

Avoiding Deception in the Last Days

I believe many people are concerned and even worried about the difficult events that have been occurring in the United States, and around the world for many years. People of all political perspectives and religious viewpoints are not sure what is coming next. The vast majority of people wonder why certain events are occurring. People are accusing one another of being evil. I believe Jesus and the apostles warned us about what we are experiencing. In 2 Timothy 3:1, the apostle Paul warned Christians that "in the last days difficult times will come." Paul was looking into the far future when he made that statement. I believe the difficult times Paul referred to have been here for sometime and times will become more difficult. Scripture teaches that we are living in the last days before the return of Christ.

Typically, when we talk about the last days, we think about the seven year tribulation, the battle of Armageddon, and the second coming of Christ. While those future events are important and exciting to talk about, I

want to address the warnings that Jesus and the apostles gave about great deceptions that will occur in the last days. This will help us to wisely understand what we have been and will be experiencing. Therefore, let us examine five truths about deception in the last days.

AVOIDING DECEPTION ABOUT JESUS' COMING. The first truth is that Jesus warned the disciples about deception related to His second coming in Matthew 24:4-5. He said this

would occur before the tribulation,

See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. Matthew 24:4-5 (NASB)

Notice that Jesus warned us twice to not be misled. The Greek word for misled is *planao*. It can also mean "deceived." Jesus is warning us to not be deceived. When He said, "many will come," Jesus used the Greek word "*polys*." It refers to a very large number. Jesus warned the disciples about a very large number of deceivers. I have discovered that during my lifetime at least thirty men have claimed to be Jesus, and at least seven

men are claiming to be Jesus even now. The point is that Jesus' warning about deception is already in progress. It is occurring and the tribulation has not yet even started.

Then in verse 24, Jesus tells us that during the last half of the tribulation

deception will explode and be extremely convincing because they will use great signs and wonders to mislead. The verse says,

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. Matthew 24:24 (NASB)

The deception will be so powerful that only the elect or Chris-



tians can escape the deception. That means unbelievers in our country and around the world will be deceived. The tribulation period will be a time of tremendous deception. That is why Jesus warned the disciples! He said, “Behold, I have told you in advance.” He wants believers to not be ignorant. Only Christians will know what is happening.

So, what is the message from Jesus? Deception about the second coming of Christ will progressively increase before the tribulation and then dramatically increase during the tribulation. This deception is already in progress and will become worse!

AVOIDING DECEPTION ABOUT TRUTH. The apostle Paul also warned us that truth and righteousness would be twisted or distorted in the last days. In 1 Timothy 4:1-2 he wrote,

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, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron . . . 1 Timothy 4:1-2 (NASB)

Notice that Paul says in the later times or just before the second coming of Christ, deceitful spirits will increase. The demons will use people who have a seared conscience. The demons will use men and women who are insensitive to sin and evil. What will they teach? The answer is given in verses 3-5. They will distort biblical truth. Their instruction will be deceptive. What will be the result of their instruction? 2 Timothy 3:1-5 gives part of the answer. It says,

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

Then in verse 8 we are told that such people are opposed to the truth. That is, they reject biblical truth and seek to deceive. In the last days evil will be considered good, and good will be con-

sidered evil. In the last days, people will increasingly become more insensitive to sin, their consciences will be seared, and their hearts hardened to others. This means in the last days evil will explode.

There is an article in the *Imprimis* titled, “Orwell’s 1984 and Today.” It is a snapshot of the present and the future. The accuracy of the article varies from country to country. The author quoted a man named O’Brien who said,

We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer. But in the future, there will be no wives and no friends. Children will be taken from their mothers at birth, as one takes eggs from a hen. The sex instinct will be eradicated. Procreation will be an annual formality like the renewal of a ration card. . . . There will be no loyalty, except loyalty toward the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother. There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. . . . All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always—do not forget this, Winston—always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.¹

We may not agree with every comment, but we are living in a world where biblical truth is increasingly hated and considered evil. The trend he describes is occurring.

AVOIDING DECEPTION ABOUT THE ANTICHRIST. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 gives us another warning. This warning is about an evil leader who will appear in the last days—at the beginning of the tribulation. The apostle Paul says,

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship . . . 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NASB)

1. Larry P Arnn. Orwell’s 1984 and Today. *Imprimis*. December 2020, vol. 49, number 12.

This passage is about the antichrist. He will be the leader of a nation. Notice that he is called the “man of lawlessness.” That describes his character. He will not be subject to God’s moral law or to any government laws. This lawless man will be a proud man who does not fear anyone! He will be the ultimate evil man. Eventually, this antichrist will seize control of the world and then rule the world. Notice Paul warns believers to not be deceived by him. That means this man will initially appear to be a nice man, but through deception he will gain control.

