

THE GREAT DECEPTION
IN THE LAST DAYS:
PREACHING
A DIFFERENT GOSPEL

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INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures reveal that Christians are involved in spiritual warfare with the devil and his forces; the battles are not sporadic but continuous and believers, being in combat, must know their vulnerabilities and weaknesses so that they may be prepared to face the enemy and to stand against the schemes of the evil one (Ephesians 6:12-13).

One major form of attack by the enemy is the use of force and intimidation. Believers may face persecution, oppression and opposition from various sources with the evil one manipulating in the background, seeking to make them compromise or abandon their faith in God and the Lord Jesus. Many have suffered imprisonment and even death (martyrdom) as they refused to deny the Lord.

Another major form of attack may not be so obvious; it may not even be recognized as an attack. From one angle, it is even more dangerous and sinister. It is by distorting the truth and sowing the seed of deception by individuals who are unaware that they are being used by the enemy.

Hearken to the words of our Lord Jesus:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves”
(Matthew 7:15).

The apostle Paul, in his farewell message to the Ephesian elders, said:

“I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29-30)

Notice that it is difficult to recognize the false prophets when they present themselves as believers and when they even quote scriptures but subtly distort them or use them out of context. It makes it very unlikely for people to suspect that certain individuals are false teachers when they are among those in the assembly and are thought to be brethren.

The problem of rightly discerning that certain individuals are in fact false prophets is compounded by the fact that Christians tend to refrain from making judgments. They do not want to be guilty of “judgmentalism”. This attitude was also condemned by the Lord Jesus. But the Lord Jesus did encourage making right judgment (John 7: 24). In fact, a local Christian assembly has the responsibility to make discerning judgments; but these judgments should be based on Scriptures that are maturely understood and on the unchanging characteristics of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. An individual or a church cannot avoid responsibility by refusing to make judgments, for that very refusal is already a judgment, especially when a judgment is called for in the eyes of God. What we can do is to ask God for the grace and wisdom to avoid making judgments based on flattery, prejudice, faulty understanding of Scriptures, carelessness or impure motives.

The Lord Jesus, whilst He was on earth, judged the Pharisees and condemned their behavior. Paul, the Apostle, referred to some Jewish individuals who infiltrated the church of Corinth as false

apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13). When it comes to wrong teachings and unfaithfulness to the Lord Jesus and the Scripture in the church, we blame the leadership in the assembly. We forget that the congregation, in one sense, determines the kind of leadership she desires and the kind of leaders she seeks to emulate. Recall what Apostle Paul wrote about the Bereans:

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).

It is interesting to note that Paul himself commended the Bereans for checking whether what he preached was written in the Scriptures. Today, Christian leaders and teachers sometimes react negatively to feedback, not realizing that they themselves are fallible and that mistakes in understanding and interpreting Scriptures are still possible, and at times not uncommon.

As deception is not so easily detected, believers may not even be aware that false prophets or false teachers are in their midst. Their fear of being branded as being judgmental may cause many to remain silent, thinking that they are being tolerant and open-minded when in fact, false teachings and distortions of the truths have already taken root in the assemblies. Subtle distortions of truths may not be easily recognized especially if believers are deficient in their wholesome understanding of the Bible, and the so-called teachers are endowed with abilities to make impressive and convincing presentations, and have the personality and the charisma to carry them through.

The damage done in such a scenario can be very extensive and wide-ranging. It becomes very difficult to extricate the assemblies if they are already entrapped and convinced by the false teachers and taken in by the deception. From the book of Revelation, we know that the final battle will involve battling the false prophet, the antichrist and Satan, the three together masquerading as the trinity. Deception on this scale usually begins with the preaching of a different gospel, a different spirit and another Jesus. We see this highlighted in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4:

*“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your simple and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** from the one you received, or a **different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough”.*
(emphasis added)

Deception by the evil one went as far back as the Garden of Eden in Genesis. The evil one was using the weapon of deception back then; he is still using it today and will use it in the final battle before the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Deception caused Eve and Adam to disobey the specific command of God and to rebel against Him. Deception is rampant in the churches today and believers might be oblivious to it being around and causing many to pursue a false gospel, which is so different from the gospel preached by the Apostle Paul and his co-workers. And deception will be at the forefront when the false prophet and anti-Christ make their appearance, and then it will be on a global scale with many being deceived and mobilized to rally on their behalf.

