

Being Deceived

Clyde Finklea

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We are going to be talking today about deception and being deceived. The Bible warns us over and over again about being deceived, especially as we draw closer to the end of this age.

First, I would like to define deceit from *Webster's Dictionary* which says: 1) Any declaration, artifice, or practice which misleads another or causes him to believe what is false. 2) The leading of another to believe what is false or not to believe what is true and thus to ensnare himself. In essence then, it means to try and convince someone that something is true when it is actually false.

Now, there are three types of deception: intentional deception, unintentional deception, and, self-deception.

An intentional deception example would be like a used car salesman who knowingly sells you a car that has a major problem but convinces you that there is absolutely nothing wrong with it in order to make a sale. This is actually fraud and it happens a lot. Fraud is deceit with the intent to gain.

Now we have unintentional deception and I would like to use the example of a member of the church who was with us years ago and he was absolutely convinced that he could prove that Jesus was a created being! Now if anyone had believed him they would have been deceived. I do not believe that he was intentionally trying to deceive anyone, because he truly believed this to be true in the Scriptures.

The next one we have self-deception, and I guess we can use the same person as an example for this also, because he believed this lie and therefore deceived himself. There was a quote in one of John's Bereans which said, "if a person claims to be a son of God but habitually lives in sin he is deceiving himself."

The essence of deception is that you are unaware that you are deceived. If I were to ask you if you were being deceived, what would your answer be? You would almost definitely say, “No, I’m not being deceived.” If you were to ask a Catholic priest or any other religions that are in this world if they were being deceived, they would say, “No, maybe you are.” People do not say, I am being deceived, because if you have knowledge of being deceived, then it proves that it is not deceived. The whole idea of deception is that you are sure you are on the right path, but in actuality you are on the wrong path.

Now let us look at some scriptures and we will begin with the warning words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in Matthew 24, where Jesus was giving His disciples an answer to what was going to happen at the end of the age.

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.”

Now I want to take a closer look at these words. The words “take heed” literally means to look at. *Thayer’s* definition gives us a little more depth into this: “To see or discern with the bodily eye; to be possessed of sight; to have the power of seeing; perceive by the use of the eyes; to discover by use, to know by experience, and then metaphorically to see with the mind’s eye to have the power of understanding.”

So we see that there is a little more than just taking heed or being careful as it seems to come across in the English. It means to look or see carefully, discernment with the power of understanding. Understanding what? It is having an understanding of the truth based on God’s Word.

The next term “that no man” means an object or a person, so it is directed to anyone and most translations translate it as “that no one deceive you.”

Now let us look carefully at the word deceive in the Greek, again going to *Thayer’s* definition of it. It means: To cause to stray; to lead astray; to lead aside from the right way; to go astray; to wander; to roam about; metaphorically it means to lead away truth; to lead into error and to deceive; to be led into error; to be led aside from the path of virtue; to sin; so sever or fall away from the truth, and to be led away into error and sin.”

What I see in this warning is that we need to be able to see clearly and discern the spirits with an understanding of the truth so that no one leads us into error and sin that is causing us to fall away from the truth.

Now back to Matthew 24, where He then goes on to say:

Matthew 24: 5 “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

It says deceive (the NET Bible says mislead) many, not just a few. The Bible warns of deception actually coming from two primary directions, from within the church and from outside the church. Many of you listening to me today were also members of WCG and you will remember that after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong that “ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing” came in and misled many, causing many to fall away from the truth. Now you would think that you would be safe from deception within the church, but those of us who were in WCG witnessed this firsthand. Peter warns us of this in II Peter 2:

II Peter 2:1-2 But there were also false prophets among the people [among Israel, they had false prophets way back then], even as there will be false teachers among you [he is talking about people in the church, people that are converted], who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. [now here is the scary part] And many [not a few, many] will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. [to speak evil of]

Is that not what happen in WCG? There were many people who followed them and that are now not a part of the truth at all anymore, they have totally lost the truth. I have run into some over the years and one lady I ran into who had probably been in the church close to 20 years, and she asked me (this was right before the Feast), “Isn’t that thing you do, that trip you go on, sometime around this time of year?” I was flabbergasted that she could not remember the Feast after keeping it for 20 or so years! She had completely lost the truth.

I ran into another friend not long ago and we had lunch. It was good to see him. It was sometime after Atonement. He told me that he had fasted on Atonement but then said, “But I went to work.” Unbelievable! But you can see how they have been deceived and totally misled away from the truth.

Now let us look at Paul's words in Acts 20.

Acts 20:29-30 “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

What does that mean, “speaking perverse things”? This means to distort, misinterpret, and to mislead.

I found an interesting quote by Criss Jami, an American poet and author, and he says, “Just because something is not a lie, does not mean that it is not a deception. A liar knows that he is a liar, but one who speaks mere portions of truth in order to deceive is a craftsman of destruction.” Now who does that sound like? It sounds like Satan, who is a master-craftsman of deceit.

