



# Deception

## The number one tool Satan uses to lead people away from Christ

Genesis 3:1-6

How are people in your circle taking the aftermath of September 11th? People I work with largely are ignoring it, going on with business with a vigor that many of them didn't have prior to the 11th. Work is therapy. Even the stock market has started to grow again.

One thing that has struck me this past week is all the accounts of heroism. The courage to risk one's own life to save others is God-breathed. This is evidence which disputes the theory of evolution which assumes "survival of the fittest." Self-sacrifice is completely alien to survival of the fittest.

As I've been considering the events we've all observed, I can't help but look for certain trends that the Bible tells us will manifest the time prior to the Lord's return. One of these is the persecution of Christians. Jesus said that this would be one of the characteristics if the Tribulation (Matt 24:8-10). The book of Revelation reinforces this in many places (see for example Rev 6:9 & 20:4). We can expect to see foreshadowing of this in our age with greater frequency and intensity as we get closer to the Lord's return.

I was given insight as to one way the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack could lead to persecution of believers in last Sunday's (Sept 23) editorial section of the Houston Chronicle. A columnist named Ellen Goodman verbally attacked Jerry Falwell in an article titled "War zone: fanaticism vs. tolerance". In the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, Jerry Falwell had blamed several groups dedicated to the secularization of America as helping to make the terrorist attack happen. He later recanted this because there is no reason to believe there is such a linkage. There certainly is a better way to put it the truth that God is using the attack on America is a wake-up call to those ignoring Him.

Even though Ellen Goodman acknowledged that Jerry Falwell apologized for his statement, she proceeded to lambaste him for his perspective which led to his original statement. Effectively, she equated him with the terrorists as being against the same thing: secularization. In Ellen's view, one set of religious beliefs are just as valid as any other and the followers of any faith can become terrorists if they become fundamentalist enough to insist they know which side God is on. She is preaching tolerance as the highest virtue and anyone who insists that they know the truth is intolerant and needs to be condemned by society.

Her tone was one of lumping those who proclaim absolute truth in with those who act out intolerance by mass-murder. Therefore, to stop terrorism at its roots, we need to legislate fundamentalist beliefs as a hate crime and go after everyone who proclaims absolute truth.

**As a side note:** Islam and Christianity both claim absolute truth – So how can you know which is of God and which is not? Look at them, true Christianity invites comparison, Islam forbids it... Islam teaches via a literal interpretation of the Koran that the only sure way to know you are going to heaven is to die killing non-Moslems. It does not take a theologian to see the flaws in Islam.

### Does this mean that Moslems are the enemy?

No more than any non-believer in Jesus... Jesus said we should love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). We should have compassion on Moslems as terribly deceived people.

### What is wrong with today's view of tolerance?

Tolerance sounds good, but its meaning has been distorted by society in our age. Now tolerance has come to mean that we should respect another's perspective to the point of proving that we accept it as equally valid to our own view. This means there is no universal right or wrong, all morals are relative.

### What does the Bible say about tolerance?

Well, Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). The Bible makes clear that there is only one way to heaven and I believe it. I am a fundamentalist and proud of it. Tolerance properly applied is a good virtue but not at the expense of the truth or love. Love is a higher virtue, one that compels us to tell others the truth they need to know to avoid certain disaster.

### Is our society moving closer or away from God? Why?

What we are seeing in our society today is indeed a moving away from God. But I don't blame the ACLU or People for the American Way or any other numerous such groups. The rise of these organizations are just symptoms of the root cause which is the apostasy of the church. The word "apostasy" refers to a falling away from the core beliefs.

### Is the proliferation of different denominations a symptom of apostasy?

No, even though there are many Christian denominations that largely disagree on minor issues which Paul called "*disputable matters*" in Romans 14:1 (NIV), there are certain fundamental beliefs that we should all hold to if we are Christian. Such as the virgin birth of Christ, His deity, His death being the only atonement for sin, His resurrection, His return, etc.. But what we are seeing on our day is that some are denying these fundamentals and still representing themselves as Christians.

### **What does the growing apostasy tell us about the age we live in?**

The growing apostasy of the church should not be a surprise to anyone who has studied God's prophetic Word. Paul said, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come*" (2 Tim 3:1). Many think this is a reference to dangerous times since Jesus said that times leading up to His return would be "*as the days of Noah were*" (Matt 24:37) which we know was "*filled with violence*" (Gen 6:11). But Jesus also said "*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect*" (Matt 24:24). We also live in perilous times because it is a time of great deception. People are buying the lies which serve to keep them in their lost condition.

So we know that there will be great deception in the time before Jesus returns. But there has always been deception.

### **What is deception?**

Webster defines deceit as to cause to accept as true or valid that which is false or invalid.

The Bible says: "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isa 5:20) Such people who seek to deceive are themselves deceived.

Deceitfulness is a characteristic of the unsaved...

Ps 55:23 - But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in You.

Since deception is so dangerous and it characterizes the end-times, we should take a closer look at it. It is instructive to look at when the deception began...

### **Where did deception begin?**

The book of Genesis is full of stories about people being deceived. Just looking at the character Jacob:

- Jacob deceives Esau over birthright.
- Jacob and his mother Rebekah deceive Isaac over blessings.
- Laban deceives Jacob over Rachel.

- Jacob deceives Laban over cattle.
- Rachel deceives Laban over the family idols.
- Jacob deceives Esau at their reunion.
- Jacob's sons deceive him over Joseph's coat.
- Joseph deceives his brothers in Egypt.

For every act of deception, an ironic recompense occurs later in the story where the deceivers are themselves deceived. This is a cycle which repeats itself over and over.

The greatest act of deception is the first one where Satan deceived Eve into eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil...

