

THE GREAT DRAGON DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8 NASB)

(8) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; (9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 NASB)

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.... (Revelation 12:9 NASB)

And it is deceiving those dwelling on the earth because of the signs which were given to it to do in the sight of the wild beast.... (Revelation 13:14 NASB)

Perhaps I should not start an article in this manner, but I must state that I do not present what follows as some deep spiritual or insightful truth. In some respects, what follows should be so obvious to most discerning Christians that it should go without saying. However, it is for this very reason that I have penned this rather short article on deception.

As Christians who have an earnest of the spirit within us, we might think that there is no way on earth that we could ever be deceived. After all, we have every provision in Christ to keep us from falling into deception.

Dear brethren, it is because of this very attitude that I write these few words on the matter of deception.

As a child of God, we face the danger of believing that we are under such iron-clad divine protection that there is no way possible for us to fall for the deception and lies of the enemy. This attitude in itself is a deception.

We need to be reminded of Paul's exhortation to the saints in Corinth: **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall** (1

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Corinthians 10:12 NASB). The sons of Israel figured that, since they were a chosen people, they could get away with immorality and idolatry and God would look the other way. Christians can do the very same thing in their abuse of grace. “I am under grace; therefore, whatever I do God will look the other way.” This is not only called deception but also licentiousness. Church history is filled with people who fell into this trap and who attempted to lead others to follow.

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:4 NASB)

The warning about being deceived is so obvious that we run the risk of entirely missing the danger of it and getting pulled into the enemy’s web of lies without knowing it, all the while thinking that we are on solid ground and in the right. After all, the most effective deception is one that gets away with the deception because it looks so real.

Deception looks real.

If you were an evil person and wanted to deceive people into accepting or following you in some way, how would you go about doing so?

Let’s say the people are generally good people who shun outward forms of evil.

Would you put up a big billboard sign announcing you were about to deceive them, telling them how you were going to do it? Would you advertise your plans in newspapers or in books, or on television, or on the internet? “I am about to deceive you so watch for me!” Would you tell them what evil you have in store for them? Would you give them a roadmap, so to speak, of all your plans for them? Would you give them plenty of time to analyze your plan so that they could fight back and counter all that you plan for them? Of course, the answer to all these questions is no.

The best deception is one that looks so good and so real that it is hard to discern its evilness. One effective way to deceive many people is to create a counterfeit, which is “an imitation made to deceive,” or “a copy or a likeness.” A counterfeit is not the real thing but a close copy. In order to deceive people, it must be as close to the real thing as possible. In fact, it must be so close to the original that it is almost impossible to discern the real from the copy or counterfeit. Only the most discerning experts are able to distinguish the two.

One area that counterfeiting is an ongoing challenge to governments is the counterfeiting of money. The United States faces this challenge every day, especially in the counterfeiting of \$100 bills. The counterfeiters have become so sophisticated in recreating fraudulent bills that the government has been forced to

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continually change the appearance and construction of the bills in order to stay one step ahead of the crooks.

Deception in the church.

Unfortunately, there are many counterfeits in the church of our day. We know it is so because we have been warned by ones who knew the dangers of the latter days.

As he neared the end of his life, Paul warned Timothy, his beloved son in the faith.

(1) But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, (2) by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.... (1 Timothy 4:1-2 NASB)

(1) But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. (2) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, (4) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NASB)

Paul knew that the difficult times would come through the trickery of men and their deceitful scheming or through what the *Concordant Version* calls **the systematizing of the deception**.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming [systematizing of the deception].... Ephesians 4:14 NASB [CV])

In other words, the deception would come through a system of doctrines.

The word *system* means “a set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity or organic whole,” or “a set of facts, principles, rules, teachings, doctrines, etc. classified or arranged in a regular, orderly form so as to show a logical plan linking the various parts.”

For a deception to work, it must make sense to the ones it is trying to deceive, and one way to do this is to make it as organized and logical as possible in order to try to remove any doubt about its authenticity or correctness from the undiscerning mind.