Acts 13:6-10 Now when they [his is talking about Paul and Barnabas] had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus [which means son of Jesus], who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting [distort, twist, misinterpret] the straight ways of the Lord?” [This man had a following, he might have been a minister even. I do not know.]

Satan was inspiring him to be right there to keep this person from the faith. As we can see, deception can come from inside the church and outside the church. Like the minister of one of the splinter groups. He claimed to be one

of the two witnesses and claimed his wife was the other one. He convinced his group to send in all their second tithe money, because they would not be needing it as they would not be keeping the feast. Because the tribulation was beginning and he and his wife would need their support in order to preach to world for three and half years. Now turn back to Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:24 “For false Christ’s and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

All the commentators will tell you is that, because the way it is worded in the KJV, it gives the impression that it is not possible to deceive the elect. So the commentators believe that it is impossible, but then why does Jesus warn us to take heed that no one deceives us, if it were impossible? The elect are who Satan is after, and Christ is warning us that it is coming and Satan is going to be working in them, performing miracles to deceive God’s elect.

Now Jesus warns us right here in Matthew 24, three times about being deceived and deception. Then in Matthew 7 it says:

Matthew 7:15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Now Satan appears as an angel of light, does he not? His false prophets come in sheep's clothing in order to deceive. If they were to dress like wolves, we would probably run away. It is like the beast that comes out of the earth with two little horns that looks like a lamb. He appears to be religious or “Christian,” but he speaks like a dragon.

Now turn to II Corinthians 11:13 and we will see more words from the apostle Paul.

II Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of

light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Now let us go to Revelation and see if it has anything to say about deception in the last days.

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Now according to Hampton Keathley III, who is a commentator and a Greek and Hebrew scholar, said that this word “deceive” here is an ongoing thing, it is continuing to deceive, never stopping until he deceives the whole world. He is not going to stop!

The Greek text strongly stresses the influence and aspects of Satan's character and activity. He causes people to miss the truth of God by many methods of deception. He is a master of deception and does it in different ways: lying against the truth; denying the truth; counterfeiting or imitating the truth; and perverting or distorting the truth. Remember the quote by Criss Jami? Satan uses the truth and twists it (mixing truth and error together) to deceive people. Satan has many traps and tricks he uses to deceive.

This scripture is telling us that deception will reach epidemic proportions in the last days.

Revelation 13:14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Did not Jesus warn us of this back in Matthew 24:24, where He said, “False Christ’s and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders in order to deceive.”?

Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince [ruler] of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

This points to Satan as the head of a demonic host, these fallen angels, who operate day and night in our immediate atmosphere to fill it with satanic deceptions, viewpoints, doubts, temptations. Deceive, deceive, deceive.

The word power is singular here and it refers to the demonic forces like a corporate body that operates as one under the authority and power of Satan their ruler. Even Christ called him “the ruler of this world.”

The word disobedience actually means disbelief. The word working here is the Greek *ergon*, meaning to energize, where we get our word energy from. It means to be active and be at work. It too is in the present continuous tense, meaning that Satan is constantly at work deceiving the whole world.

I want to quote Dresden James here, who was a British author. He said, “When a well-packaged web of lies have been sowed gradually to the masses over generations, the truth will seem utterly preposterous and its speaker a raving lunatic.”

We see then that deception can come from inside or outside the church. Now how can we protect ourselves from this deception? Actually, our pastor John [Ritenbaugh], gave us the answer last week. And it is in II Peter 1.

II Peter 1:3-7 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason [because we have been given these great and precious promises, to be a partaker of the divine nature—that is awesome!], giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control [a characteristic of love and the Spirit

God], to self-control perseverance [endurance under extreme times of stress and persecution, we have to keep on keeping on], to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

This is a continuous thing, you have to keep working at it, you never stop growing and producing. We have to keep on keeping on! We must love and care for each other and have a loving affection for one another. God says, how can you love Me who you cannot see and not love your brother, whom you do see? This is the way that we will go to keep each other strong and keep each other from deception, because love covers a multitude of sins. We have to help each other and love one another. We cannot be accusing, we already have a great accuser whose name is Satan. He accuses us day and night!

And to these characteristics—brotherly kindness, brotherly love, the affection that we have—we have to work on having the very character and nature of God, which is love. That lovingkindness and longsuffering that Paul mentions in I Corinthians 13. We have got to grow to be like that.

II Peter 1:8-10 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

When a person is self-righteous they are blind (like the Laodiceans) and not looking back to the fact that you were a dirty, rotten sinner, but who called you and pulled you out of that mess, out of that darkness and brought you into the light of Jesus Christ? Never forget that we are all once sinners and all fall short of the glory of God.

II Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; . . .

So if you do these things you will never stumble. You will not be deceived if you keep doing these things.

II Peter 1:11 . . . or so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is what we are to do, this answers the question of how not to be deceived. We are to follow this outline, follow these words and to keep doing them continually.

II Peter 1:12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

Brethren, we know the truth. So do not let anyone deceive you!