Genesis 3:1-6

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3 "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

### **What were the lies Satan use to deceive Eve?**

The serpent deceived Eve into thinking that she could be "like God, knowing good and evil." Four lies were concocted by the serpent to deceive Eve:

1. You will not surely die
2. Your eyes will be opened
3. You will be like God
4. This is desirable for gaining wisdom and knowledge.

### **Did Adam and Eve die when they sinned?**

They died spiritually, and they would also die physically.

### **Were Adam and Eve's eyes opened?**

Yes... the best deceptions always have some truth but not the whole truth. While their eyes were opened, this caused them to have to hide themselves from each other and from God. So the net effect was for them to see less. Note: not everything we think we want is in our best interest.

### **Did Adam and Eve become like God?**

No, their spiritual death actually served to make them less like God.

### **Did Adam and Eve gain wisdom and knowledge?**

No, rather it caused their relationship with God to be severed which served to disconnect them from the source of all wisdom.

It is interesting to note that exactly these 4 deceptions are the core teachings of the New Age movement:

1. There is no death, only endless reincarnations to gain perfection.
2. Humanity needs their eyes opened about the deity within them.
3. Humans can become divine.
4. The knowledge of one's divinity brings wisdom and power.

Therefore, "new age" beliefs are not really new at all.

- When we consider the cycles of deception which is a pattern in the Bible it is interesting to note that Satan's first great deception of mankind at the beginning of history would be the same he would make man at the end of the age preceding the Lord's return.
- If there is anything we learn from history, it is that we don't learn from history. As Solomon said...  
*"there is nothing new under the sun"*  
- Ecclesiastes 1:9
- Indeed the Bible foretells Satan's deceiving activities at the end of his freedom to roam (Rev. 20:7-8, 10).

### **What caused Eve to listen to Satan's deception?**

The attraction to be like God. Eve wanted to be equal to the Creator.

- This is the core lie of the New Age movement that the creation = God (everything is God). The theological term for this is pantheism. But God calls it idolatry. To identify what is not God as God is idol worship.

### **What else attracted Eve?**

The desire for forbidden knowledge has been an attraction for mankind since the beginning. Man has been deluded into thinking that by gathering hidden knowledge, he can attain perfection.

- This is kin to the view that all of society's problems can be solved through education... this is a mindset that overlooks man's sinful nature.
- This is at the root of every seance, tarot card reading, Madame psychic, UFO contact, and New Age channeler.
- Those who contact the spirit world used to focus on the dearly-departed but in our day they have upgraded their contacts to extra-terrestrial "wise ones", ascended masters, spirit guides, space brothers or some other

term for spiritual entities who claim to want to save mankind for self destruction.

- These kind of contacts with the spirit world are forbidden by God because it opens up contacts with demons, fallen angels. Leviticus 20:37 says that seeking contact with the spirit world is worthy of death.

### **What sources of deception are there?**

The word deceive or its variants such as seduce and beguile appear 150 times in the Bible. A study of these verses reveal three sources of deception:

1. Self-deception
2. Other people
3. Demons and seducing spirits.

### **What instances of self-deception can you think of?**

- We deceive ourselves when we know the Word and do not practice it (James 1:22).
- We deceive ourselves when we say we have no sin or refuse to acknowledge it (1 John 1:8).
- We deceive ourselves through pride or gloating over our own importance (Galatians 6:3).
- We deceive ourselves into thinking our religion is sufficient when good works do not accompany it (James 1:26).
- We deceive ourselves into thinking that unrighteous people are actually saved (1 Cor 6:9-11).
- We deceive ourselves when we think we can sin and get by without reaping the consequences (Gal 6:7).

### **What does the Bible call human deceivers?**

False teachers and false prophets.

### **What are the conscious or unwitting objectives of the false teachers and false prophets?**

1. Lead people away from God.
2. Promote immorality by minimizing sin and its consequences.

### **Why do false teachers and false prophets have these objectives?**

Leading people away from God and promoting immorality reinforces their position as being valid (misery loves company).

### **How are you able to spot false teachers?**

They will have an unbiblical view of Jesus Christ which is apostasy and look for them to talk or act like they have a license to sin...

Jude 1:4 - For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Who do religious people that do things in the name of Jesus Christ serve?**

(this is a trick question) They serve the Lord only if they have a relationship with Him.

Matt 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

These are people doing great things in the name of Jesus that Jesus declares are unjustified. They are not only deceiving others, they have been deceived themselves. Only those who Jesus knows will enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is God and knows you better than you know yourself, the term "know" here is used in the biblical sense and refers to having a relationship with as in Genesis 4:1: *"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain."*

**Let me re-state the question: Who do religious people that do things in the name of the Lord but do not know Him serve?**

They are really agents of Satan... People who walk *"according to the course of this world"* also walk *"according to the prince of the power of the air"* which is *"the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2).

**We see that signs and wonders is often a tool by which false teachers deceive others, what technique do demons use?**

They lie. Jesus called the leader of the demons the "father of lies" (John 8:44, see also 2 Cor 11:14) because he was the one who started all the lying in the world. Demons certainly follow their leader and their lies like Satan's in the Garden of Eden, deceive people through doctrines...

1 Tim 4:1 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons

This verse shows what is behind the apostasy of the church in the end-times just before Jesus returns.

**Is apostasy in the church a good reason not to go to church in these end-times?**

It is a good reason not to go to a particular church but is a lame excuse for not finding a Bible-believing fellowship of believers...

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of

some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

If you are saved, you will go to church because you want to be with those you love...

1 Jn 3:14 - We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Not all the people in church are saved, but all the saved people are in church. It is common for people to trust in something other than the Lord for their salvation, such as their good works or even church membership. But the only sure way to get to heaven is to trust in Jesus' death on the cross as full payment of the penalty due for your sin...

Jesus said:

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.