

Lesson 2: The Devil's Masquerade

In the Last Days before the second coming of Christ, there will be an influx of false ministers, false prophets, and false teachers who will deceive many. This is the devil's attempt to sabotage the Body of Christ by bringing in ideas and concepts that are contrary to the Doctrine of Christ. The prevalence of false ministries calls for a spirit of discernment to determine what is of God and what is of the demonic realm.

Matthew 24:4-5 NKJV - *4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 AMP - *13 For such men are false apostles [spurious, counterfeits], deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles (special messengers) of Christ (the Messiah). 14 And it is no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light; 15 So it is not surprising if his servants also masquerade as ministers of righteousness. [But] their end will correspond with their deeds.*

I. Last Days Deception

A. One of the characteristics of the anti-Christ spirit is that it will be active in the realm of the religious world.

1 John 4:1-3 NKJV - *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*

B. Demon spirits will be released into the cultures of the world system by satanic assignment. Their purpose is to deceive, confuse, and manipulate the minds of the masses.

C. The word "deceive" has several definitions that are found in the New Testament:

1. Apate - to cheat; to beguile or to trick; to give a false appearance or impression
2. Dolos - to bait; to ensnare; craftiness
3. Planao - to roam from safety or truth; to wander off course; a moral wandering
4. Phrenapatao - to deceive in the mind; to become self-centered; to sin against common sense
5. Doloo - to corrupt with false doctrines or notions; to be ensnared by a huckster

D. Satan and his demons are always in disguise. Deception always wears a mask to veil the true identity. He appears as an “Angel of Light.”

E. The culture of today is now a syncretistic society, totally deceived and given over to lusts and pleasures.

Syncretism - the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism is the inclusive merging of theology and religion into a unified expression.

Colossians 2:8 AMP - *See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism and vain deceit (idle fancies and plain nonsense), following human tradition (men’s ideas of the material rather than the spiritual world), just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding [the teachings of] Christ (the Messiah).*

II. False Religious Leaders

A. Jude’s Insight of False Ministry

Jude 3-4 NKJV - *3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 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.*

1. Hidden reefs - This is a picture of false teachers, the idea of something hidden but not obvious.

Jude 12 NKJV - *These are spots (hidden reefs) in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.*

2. Clouds without water - Godless men who do not have the presence of God’s Spirit in them. No living water flows from these clouds.

Jude 19 AMP - *It is these who are [agitators] setting up distinctions and causing divisions—merely sensual [creatures, carnal, worldly-minded people], devoid of the [Holy] Spirit and destitute of any higher spiritual life.*

3. Trees without fruit - The picture of false teachers here is that of a tree in late fall not bearing fruit. It is then considered dead and is pulled out of the ground. It is then considered twice dead.

4. Raging waves of the sea - A metaphor illustrating that apostate teachers are like the raging waves of the sea. Raging waves stir up dirt and sediment. The image here is the foam of shameful deeds.

Jude 13 AMP - *Wild waves of the sea, flinging up the foam of their own shame and disgrace; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of eternal darkness has been reserved forever.*

5. Wandering stars - These are stars that are unfixed in the solar system. They have no stable position. This is a picture of a false teacher. They are not set in place by God. They burn brightly for a moment, but then they fizzle out into darkness.

III. The Need to Have Discernment

Psalm 119:66 AMP - *Teach me good judgment, wise and right discernment, and knowledge, for I have believed (trusted, relied on, and clung to) Your commandments.*

A. Discernment is the process of making careful distinctions in our thinking about what is true and what is false.

B. Believers must examine everything carefully and hold on to what is good.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 AMP - **21** *But test and prove all things [until you can recognize] what is good; [to that] hold fast. 22 Abstain from evil [shrink from it and keep aloof from it] in whatever form or whatever kind it may be.*

C. We must pray and ask God for discernment.

Psalm 119:125 AMP - *I am Your servant; give me understanding (discernment and comprehension), that I may know (discern and be familiar with the character of) Your testimonies.*