It is therefore critical for us to examine this deception and to combat it. In effect, the deception has already infiltrated the Church worldwide and believers must awake to this reality. The following chapters will be devoted to examine more fully the nature of this deception.

CHAPTER ONE

PREACHING ANOTHER JESUS

Whenever the Lord Jesus is presented not as the biblical Jesus but as a great religious teacher, a good model of righteousness or even a wonderful mentor and prophet, we can be sure that another Jesus is being preached. The danger of the false teachers is their wrong or false estimate of Jesus. Whenever the message ceases to be purely centered on the biblical Jesus, and fails to draw its inspiration and power solely from Him who died as a penal substitute for our sins and rose again for our justification, the message is already corrupted.

We must not allow anything or anyone to draw us away from placing complete confidence in Christ the Son of the most High God, God Himself and man in one Person, who laid down His life to atone for our sin. When false teachers call you from one Christ to another, we must know that this call is not from God. The false teacher calls you from trusting the righteousness of Christ (His objective work done for you and made yours by faith for your justification) to trusting in an alleged work of another spirit.

The key characteristics of Jesus and His public ministry were meekness, gentleness and an attitude of self-emptying, which caused Him to give up the glory He shared with His father to take on the shame and rejection of the cross for our sake.

This is clearly expressed in the epistle of Philippians:

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”

(Philippians 2:6-8).

These verses highlight the essence of the being of the Lord Jesus and His mission when He became man.

In Jesus, God makes Himself visible to the believers. But His identity remains hidden to those with divided and unbelieving hearts. Only those whose hearts are purified by faith ‘see’ Him as He really is, the almighty God in all His glory. Jesus Christ not only justifies us by sharing with us His righteousness; He also sanctifies us and transforms us by making us righteous. He is the only mediator between God and man; we need no other, for He alone qualifies to be the One and only.

Bishop J.C. Ryle, in *Day by day with J. C. Ryle* (edited by Eric Russell) crystallised the mission of the Lord Jesus. He wrote:

“Our Lord Jesus Christ did not die merely as a martyr, or as a splendid example of self-sacrifice and self-denial: those who can see no more than that in His death, fall infinitely short of the truth; they lose sight of the very foundation-stone of Christianity, and miss the whole comfort of the gospel. Christ died as a sacrifice for man’s sin; He died to make reconciliation for man’s iniquity; He died to purge our sins by the offering of Himself; He died to redeem us from the curse which we all deserved, and to make satisfaction to the justice of God, which must otherwise have condemned us. Never let us forget this!”

D. A. Carson elaborated in *A Model of Christian Maturity*:

“Yet as soon as Jesus Christ is not the sole basis for our salvation, as soon as our acceptability before God depends on something more than his sacrifice on the cross, we have denied the sufficiency of his person and work. At that point the Jesus being preached is no longer the biblical Jesus but an unreal product of human imagination, a relatively powerless figure who cannot effectively save his people from their sins unless they supplement his work with something of their own merit.”

When we detect the absence of the biblical Christ in the preaching of the gospel, we can be sure that we are dealing with deception, even though other aspects may sound right and the delivery of the message may appear impressive. Let us be clear about this. The preaching of the true biblical Jesus will bring about the proper spirit in the believers; this wholesome spirit would also be manifested in the messenger and the preacher. Deception, however, will result in a different spirit and this will be elaborated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

RECEIVING A DIFFERENT SPIRIT

We have noted the characteristics of the biblical Jesus - humility, meekness, self-denial and sacrificial love in His mission on earth. In His own words, He declared, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). To be sure, these same characteristics should be seen and stamped in the lives of the true servants of God. When we see various ones claiming to be servants of God, parading themselves proudly, claiming ‘visions’, ‘gifts’, ‘power’ and lording it over others, we need to see the ‘red flag’ and question the spirit of these so-called preachers and teachers.

It is also true that the message of the true gospel always brings about a spirit of peace, humility, gratitude and love; it certainly does not promote a spirit of arrogance, a sense of superiority, a negative judgmental outlook and an attitude of one-upmanship and showmanship.

