

The spirit of Deception

Matthew 24: 3 - 27

The sign of the coming of Jesus and the end of the age.

1) The Deceiver

- The ultimate deceiver behind all false prophets and false teachers is the devil, Satan. He deceived Eve in the garden of Eden and he uses people to deceive God's people today.
- Deceivers aren't horrible looking, nasty characters. On the contrary they are very nice people with attractive personalities. They are often good orators and have people flocking to hear them speak.
 - If deceivers were repulsive they wouldn't have a following to be able to deceive anyone. Their deceptions would be easily recognisable and thus avoided.
- 2 Corinthians 11: 13 – 15 “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”
- 1 John 2: 18 – 19 “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, and now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us but did not really belong to us.”
- Matthew 7: 15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”
- If a deceiver told us to use the Qur'an or Bhagavad-Gita we would immediately dismiss them as being a false teacher. But they come to us using the Bible.
- Deceivers are deceived themselves – 2 Timothy 3: 13 “...evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

2) The Deceptions

- They twist God's word for their own purposes – the devil twisted God's words and deceived Eve. He tried to deceive Jesus by quoting the scriptures.
- Deceptive philosophy which is based on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ – Colossians 2: 8
 - Rules: Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! Colossians 2: 21
 - Religious festivals and days Colossians 2: 16
 - Worship of angels Colossians 2: 18
 - False humility and harsh treatment of the body, but lacking any value in restraining sensual indulgence Colossians 2: 23
 - Self Esteem
- Denial of Jesus
 - 1 John 4: 2 – 3 “This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.”
- A false Jesus – 2 Corinthians 11: 4
 - Died to make us rich
 - Didn't die on the cross
 - Man centred instead of God centred
 - Complex religion rather than pure devotion to Christ - 2 Corinthians 11: 3
 - Without grace
 - Without judgment
- A false Gospel – other ways of salvation apart from the finished work of Christ on the cross. Galatians 1: 8 “ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the gospel we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.”
- Using grace as a license for immorality – Jude 4

- Preaching present prosperity
 - 1 Timothy 6: 5 “...men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.”
 - Philippians 3: 18 – 19 “For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”
- False sign and wonders – or and unhealthy pursuit of them.
 - “Matthew 24: 24 “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible.”
- 2 Timothy 4: 3 – 4 “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of preachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

3) The Protection from deception

- Know and hold on to the Word of God – it is our standard of truth
 - Eve knew the Word of God but didn't hold onto it.
 - Jesus knew the word of God and held onto it in the time of temptation
- Test everything
 - 1 Thessalonians 5: 19 – 22 “Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”
 - 1 John 4: 1 “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out from God.”
 - Acts 17: 11 “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.”
 - Test scripture against scripture. Often false teaching comes from the Bible. Look at the context of the scripture and look at the teaching in view of all the scriptural doctrines to see whether it has been taken out of context or not.
- God has give us the Spirit of truth
 - John 16: 13 “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”
- Be humble
 - God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud.
 - Pride comes before a fall. God gives people over to their lusts.
 - A humble person is teachable and accepts correction and rebuke.
 - Humility acknowledges our own weakness and proneness to falling
 - Submit to one another – the body ought to protect itself.
 - The pastor ought to be a true shepherd and protect the flock and not be a hireling who flees when the wolves arrive.