived generation Christians may be seen as a nuisance or even a threat. We are going a different direction and aiming at a different destiny. This is especially marked by our fiat hint eh resurrection, as contrasted to the world's concept of a ghostly life-after-death or a mysterious reincarnation. The first deception of Satan was his statement to Eve: "you shall not surely die" (Gen 3:4). The world relies on this falsehood. The truth which Christ gave is that death is a reality but that He will raise the dead and give life to the redeemed. This is the GOOD NEWS and the point at which the light of truth should burn the brightest, but unfortunately the church has allowed this light to be dimmed by medieval creeds, and the dynamic truth of resurrection can hardly be seen through the fog of human tradition.

There may be a million ways to deceive and lie about a thing, but the one thing that will defeat all the lies is the truth. It is the only weapon against the gross deceptions of the age. It is the only light to dispel the darkness in the world.

As the nations follow Satan's deceptions, "Evil men and seducer shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). Even so, Satan has no authority and power other than what his follower concede to him. He is a defeated enemy. Christ has defeated him for all who commit themselves to Him and His saving grace.

"In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

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