There is so much logic and order built into the deception that it makes people feel that it is right. However, when one who has some spiritual discernment challenges it that person is made to think it is he or she that is in the wrong and illogical, or

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even worse, the person is told that God Himself is against the person and will judge him or her for it.

By the way, one of the greatest systematized deceptions thrust on the Lord's people is **the doctrine of hell** as a torture chamber of literal fire. As I have stated elsewhere, this comes straight out of pagan theology, and yet, it has become so systematized into church doctrine that it has shaped church teaching on many fronts. There is little doubt in my mind that many who hold to this evil doctrine are also practicing an Old Covenant Christianity. But I challenge you to try convincing ones who hold to such doctrines, and, most likely, you will be told that you are going to hell. Strange, but true!

By the way, another term for the systematizing of the deception is the tradition of men, something that both Jesus and Paul warned about.

“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:8 NASB)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men.... (Colossians 2:8 NASB)

Notice how *empty deception* comes out of *the tradition of men*. How much tradition have many of us been led to believe by well-meaning teachers who stopped growing in the Lord early in their teaching career? I cannot answer that question definitively, but I suppose that there is far more of it than we realize.

Paul was not alone in his spiritual discernment, for Peter, at the end of his life, also warned of false prophets and teachers.

(1) But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (2) Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; (3) and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. (2 Peter 2:1-3 NASB)

Notice that many will follow their sensuality, something that the kings and merchants of the earth fall into as they are seduced by Babylon the great city, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth (Revelation 17:5). But how many of these kings and merchants consider themselves Christians?

Paul and Peter were not alone either, for both John and Jude warned of the dangers that the church faced and continues to face from false prophets and mockers in the last days.

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Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1 NASB)

(17) But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, (18) that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” (19) These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. (Jude 1:17-19 NASB)

The take away from these verses is that deception is within the church of God, not outside it, and many have fallen into deception through false teachers and prophets, and this is one of the characteristics of the latter times or days.

If you are still not convinced, then consider what the Lord Jesus Himself has to say to the church that is most prominent at the end of the age.

(14) “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: (15) ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. (17) Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, (18) I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. (19) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. (21) He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (22) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:14-22 NASB)

How do the Lord’s people come to be in such a sad state? The answer is discovered in one word: deception. They have been deceived into believing a lie.

They are deceived, for they think they are something that they are not. Since they have so much going for them and things have gone so well in the area of money and outward success, they have falsely believed that it is all the Lord’s doing, when all along He is outside of it all. Simply, He is in none of it and wants nothing to do with it. The result is spiritual poverty, nakedness, and blindness. They are in great need, and they do not know it because they have been deceived by the outward success of their own actions that were never led by the spirit of God but by their uncrucified flesh.

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There is only one antidote for ones who have been deceived and that is to repent and return to the Lord—loving Him with a whole heart and being obedient to His will.

Well, much could be said on this subject but that is not the purpose of this article, which is simply to underline the danger and the reality of deception.

If Christians have been deceived from the pulpit within the church, then what chance do they have of not being deceived from the pulpit of the world, metaphorically speaking?

Or, to ask it another way: If Christians have not discerned the spirit of truth in the church and tested the spirits, then how can they discern the spirit of the world, even the spirit of antichrist? They cannot. But what makes matters worse is that once the spirit of the world has taken charge of believers that same spirit enters into the church. In our day, especially in America, it has done just that.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God...
(1 Corinthians 2:12 NASB)

Do we know the things freely given to us by God? Are we discerning *in* spirit the things that are not of God? Do we feel defiled and soiled by the spirit of the world when we are around it or it tries to overtake us?

