

# Opening Your Eyes to Spiritual Deception

Medical doctors call it Usher syndrome. It's a disorder that causes deafness and gradual loss of sight.

You may have heard about it in the news in recent years. Jacob, the 9-year-old son of star horse jockey Kent Desormeaux, is suffering from the disease. Jacob is progressively going blind, and more quickly than anticipated. Doctors say one day he may not be able to see at all.

As a parent, this tears at my heart. I can't even imagine this father's pain, watching as his son slowly but surely loses his senses of sight and hearing; realizing his son will soon be unable to hear his voice or see his smiling face. But this natural example also awakened my spirit to the Father's pain in watching some of His own children slowly but surely lose their senses of sight and hearing—through spiritual deception.

Like Usher syndrome, deception is progressive. I don't believe people move from worshipping God to worshipping angels overnight, for example. Nor do I believe one leaps from the practical study of biblical types and shadows to practicing occultism quickly. It starts with a little erroneous fox. Just as the Word of God warns us how one sin can lead to another sin (read: David and Bathsheba) it is also true that one error can lead us into another error. One wrong belief can cause us to believe many wrong things.

Of course, the devil first has to seduce us before he can deceive us and he'll usually start with something that seems on the up and up. After all, the apostle Paul warned us that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). But with the written Word of God and all its warnings about deceiving spirits to guide us, how does deception get

its stronghold? Well, one way is ignorance of the Word of God and the ways of God. But I also believe deception finds a doorway in the idolatry of our hearts.

The Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). If that's true, and it is, then none of us are above deception. If we think we are, then we're deceived already. But the good news is Jesus sent the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us into all truth; truth that is readily confirmed in the canon of Scripture. If we follow His Spirit and His written Word instead of the idolatry of our hearts, we'll walk in the light.

Idolatry is always a danger. The apostle Paul lists it as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). But the same apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, also told us to flee from idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14). The Word of God never instructs us to do something the grace of God won't empower us to do. We simply have to get into agreement.

Noteworthy is a comparison between two Scriptures that deal with fleeing. The Bible implores us to submit ourselves to God, "resist the devil and he will flee" (James 4:7). The Bible doesn't say idolatry will flee from you. Rather, it says we have to flee from idolatry. Why? Because idolatry allows the tempter to get a foothold if we don't turn our hearts toward God's will instead of our own. Consider Paul's warning:

"God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently.

"Therefore, my dearly beloved, shun (keep clear away from, avoid by flight if need be) any sort of idolatry (of loving or

venerating anything more than God). I am speaking as to intelligent (sensible) men. Think over and make up your minds [for yourselves] about what I say. [I appeal to your reason and your discernment in these matters.]" (1 Cor. 10:13-15, AMP).

So we can't blame all this deception business on the devil. Nor can we be ignorant to his devices. Part of his ministry is to find the idolatry in our hearts: the deceitfulness of riches, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh or something else that causes us to give God's place to another. Once Satan finds that idolatry he'll tempt you with it. At that point we have a clear choice: Destroy the idol or walk into darkness.

We must partner with the Lord in guarding our hearts with all diligence from deception in these last days. Again, most of us wouldn't consider turning to occultic practices to discover hidden meanings in the name of prophecy. Yet some have fallen into this snare. Likewise, most of us wouldn't exalt angels to a place they don't deserve—or even want. And most of us wouldn't offer strange fire in the name of Jesus. Yet, we see these things happening in the body of Christ even now.

Again, deception is progressive. It starts with those little foxes. Guarding our hearts from deception means being humble enough to acknowledge that we are capable of being deceived. It also means setting our minds on Christ and putting first the Kingdom. As far as the world is concerned we have died, and our real life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). Guarding ourselves from deception, then, means taking the apostle Paul's advice:

"Kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God)" (Col. 3:5, AMP).

Prophets are called to holiness, humility, and should be turning hearts away from sin toward God, not mysticism, angels or anything else. We've watched some in prophetic ministry stray from its purpose, sometimes for the sake of not appearing 'religious.' Yes, we want to make room for God to move how He wants and to avoid the trap of a religious spirit that would quench His operations. But does that mean we throw our discernment out stained glass windows to prove we're open-minded? God forbid.

Consider 9-year-old Jacob. While there is deliverance from deception, there is currently no cure for Usher syndrome. That means Jacob will soon lose his sight. This is not God's will. So I ask you, what would it be like if the church rose up in power, equipping the saints with the truth to see signs of God—like healing the sick and opening blind eyes—following them that believe? I submit to you that Christ would be getting the glory He deserves and young Jacob would be able to hear the sound of his father's voice and see him cross the finish line of a world-class horse race again.

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