D. A. Carson in *A Model of Christian Maturity* asked:

“Is it a biblical Jesus who promises us nothing but health, prosperity, wisdom, and joy? Is it a biblical Jesus who guarantees heaven and says nothing of hell? Is it a biblical Jesus who promises eternal life but says nothing of entailed righteousness? Is it a biblical Jesus who needs to have his saving work supplemented by our merits, ceremonies, and sacrifices if we are to be redeemed?”

Often than not, a wrong spirit is accompanied by the teaching of triumphalism, a belief that all the victories we will experience in the new heaven and new earth are available to us now. It fails to recognize that we are still living in a fallen world, and we are still “work in progress” and have not attained perfection and complete spiritual maturity. It does not acknowledge that there is still the tension of the “already” and “not yet” in our spiritual walk. The Holy Spirit who dwelt in the holy, loving, patient, meek, compassionate and gentle Jesus is the same Spirit who seeks to reproduce these qualities in His messengers and His people. A different and negative spirit in those who claim to be His servants and His people should ring a warning bell that something is seriously wrong and amiss.

There is no doubt that God has blessed us with much of His life and power even while we are on earth, but let us realize that only when the Lord Jesus comes again will we inherit all that is promised by God in the new heaven and new earth. Some believers have rightly commented that we are saved, we are being saved and we will be fully saved at His second coming. A wrong understanding of this and over-realized eschatology will only cause much pain, discouragement and make us more vulnerable to the manipulation and deception of the evil one. Let us not forget that the devil can dress up like an angel of light and he can present his false messengers in the same guise.

Contrasted with the teaching of triumphalism is the calling to the preparedness for suffering and the readiness for persecution for all true believers and disciples of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote:

*“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ
not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,”*
(Philippians 1:29).

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12).

The Apostle Paul himself listed out his sufferings for the sake of Christ and the gospel, and the list included being imprisoned, flogged, lashed five times with thirty nine lashes, beaten by rods three times, stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked, hungry, sleepy and burdened with concerns for the churches and also suffering danger from Gentiles and his own countrymen.

It is perhaps not incidental that almost all the apostles died for their faith as they faithfully preached the gospel in the face of opposition and persecution. And surely this is not a picture consistent with the teaching of triumphalism. In case we think that suffering only affected the apostles, read the passage in Hebrews 11:37-38:

“They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground”.

The comments made by D. A. Carson in *A Model of Christian Maturity* on the Corinthian church succinctly highlight the seriousness of a wrong spirit and the unbalanced stress on over-realized eschatology:

“They [the Corinthian Christians] rightly understood that the salvation Christ provides exalt poor sinners to become priests and kings; but they so emphasized these themes that they started to strut like peacocks, forgetting that until the parousia, the church is also called to suffering witness (1 Corinthians 4: 8-13). The Corinthian Christians were inclined to stress their freedom in Christ; but they overlooked the fact that perfect freedom is possible only when there is perfect goodness – and the church has not yet reached the point...They were avid followers of spiritual gifts, and especially cherished those spiritual gifts that fed inflated egos. Extravagant displays in their view prove how spiritual a person is, how much he has appropriated of all the blessings Jesus Christ already provided. This pathetic spiritual one-upmanship was doubtless part of the cause of the party spirit that wrecked the church (1 Corinthians 1:12)...In short, they were quick to seize every emphasis in Christianity that spoke (or seemed to speak) of spiritual power, of exaltation with Christ, of freedom, of triumph, of victorious Christian living, of leadership, of religious success; but they neglected or suppressed those accents in Christianity that stressed meekness, servanthood, obedience, humility, and the need to follow Christ in his suffering if one is to follow him in his crown.”

A wrong spirit will lead us progressively away from Christ and the true gospel. It makes us very vulnerable to the manipulation of the evil one, and causes pride to rear its head and closes our hearts to the truth and to openness to correction and repentance. Thinking of ourselves as wise, we become foolish and succumb to the preaching of a different gospel.

CHAPTER THREE

PREACHING A DIFFERENT GOSPEL

The Bible reveals that the world through its wisdom did not come to know God; God was pleased through the foolishness of the preaching of Christ crucified to save those who would believe. The Creator God made us, his creatures, as dependent beings by his design. Our purpose is to know and worship Him as Creator and Father. But we rebelled against Him and His design for us. God’s plan of redemption provides forgiveness and life only to those who would bow before Christ at the cross and receive reconciliation and the Holy Spirit as free gifts of grace. The Apostle Paul wrote clearly that we are saved through faith by grace; it is a gift of God, not of our own works and there is no room to boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our works do not add anything to the salvation accomplished through Christ.

