

Deceived

It is shocking but true. Almost all the world is deceived, Revelation 12:9, *'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.'* I'm not just talking about false religions other than Christianity. I'm talking about most of 'Christianity' too!

There is a great deceiver who has set out to blind the minds of those who do not take care to directly and prayerfully study the words of God, 2 Corinthians 4:4, *'In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'*

Jesus warned us that if we hope to enter His Kingdom, we need to approach the scriptures as would a little child, Matthew 18:3, *'And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'*

Christ meant that little children are teachable. They believe what a parent says, place their trust in what they are told and act on it (or should do!) In other words they have trust in their parents, just as we must have faith in God's words, and promises.

Satan, however, is a very subtle deceiver. He knows that many are sincere in their desire to please God. He knows that to try to deceive with downright evil would not succeed. What he would need to do is **mix some evil with good**, just enough to divert the less than diligent from the truth.

There once was such a man, His name was Mohammed. He truly sought after God, and would meditate on the scriptures from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. One day as he meditated in his favourite retreat, a cave near his home, he was suddenly gripped in a vice like hold so that he found it hard to even breathe, and could not move.

The one who had seized him was a powerful Angel, who proceeded to feed him information that he was told to pass on to others, in what became the Koran (Qur'an). Mohammed was at first in some doubt about what he was told because of the manner in which it was delivered, but finally decided that the great spirit- being he saw was the Arch-angel Gabriel.

If Mohammed had more carefully studied God's word he would have applied the test God gave all of us to use in any such circumstance, Deuteronomy 13:1-4, *'If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.'*

But such was the power and the glory of the angel, that Mohammed was deceived and began to pass on information that **subtly contradicted** God's commandments. Who then was the angel? 2 Corinthians 11:14, *'And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.'*

Mohammed fell victim to his lack of vigilance, 1 Peter 5:8, *'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.'* The result was the great evil, suffering and death which Islam brings to its followers and the rest of the world today.

But others who read God's word have also been deceived. In like manner the same angel appeared to one Joseph Smith, who also received a supplementary book to give to his followers – the book of Mormon, which equally diverts its adherents from the plain instructions of the Bible.

What a shame that these two God fearing men were apparently not aware of the warnings God placed in the Bible not to add anything to its words, the last of which is found in its final chapter, Revelation 22:18. *'If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.'*

Even the largest Christian sect, the Roman Catholics, have a Bible that includes extra books called the Apocrypha which are not included in the original Hebrew and Greek scriptures commonly used by the early Apostolic Church.

However, once men began to claim to represent God, taking to themselves the authority to adapt and change the commandments of God, it was not even necessary to introduce extra books. The Popes for example, claim to be the Vicar of Christ, to vicariously speak for Him on Earth, and went on to change even the 4th commandment about God's Holy Sabbath, from the 7th day of the week to the first!

When the protestants rebelled against that kind of claimed authority, they failed to revert to the Bible's clear instructions about the Sabbath and so to this day most 'Christians' still do not keep the Fourth Commandment, and because they blindly follow the teaching of their church they remain deceived, disqualified by their idolatry from entry into God's Kingdom, in that they are prepared to follow a man's teachings rather than God's.

Revelation 22:15, *'For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'*

So we see that some are deceived by angels, some by false books, some by claims to hold divine authority and very many simply because they fail to diligently read and study God's word, going along with the majority. Matthew 7:13, *'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.'* They claim to be Christians, but have been deceived into believing that the 10 commandments have been 'nailed to the cross' – done away.

Even many in the Church of God, who strive to keep God's Laws and commandments, are deceived into idolatry. In the book of Ezekiel, a book with a message for Israel with a large

End-Time content, God explains that He will never tolerate a ministry building a hierarchical structure which stands between Him and his direct contact with his people., Ezekiel 8:1-6, *'And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that **looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.** And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.*

*Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north.[God's throne is in the Northern heavens] So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this **image of jealousy** in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should **go far off from my sanctuary?** but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.'*

Many churches have fallen for this deception because men have always sought power and glory, even above wealth. President or pope, hierarchy or oligarchy, that system is still an image of jealousy to God, and when it appears, even in his temple [the true Church], He departs, taking with Him his Holy Spirit, as many have witnessed.

Referring to the New Testament pattern and the teaching of Christ, H W Armstrong, a well-known minister in the Church of God, now deceased, wrote that, "All authority ...is limited solely to each LOCAL congregation, But there is NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for a super-government, or organisation with authority over the local congregations' Mark 10:42-43, *'But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to RULE over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise AUTHORITY upon them. But so shall it NOT be among you.'*

Those who are IN, and MEMBERS of such an organised church government, submitting to doctrines declared by unscriptural boards as a fellowship test, are IN BABYLON and actually worshippers of THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST!

God is calling us, His people OUT of Babylon today, before it is too late..."

Brethren, let us have the courage to accept the TRUTH, and to COME OUT !" (The Good News April 1939).

Well, the language may be old-fashioned, but in those days he had it right. Large organisations are more concerned with protecting their control, church numbers and income, and so pay little attention to any member who finds something in the Bible that needs addressing.

Whenever that occurs, the essence of such a structure is power and wealth, and the paid ministers look to 'the image' more submissively than they do the Word of God, disqualifying themselves from a future in God's Kingdom, Revelation, 14:1, 4, *'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. ...These are they which were not defiled with*

women; for they **are virgins**. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.'

'Woman' here is a biblical symbol of a church, as in Revelation 12: 6, 14. But here the woman can defile her members, and only those who recognise the danger and remove themselves remain faithful to Christ (virgins) and gain victory over the image, Revelation 15:2, 'And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, **and over his image**, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.'

As you have read, very few are faithful enough to take part in the marriage of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7-9, 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath **made herself ready**. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.'

Christ requires a faithful Bride, not an indolent one!

Let's face it – at one time or another we have all been deceived, but as soon as we recognise it, Christ requires us to act, if we are to remain spiritual virgins. Only if we stay close to God's word and remain faithful, can we be assured of our eternal future with Christ, Revelation 17:14, 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: **and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.**'

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