Verses 8-10 give us more information about this man. We are told,

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; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 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. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 (NASB)

We need to notice three things about the antichrist in these verses. First, the antichrist will come “in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness.” That is, he will be very politically powerful. His primary tool will be the art of great deception. Like a magician, he will skillfully deceive people into believing one thing while actually doing something else. Second, we are told that people will be deceived. That is, the vast majority of people will think he is doing good. They will trust him. Everyone but Christians will be deceived by him. Why will they like his magic tricks? We are told that those who will be deceived are those who “did not receive the love of the truth.” That is referring to non-Christians. They reject biblical truth. Third, this lawless man will be killed by Jesus at the second coming of Christ. The antichrist is the ultimate deceiver.

SATAN’S ROLE IN DECEPTION IN THE LAST DAYS. So far, we have been warned about false Christs, false teaching, and the antichrist. Who is responsible for all of these? The answer is Satan. This gives us the second truth about decep-

tion in the last days. It comes from Satan, who is the architect of deception. He will aggressively work to deceive the world. 2 Corinthians 11:3 describes Satan’s character as a deceiver. He is “the deceiver.” In Revelation 12:9 we are told,

... the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world ... Revelation 12:9 (NASB)

That is, Satan is the master deceiver of the world.

Revelation chapter 13 describes the future antichrist and the false prophet. In verses 3-4 of this chapter, we are once again told the antichrist will deceive the world so that the whole world follows and worships him. The world will think this man of lawlessness is a wonderful leader. Why? Verse 2 gives us the answer. The dragon or the devil or Satan (Revelation 12:9) empowers him.

Verses 11-18 introduce us to the false prophet. He will be the leader of a false religion that will span the world. Verses 13-14 say,

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. Revelation 13:13-14 (NASB)

Notice the false prophet will deceive everyone on the earth too! His worldwide religion is also described as a deceptive organization (Revelation 13:13-14; 19:23). It will be a false religion that suppresses Christianity. Finally, in Revelation 19:20 and chapter 20, verses 3 and 10, the devil, the antichrist and the false prophet are described as deceptive.

This helps Christians understand that in the last days, the great evil and deception that Christians will see will be orchestrated by Satan. Those who reject divine truth are the ones who will think the antichrist is wonderful. Then evil men will become even worse. As Ephesians 6:12 says, we do not struggle against flesh and blood, but against Satan and his demonic forces.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN DECEPTION IN THE LAST DAYS.

Now we are ready for the third truth about deception in the last days. It is explained in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12. The passage explains the purpose of deception. It says,

For this reason, God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NASB)

Here we are told that God will send a deluding influence on the world or a deceiving influence so that they will believe what is false. That is, God will cause the world to be deceived. Now why will God do that? God gives us the answer. He will do it "in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness." That is, God will intentionally cause those who have already ultimately and finally rejected Jesus Christ and are indulging in the pleasures of sin to be completely deceived. He gives them over because they have completely rejected Christ. Then when God judges them, His judgments will prove He is righteous. They will prove they deserve hell.

CONCLUSION. What have we learned? Jesus and the apostle Paul have warned us to not be deceived in the last days about the second coming of Christ, the distortion of truth, the increase in evil, and the rise of the antichrist. They warned us that Satan will be the master deceiver and will cause worldwide deception. Finally, God will cause those who have rejected the truth and enjoyed sin, to be deceived and to believe lies.

My purpose for this study was to help you discover an important truth about the end times that is often missed. God is allowing evil and deception to increase as an act of judgment on a God-rejecting world. We are moving closer to the second coming of Jesus. But we must remember the rapture occurs first, followed by the tribulation, and then Jesus will return. That is, we are moving closer to the rapture.

I believe the tremendous increase in evil, lies, and deception that we have been observing for decades is not just due to men being sinners. It is the handiwork of Satan, which God is increasingly allowing as we more quickly move to the end. As God releases control, we will see how wicked mankind

will become when God stops restraining evil and deception. Matthew 25:34 tells us that God the Father made plans for His kingdom from the foundation of the world. What we are seeing is the execution of His plan. We are marching faster now toward the second coming of Christ.

Lord willing, maybe those who are living in the tribulation might read this message some day and discover that Jesus told the disciples that His second coming will be obvious to everyone when it occurs. For in Luke 17:23-24 Jesus said,

They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them. For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. Luke 17:23-24 (NASB)

That is, if someone says to you, "Come with me, I will show you Jesus," He said to not believe them. For when He returns, everyone will see Him! He will come in a blaze of light and everyone around the world will see Him. So, we should pray, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Come!"