In Romans 3:23-26, Paul elaborated:

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus”.

Because Christ the sinless one died for our sins and took our penalty for sin, those accepted in Christ through faith no longer need to pay the penalty for their own sins. Indeed, “He was delivered to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

The author of Hebrews declared:

“But now he [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:26b-28).

We see clearly from the Bible that Christ’s sacrifice at the cross was once for all and complete. Any attempt to suggest that His sacrifice is not sufficient and we need some additions is distorting the truth of the gospel. It is tantamount to preaching a different gospel.

We see such a problem highlighted in the epistle to the Galatian believers. The Christians in Galatia began by believing and by faith, but turned away from faith and sought to attain their Christian goal by human effort and by observing the law of Moses. Certain Jewish teachers told them that they needed to be circumcised in addition to believing the gospel in order to be saved. They were in fact saying that Christ’s sacrifice at the cross for our sins was not sufficient; something else was needed. In the case of the Galatians, they were told of the need of circumcision like their Jewish believers. But the addition can take various forms in our context. It can be the need for another

spiritual experience; it can indicate the requirement of following a certain ceremony or way of worship; it could be a call to follow a certain charismatic leader and only adhere to his teachings. The list can go on.

The Apostle Paul was indignant when he noted a different gospel being preached. He stated clearly in Galatians 1:8-9:

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”

We see the seriousness of preaching a different gospel. There are eternal consequences. In this case, it is preaching a gospel-plus, that is, a gospel that claims that something extra is needed in order for the gospel to be complete and to effect salvation and Christian growth. Grace would no longer be grace; merit theology would come in and it can come in different forms. To accept such a teaching is to be deceived; and we can be sure that the evil one is behind this. We have to be clear that there is nothing we can contribute to effect our salvation. We are a people with no righteousness of our own to plead before God. We are spiritually bankrupt and must plead for mercy. Only in Christ and Christ alone can we be forgiven and justified. Only in Him and through His Holy Spirit can we grow in sanctification and be conformed to His image. It is through grace and grace alone that we are accepted in the beloved and there is no place for us to claim any iota of merit of our own. Only as we come to know God and His presence do we begin to discover ourselves as we really are.

But the deception of a different gospel can take another form. It is taught and advocated in antinomianism, a teaching that claims that the law no longer applies to us and we are free to live without adhering to the moral law as we have already been forgiven by grace. We certainly cannot take Christ's gift of forgiveness and neglect His demands for right living. It is one of the greatest tragedies that some believers have come to believe in 'cheap grace' – believing in a Savior who leaves us much as we were, instead of actually transforming us to be what we ought to be in Him. In developing a right relationship with God, God expects us to grow to increasingly live with moral integrity, to nurture right relationships with others and to reform society and bring it into conformity to Christ's teachings. We are to be 'light of the world' and 'salt of the earth', as taught by the Lord Jesus.

We must take note that the true gospel is centered on the cross. The Lord Jesus Himself said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). The cross in the days of Jesus speaks of suffering and death, a death that was very painful, agonizing and reserved for the worst of criminals. It also denotes weakness and was considered a 'curse', not something beautiful to wear as a necklace. The cross, in Christian theology, shapes every aspect of Christian living; it not only justifies, it shows believers how to live and how to die, how to love and how to lead and to serve.

In his ministry, the Apostle Paul focused on the cross and Christ crucified; he understood suffering, hardship, and weakness as integral parts of Christian service. This was in contrast to the false apostles in 2 Corinthians who focused attention on rhetoric and oratorical abilities, showmanship, powerful deeds and ecstatic visions and experiences. They focused on outward manifestations rather than the inward reality.

Once the cross is not at the centre of the preaching of the gospel, it is a different gospel, a false gospel. They turned the gospel of grace, centered on the atoning work of Christ on the cross, to a message of self-promotion, self-development, a triumphalism less and less based on the actual gospel of Christ crucified.