(2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1 John 4:2-3 NASB)

Dear brethren, this spirit of antichrist is all around us. I cannot speak for other nations, but I can speak for my own nation. More and more, each day we see the spirit of antichrist at work to further secularize, humanize (i.e., humanism with man as the center of the universe), and globalize our once great country. At every turn, there is a dark force at work that portrays a good theme but at its core is an antichrist spirit that seeks to dethrone God as the Sovereign of creation and His Son as the rightful heir of the earth. This spirit attempts to join all the religious thoughts of man into one melting pot with man at the center of it all as his own god. It is so pervasive today that anyone with the least of spiritual discernment should see it in every aspect of the American life today. Our government is driven by this spirit; our education system is driven by this spirit; and our very systems of life are driven by this spirit.

We must wake up and buy from the Lord His gold refined in fire, which speaks of His divine nature and His love, as well as His faith that is more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:7). We need the faith of the Son of God in these days in order to press on

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toward the goal for the prize and to reach the finish line that is coming into sharper focus as each day passes. It won't be long till the race is over! Have you bought His gold? The righteous shall live by faith in the day that our world is ruled by the Babylonians (Habakkuk 2:4) and is in captivity to this Babylonian system of seduction and immorality (Revelation 18).

We need white garments, which speaks of the righteous acts of the saints. We are righteous in Christ who has become our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30), but we must also let His seed life grow within us and live out from us so that we practice righteousness (1 John 3:7-9) in our dealings with one another and the world, even our enemies.

Finally, we need eye salve so that we might see more clearly. We need spiritual vision, not only of the things going on around us but also, and especially, of the great goal that lies before us. We need the spirit of God to enlighten our hearts.

Paul's prayer for the saints over 2,000 years ago is just as relevant today, perhaps even more so as we near the end of the age.

(17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. (18) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19 NASB)

We need to know Him, not in head knowledge but in heart love.

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Now, let us carry these thoughts to another level, specifically to the whole world and its nations. Can the world and the nations be deceived? Will the whole world be deceived, which includes all the nations? If so, who will deceive the whole world, and how will it be done?

Well, those who know their Bible know that the answer lies with the one that disguises itself as an angel of light. Please forgive me if this seems so obvious and fundamental, but it is for this very reason that I believe we need to be reminded of it.

(13) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NASB)

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Again, a good deception is one that looks like the real thing. Satan could never even have a chance of winning if it (not *he*) appears as an angel of darkness and of evil. Most religions, along with much of the world, would immediately stand against it. After all, most of the world stood against Hitler to bring down his evil empire, and there are many other examples in history where evil tyrants have been confronted.

But the word of God tells us that there is one that deceives the whole inhabited earth. It is the tyrant and deceiver of all tyrants and deceivers.

And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent called Adversary and Satan, who is deceiving the whole inhabited earth. It was cast into the earth, and its messengers were cast with it. (Revelation 12:9 CV)

Based on John's vision, it is clear that **this present evil age** (Galatians 1:4 NASB) in which **the whole world lies in the evil** (1 John 5:19 LITV) is one of deception in which the whole inhabited earth has been and continues to be deceived. This deception will end for a long season when the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ begins to take root among the nations.

(2) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; (3) and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. (Revelation 20:2-3 NASB)

However, even after a thousand years of being out from under deception and seeing the true light, some nations will still be ripe for deception.

(7) When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, (8) and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. (Revelation 20:7-8 NASB)

The point is this: The great fiery-red dragon is a great deceiver, and it must not be underestimated in its ability and effectiveness to deceive. Simply, no one is immune from its deception, for it deceives the whole world.

But how does it go about deceiving? It does so by producing something so close to the real thing that many believe it is of God and not of the great dragon. They think it is good when, in fact, evil lurks under the surface. They think it is a holy lump when, in fact, it is leavened, and the leaven is causing it to rise until it reaches the heavens. Once its true identity is known, it will be too late for the inhabitants of the earth, including many Christians, to overcome to it.

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The counterfeit of the great dragon is so real and effective that it brings the whole world into bondage to its seduction system, and the whole world has no clue that it is in bondage, in slavery to its seductive and immoral power. What is the best way to bring people into bondage without them knowing it? Create something that seems so real and so pleasurable and put God's name on it! Think about it!

