

Discerning the Deceivers of the Last Days

In a previous article, we discovered the extent to which the devil is a liar and a deceiver. Jesus declared in John 8:44 (AMP) that there is no truth in him. "When he lies, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies and half-truths."

The same is true of his lesser devils, the demons who try to trick or trap us with their lies of deception.

In His Holy Week discourse on the Mount of Olives, Jesus warned His close disciples that at the "end of the age" there will be specific religious deception, social and political upheavals, natural calamities, disloyalty and persecution (Matt. 24:3-24).

Spiritual Deceptions

In Matthew 24 (NKJV), Jesus repeatedly warned of spiritual deception from that time until the "end of the age," from professing believers, religious leaders and bogus miracle workers:

- "Take heed that no one deceives you" (v. 4).
- "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (v. 5).
- "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many" (v. 11).
- "For false christs and prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (v. 24).

Such deception in the "last days" requires us to be discerning and *resist* those who may be careless collaborators in these demonic deceptions, or even publicly *reject* those who may be

complicit partners in them. The apostle Paul advised the Roman believers to “note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18, NKJV).

Lifestyle Deceptions

Paul warned the Christian believers in Corinth that they could deceive themselves and even other believers regarding lifestyle decisions. He declared that “the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God” and then gave examples of disqualifying lifestyle practices: “Neither fornicators [sexually active singles], nor idolators, nor adulterers [sexually unfaithful marrieds], nor homosexuals, nor sodomites [male homosexuals], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10, NKJV).

Those former lifestyles do not glorify God in our bodies or in our maturing spirits, which are now to be submitted to God (1 Cor. 6:20). Some believers may still struggle with these sinful habits and practices but can be cleansed, set apart for God and totally accepted in His sight by the transforming power of the “Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11, NKJV).

Paul also spoke to the Galatian Christians about lifestyle deceptions: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:7-8, NKJV).

The temptation to desire God’s love and forgiveness but still practice the “works of the flesh” (see Galatians 5:19-21) is a devilish deception as well. Paul taught, “Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Instead,

“those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24, NKJV).

Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians teaches the putrefying lifestyles of this world are contradictory to the “sweet-smelling aroma” we are to exude, as we are “imitators of God as dear children” (Eph. 5:1-2, NKJV). Such things should not even be named among us “as fitting for saints” (v. 3, NKJV). Those who would deceive us with their “empty words” and human rationalizations about holy living should be avoided, and we should have no fellowship with them (vv. 6-7, 11, NKJV).

Doctrinal Deceivers

The small Epistles of St. John are exhortations to allow the life of the Holy Spirit to bring our faith’s works fully alive in us. It is understandable that Satan would work against us as we seek to “walk according to [Christ’s] commandments” (2 John 6, NKJV).

In this progressively holy lifestyle, we are to beware of the “many deceivers” who have gone out into the world, “who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.” Bluntly, John said, “This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7, NKJV).

Seductive teachings of independent, doctrinal deceivers threaten the stability of the church. Jesus is not “a son of God” but “the Son of God.” He is the “only begotten Son” of the Father, who was incarnated in the flesh to live a sinless life and to suffer and die as our sin-substitute. Anyone who would teach other than that is “an antichrist” who subverts the Word of God for the Antichrist, who is to come (1 John 2:18).

John is speaking of the doctrinal heretics who withdrew from the organized fellowship of believers and the spiritual oversight of their appointed leaders (1 John 2:18-19). Their withdrawal is evidence that they never really shared in the life and fellowship of the church of Christ as true believers.

“He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22, NKJV). Such doctrinal deceivers have invaded believing congregations since the early church (2 John 2:18-27). So, watch out for such persons and learn to “test the spirits, whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1, NKJV) and do not share “in [their] evil deeds” (2 John 11, NKJV).

The Minister of Truth

Rather than a dystopian government’s “ministry of truth,” Jesus Christ is *the* Minister of Truth. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, NKJV).

Let us not be deceived by misinformation, disinformation or mal-information but give ourselves completely to the Truth, Jesus Christ, who said, “I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Rev. 22:12, NKJV). {eoa}

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