The Apostle Paul considered himself an unworthy servant of Christ. He knew he was one with Christ and exalted with Him; yet he was humbled before the Lord, very conscious of his unworthiness and the wondrous grace of Christ in his life. It is because of this attitude that Paul focused on his weaknesses, and boasted of his weaknesses in Christ. He understood that when he was weak, he was in fact strong. In his weakness, he depended wholly on Christ and His enabling and as a result, he became strong. In effect, Paul was living out the principles of the cross in his life and ministry: strength out of weakness, life out of death, and glory out of suffering. Paul claimed that ‘he died daily’, denying himself, and in the process, ministering ‘life’ to others. He truly understood that his sufferings for Christ would prepare him for the glory that was to come. In fact, Paul considered his long list of sufferings as temporal; they could not even be compared with the wondrous glory that was to come.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5-6, the Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians:

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test”.

Paul was confident that he and his co-workers passed the test

because he was preaching the true gospel. If the Corinthian Christians were adhering to his gospel, they also would pass the test. On the other hand, if they hearkened to the false gospel preached by the false preachers, there were doubts whether they actually passed the test. Note that the result of this test has eternal consequences; the test was not to be taken lightly.

Similarly, for those who preached antinomianism and their followers, the Apostle Paul had this to say:

“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 5:5-6).

This is indeed a sobering and serious warning. Let us not be deceived into thinking that we can live in any manner we like since we are already believers. The Bible is very clear about the consequences of such a life.

The Apostle John also had similar warnings:

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:3-6).

Perhaps, the warning we cannot afford to neglect is the warning given by the Lord Jesus Himself:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evil-doers!’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

From this passage, it is possible to see that people can exercise spiritual gifts like prophesying, casting out demons and performing miracles and yet not be sharers of God’s saving grace. What we do publicly and what others commend us for do not indicate how we will fare in reality when we come before the judgment seat of Christ. What really and finally counts is how we are related to Christ Himself. If we are responding to a false gospel, it is almost certain that we are not truly related to Christ as born-again believers. This is the case even though we may appear spiritual with many spiritual experiences and impressive manifestations of spiritual gifts.

Jesus’ claim in Matthew 7 that He never knew them and branding them as evil-doers indicates that very likely, the power behind their gifts and miracles actually came from the evil one. The devil, we are told, can dress as an angel of light. The false prophets and teachers can do likewise; they are in effect servants of the evil one. Some of them may not even be conscious that they are being used by Satan, and they may even be zealous in their own way. Nevertheless, the true gospel will bring about repentance and a new spiritual birth. This will result in a new creation and a restored new relationship with Christ and God. Anything short of this will not do.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have seen how subtle and devious is the deception employed by the devil to cause various persons to preach another Jesus, a different spirit and a different gospel. This can cause much damage to the churches, as the members may not be so conscious that there have been spiritual attacks affecting them. Also, many are not willing to speak up when they see that something is amiss as they are afraid to be branded as being critical or judgmental.

Many are also easily taken in by signs and wonders, not knowing that the enemy can also quote the Bible and perform 'miracles' of his own. What is not so obvious is the subtle distortion of the truth. Remember that if truth were not so precious and important to God, He would not allow it to be purchased and preserved with the blood of His people and more importantly, with the blood of His only begotten Son. Truth, in one sense, is the substance and representation of God's thoughts and revelation. If we reject truth, we are in effect rejecting God. We know that the truth God desires to transmit to man is found essentially in the Bible. As children of God, we cannot afford not to be students of the Bible. We must rightly handle the Word of God. To distinguish the counterfeit from the true item, we must know the true item very well. We cannot plead ignorance when it comes to God's truth for our lives and for His Church.

We have noted also that the preaching of another Jesus, a different spirit and a different gospel results in serious eternal consequences. It might mean eternal condemnation, rejection from the

faith and rejection by Christ Himself. We need to examine ourselves and test ourselves and ensure that we do not fail God's test for our lives.

We have noted that it is not easy to detect deception; it is also not easy to recognize a false prophet or a false teacher. However, there may be some principles, given by the Lord Jesus, which may be helpful for us to consider and these may assist us to be on our guard.

