

We Need Divine Discernment to See Through This Fog of Deception

We live in an age of mass deception and in an “anything goes” society. “If it feels good, do it” is the motto of many. Evil is called good while good is called evil. When asked what the signs were of His Second Coming and the end of the world, Jesus declared deception was the number one indicator. Before mentioning wars, natural disasters and other calamities, He said, “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come . . . and will deceive many” (Matt. 24:4-5). He predicted deception will be so pervasive that it will “deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:24b). Keen spiritual discernment is needed to see through the fog of deception that blinds our secular society.

God asked the Prophet Jonah, “Should I not, therefore, be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people, who do not know their right hand from their left” (Jon. 4:11). This figure of speech meant the Ninevites could not tell the difference between right and wrong. Millions of people today are in a similar situation because they have no moral compass. D. L. Moody said, “The best way to show that a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or to spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it.” The Bible is the “straight stick” we lay beside all the crooked views circulating in our corrupt culture.

The Apostle Paul described the symptoms of a sick society. After a long list of indicators of the moral breakdown of the last days, he summarized, “always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”

(John 8:32). You see, it is spiritual truth that sets us free from error, not merely facts, data, trivia or general knowledge. We need more than human information and education; we need divine revelation and transformation.

Discernment is “the ability to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, to perceive, to detect or to recognize.” The more familiar we are with a genuine item, the easier it is to spot a fake. We’ve all seen cashiers use a detector pen to test the authenticity of a \$20 bill. The detector pen contains an iodine solution that reacts with starch in wood-based paper. A black mark will appear on a phony bill made on cheap paper, while a yellow mark appears on a genuine bill. The Bible is our detector pen—the best spiritual counterfeit detector known to man.

In Old Testament times, God gave Aaron, the High Priest, a unique way to determine His will on various issues. There was a pocket on the breastplate he wore that contained two objects (probably stones) called “the Urim and the Thummim” (Ex. 28:30), also translated as the “sacred lots.” Apparently, if the High Priest needed to know God’s will on a given matter, he would pull out one of these stones. Presumably, one meant “yes,” while the other meant “no.” Personally, I’m glad we don’t have to carry around two rocks in our pockets to discern God’s will. Now, we have a much better method. “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things” (1 John 2:20). We have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, our personal tutor, to guide us into all truth and help us discern right from wrong.

We also have the Bible, God’s revealed will, which, like a fog light, penetrates through the hazy ideas in society to help us see issues more clearly:

- Society accepts evolution as a scientific fact; the Bible teaches intelligent design—creation has an all-wise Creator.

- Society considers an unborn child as merely fetal tissue to be disposed of if a woman so chooses; the Bible informs us that “the fruit of the womb is a reward” and infants are “made with fear and wonder” in the womb (Ps. 127:3b; 139:14).
- Society views drugs and alcohol as a desirable lifestyle; the Bible warns, “Wine is a mocker ... and whoever is deceived by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1) and “Do not be drunk with wine, for that is reckless living. But be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).
- Society says premarital sex and adultery are tolerable and that abstinence and monogamy are unrealistic; the Bible counters “Marriage is to be honored among everyone, and the bed undefiled. But God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers” (Heb. 13:4).
- Society thinks viewing pornography is harmless “adult entertainment;” the Bible says, “I will set no wicked thing before my eyes” (Ps. 101:3) and “But I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).
- Society promotes homosexuality as normal and acceptable; the Bible decrees, “You shall not lie with a man as one does with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev. 18:22).
- Society says it doesn’t matter how you live; the Bible declares we will reap what we sow and eventually all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Gal. 6:7; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Some might object and say, “We should be more tolerant and open-minded” or “The Bible is too narrow and restrictive.” One author noted, “Open minds, like open windows, need screens to keep the bugs out.” There are many views and opinions floating around, but the Bible is the screen that helps us filter out truth from error. By the way, no passengers on an airplane complain that their pilot lands on a narrow strip of pavement called a runway. All passengers are grateful for a safe

landing. Jesus called His way “the straight and narrow way” that leads to eternal life—the ultimate safe landing. May God grant us discernment to see through the fog of deception and help us always be open-hearted toward sinners but never be open-minded toward sin! {eoa}

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