It is like attaching a rope to someone and, over time, ever so slowly pulling him toward a precipice until finally he falls over the cliff. Or, using a very commonly used analogy, it is like placing a live frog in a pot of water and ever so slowly heating the water. The frog knows no other world than the space within the pot, but this is okay to the frog because it is a comfortable pot. After all, the water is warm. Come on in! However, over time, the frog gets so used to the warmth of the water that it fails to realize the temperature is rising, until the water boils and it is too late to jump out. All along, the frog was in bondage in the pot, but it never knew it.

Ask yourself this question: If you wanted to deceive the world, would you do it by infiltrating or leavening something, say a nation, a group of nations, or a worldwide system of some sort, that is known for evil or one that is known for good and is a benefit to a vast number of people? Would you infiltrate or leaven a nation filled with Christians or one filled with pagans that are already in your camp? Would you infiltrate or leaven a nation with biblical roots or one with non-biblical roots?

Now, if you were the Adversary and Satan, which means that you are an adversary of God and of His people, then where would you concentrate your deceptive works in order to inflict the most harm? Again, would you go to a pagan place that has no interest in the true living God or to one that proclaims that it is a place that trusts God, even proclaims "In God We Trust"? Would you leave people to choose whether they wanted to be in bondage, or would you bring them into it without them knowing it?

What if the modern-day system of American life is a counterfeit to God's way of life? What if it is a seductive system that has made us its slaves and has led us as a nation into many types of idolatry? Again, think about it! Better yet, pray about it!

I want to caution my fellow brethren living in America. There is a movement afoot to restore America back to the principles of our founding fathers and to the roots of our Christian heritage in order to combat the progressive movement that seeks to transform America into a global, secular, socialist, and antichrist community. As much as I personally dislike this latter movement, I cannot embrace the former movement either.

Please see *The Upward Call*, issue #04-1049, May 11, 2010, *Transform or Refound America?*; and issue #04-1056, May 21, 2010, *A Day of Deception: They Believe What is False*.

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If I thought there were another 100 years for our present wicked eon [age] to run its course, I would be in full agreement with the American restoration movement. However, we do not have 100 years. I believe the countdown could be measured in years before this world enters into its final trial called the wrath of God, and God's King takes the scepter of the kingdom of this world. The only question that remains is where in this process and in what year the first resurrection and transfiguration of the conquerors (overcomers [Revelation 2, 3]) will occur.

Please see article #17, January 2009, *Snatched Away [The Rapture]*, and *The Upward Call*, issue #04-1010, January 22, 2010, *Waiting for His Son from Heaven*.

The point is this: The great dragon needs a counterfeit of good and of light. The only way to keep its deception going is to bring people into bondage to it without them knowing it and, in a sense, enjoying it, and this is exactly what the great dragon has done to the whole world.

How far have each of us who claim the name of the Lord fallen into this worldwide deception? How much of our thinking is based on this deception? Individually we need to seek the Lord for the answer.

Dear beloved in Christ, please heed this plea. We are in days of great deception that will grow increasingly worse as the end of the age and the coming of the Lord draws near. **There is only one answer and only one reality—His name is Jesus.** There is only one solution and that is **the kingdom of our Lord and of our Christ.** There is only one way to end this deceptive madness and that is with **the coming of Christ to take the reign over the nations of this world.** There is only one life that will have the wisdom and knowledge to lead the nations and that is **the immortal life of Christ manifested in and through the conquerors, the first fruits of the sons of God.**

Let us take up the prayer: **Keep deception and lies far from me** (Proverbs 30:8 NASB).

And, let us be ready to move out in the twinkling of an eye when the voice from heaven, which I believe is the voice of our beloved Lord, commands: **“Come out of her, My people, that ye may not partake with her sins, and that ye may not receive of her plagues”** (Revelation 18:4 YLT).

CV	Concordant Version
LITV	Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
YLT	Young's Literal Translation

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