The first of these is to look at the person's attitude toward the people of God and the Church. Inwardly, the false teacher is a 'ferocious wolf' although he may appear as an innocent 'shepherd'. He does not lay down his life for the sheep, unlike the good shepherd, the Lord Jesus (John 10:15). Instead, he uses and manipulates the sheep for his own purpose and agenda. Instead of guarding and protecting the sheep and ensuring peace and unity among God's people, he actually destroys it to bolster his own reputation, status and 'ministry'. As stated before, the true servant of God does not 'lord it over' God's people. He humbly serves them and sets a good example and model for them (1 Peter 5:3).

The false worker is also recognized by the 'fruit' of his teaching (Matthew 7:18). This is seen in his own character and in the character of those he influences. The vital question is: are they Christ-like; do they increasingly manifest Christ-like qualities in their lives? A good tree, the Lord Jesus reminded us, always produces good fruit. We need to realize that it may take some time for us to notice the fruit that is produced and we therefore need to ask God for wisdom and discernment.

One negative aspect in false workers' lives and teaching is

encouraging exclusiveness instead of the open-heartedness of Christ and His people. They are probably unable to benefit from the teaching and ministry of others and claim that theirs is the only true and superior teaching. At the same time, they become increasingly judgmental and critical of others who have been faithful to the Lord. We see this in the criticism of Apostle Paul by the so-called super-apostles who were actually promoting themselves and exhibiting their 'gifts' in a proud manner. Their teaching had led to a partisan spirit, division, self-promotion and disunity within the Corinthian church. This resulted in the Corinthians even 'rebellious' against the Apostle Paul who truly loved them and was the first to bring the true gospel to them.

The false worker is also detected by the wrong priorities in his life. He is more interested in his own position and status than in serving God's people. In this respect, 'gifts' take precedence over 'grace'. We have noted that in Matthew 7:22-23 that even though false servants can perform 'miracles' and other 'impressive things' in public, the Lord Jesus still rejected them because there is no true relationship with them. In fact, they were branded as evildoers and their relationship was with their father, the evil one.

God is more interested in changing our character than in changing the course of nature like in miracles. He is more concerned about holiness than in granting us temporary superficial 'happiness'.

Jesus Christ is principally our savior. Although He did perform miracles whilst He was on earth, it was more to fulfill Scripture and to affirm His Messiahship. He delivers us from sin and transforms us to be like Him and this is the fruit of the true servant of God. The authentic servant of God is more interested in 'grace' than in 'gifts'.

The Holy Spirit, working in the servant's life, seeks always to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to focus the spotlight on Christ rather than on Himself or the Christian worker. When the spotlight is focused on the so-called servant of God and his gifts rather than on Jesus and His glory, something is terribly wrong.

The false worker is usually more interested in success and results rather than obedience to God. When obedience to God means anonymity and no visible success and achievement, he is likely to lose his interest and apparent zeal. His focus is on mesmerizing people with his unusual power and signs rather than helping them to become more like the Lord Jesus and doing the will of God the Father.

The Lord Jesus told the familiar parable about the wise man who built his house upon the rock and the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. What distinguishes the two men is that the wise man hears the Word of God and does it. He puts into practice the teaching of the Word of God. The foolish man may hear but he does not put it into practice. The wise man is a doer of the Word of God, not just a hearer. He hears and he obeys. Jesus also taught that the one who obeys the commands of God is the one who loves him. Our obedience to God and Jesus is a measure of our love for Him

The great deception has taken place and is taking place, with the expert manipulation of the evil one and the sending out of his minions into the world and even into the churches. Here is a call for vigilance and a call for Christians to awake to the dangers penetrating and infiltrating the churches! It is a battle between truth and deception. It is a spiritual battle between God and the devil. There is no doubt that God has won the war at the cross but the battles are still going on as the devil knows that his time is limited and he intends to inflict as

much damage as possible. Believers must realize that they are not immune to these attacks and there can be casualties. We cannot afford to be presumptuous. We must keep close to the Lord God and His Word. We must know what God expects of us in these last days.

Other books by Quek Koh Choon on
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- Living in the Last Days
- □□□□□□
- Keeping the Right Focus in the Last Days
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- Berjaga-Jagalah! Engkau Terus Menetapkan Pusat Perhatianmu Yang Benar Pada Zaman Akhir Ini (Indoesian Translation)
- We Need Not Lose Heart in the Last Days
- □□□□□
- Missing the Mandate in the Last Days
- Following Christ Jesus in the Last Days
- Overcoming in the Last Days
Reflections on the Book of Revelation

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