

End Time Deceptions

Memory Text: “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (Revelation 12:9)

Setting The Stage: One summer morning in the 1920s, a Scotsman names Arthur Ferguson was standing around in London's Trafalgar Square. As he observed passers-by, an obviously well-to-do American began admiring the statue of Admiral Lord Nelson and the column it rested on. Suddenly inspired, Ferguson put his selling ability to work and "sold" Nelson's column to the American for about \$30,000!

Not one to let the grass grow, Ferguson went on from there to sell the famous clock Big Ben to another American for \$5,000 and took \$10,000 from another as down payment on Buckingham Palace. By the time justice caught up with him, Ferguson had added the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty to the list of his amazing "sales"! He spent several years in prison for his ability to deceive.

According to our scripture reading, the devil knows nothing else but to deception. Each day his focus is to pull the wool over our eyes. It's what he lives for and does best. He doesn't know honesty and truthfulness, just lies and deceit.

Deceive: To cause someone to believe something that is not true, typically in order to gain some advantage.

The devils game plan has always been to receive the worship, the loyalty that belongs only to God. To gain the upper hand he resorts to deception. To gain the advantage in heaven, the devil, that once covering cherub, deceived a third of the angels (Rev. 12:4, 7-9). To gain the advantage in the Garden of Eden, he deceived our first parents (Gen. 3:1-5). Even at the end of the 1,000 years, he will use deception to convince the lost that they can take the holy city and gain access to the Tree of Life (Rev. 20: 8). Deception will be rampant in the last days. Jesus didn't just warn us, He promised it!

Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24: “And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many... Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many... For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

What ways will the devil seek to deceive us? How can we be prepared for His cunning and duplicity?

Sunday – The Grandest Deception

Revelation 12:12, 17; 13:2; 20:2, 7, 10

If you were to ask the average person what the devil looks like, what do you think they would say? There are plenty of people who would say that he is dressed in red, has horns, a tail, and a pitchfork. Getting people to believe that the devil looks like some fictional character has the effect of leading people to believe he actually is a fictional character.

Of course, the devil would like for us to believe that he's some hideous looking monster. If he can get us to believe that's what he looks like then we'll be unsuspecting when he appears as an angel of light.

Satan is no mythical being. Even though he would love to have people believe that. After all, why would anyone seek to protect themselves from an enemy they don't believe is real?

Jesus said He saw him fall from heaven (Luke 10:18) and warned Peter about Satan's desire to sift him like wheat (Luke 22:31). If at the very least a person believes Jesus lived and was a good man and didn't believe in the devil, they would have a difficult time trying to get around what Jesus said.

Paul knew Satan was real. He wrote and warned about his schemes (Eph. 6:11), his powerful deceptions (2 Cor. 11:14), and of his supernatural powers (2 Thess. 2:9). And his presence is pervasive in the book of Revelation, God's last-day book.

Revelation 12:12, 17: “Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time... And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (cp. Rev. 12:9)

Revelation 13:2: “Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.” (cp. Rev. 12:9)

Revelation 20:2, 7, 10: “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years... Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison... The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Satan's realness can't be debated. The fact that there is evil in the world testifies that there must be an enemy to God and man. The good news, however, is that we

can overcome this enemy by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Rev. 12:11).

Monday – The Two Great Errors

Revelation 13:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Proverbs 16:25

It's important to know how to spot a counterfeit, and to know the genuine article. Why? Because the Bible says that Lucifer is a master deceiver (Rev. 12:9). The devil is on a mission to deceive whole world. If he was successful in deceiving a third of the angels in glory, you can expect a major deception down here at the end time.

Revelation 13:3, 4: “And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’ “

What we read in the Bible about the last days is a deception so masterful that virtually everybody living on planet earth is going to be deceived by it and follow after it, to the extent that they worship, not God, but the beast; not Jesus but the devil himself. And they won't even know they're doing it!

Today we see false religious movements all over the place. There is the *Unification Church* with the aberrant teachings of its founder, Sun Myung Moon. We also see the depravity of a group such as *The Children Of God* (now known as Family International) and their incredible immorality. There's also the teaching of the *New Age* with its reincarnation and its “You are God” ideas. There is false religion everywhere today.

According to the website familiesagainstcultteachings.org there are about 3,000 cults in the United States, and students are targeted more than any other group. And this confirms what Jesus said when He said, “Beware false Christ's and false prophets.”

But these cults are not the sum total of what Jesus was referring to. It's not likely that a Christian who has their nose in the Bible is going to be led away by Sun Myung Moon or the Hare Krishna's who's teachings are clearly opposed to those of Jesus Christ. Jesus made it clear that these deceptions would affect the Christian church, and that Christians would be especially vulnerable to last-days deceptions.

2 Corinthians 11:14: “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”

In the book of Revelation chapter 17, it talks about a religio-political entity so persuasive that it makes the entire world drunk with its wine. It confuses the world with its doctrine and dogma. Revelation 18 presents a merciful God calling His

people out of religious confusion. So you can see that God's people are going to be caught up in some tremendous deception to the extent that He's got to call them out. And sincerity alone probably won't keep us from being deceived.

Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

You can be sincere, but sincerely wrong. If I sincerely believe that getting on 80 W is going to take me in the direction of San Francisco, I can be as sincere as the day is long and I'll be in Reno, NV before I know it. Sincerity isn't enough. Of course, God wants our sincerity to be coupled with His guidance from His holy Word. Why is this important? The Bible says there will be massive deceptions in the last days – the majority of people will follow after the beast.

Tuesday – The Immortality Of The Soul

Revelation 16:14; Job 16:22; Psalm 146:4; 115:17; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; John 5:28, 29

Satan's first lie will end up being one of his last for planet earth. God told Adam, "You eat the fruit you shall surely die." But then the serpent told Eve, "Does God really mean what He says?" (Gen. 3:1) Then he contradicted God's word and said, "You shall not surely die. (Gen. 3:4) That was the first recorded lie, and this lie forms the foundation for what we call modern spiritualism. And most people in the world, and I dare say most people in church, side with devil on this question, rather than God.

Most people don't really believe that the dead are really dead. Just invite someone to walk through a graveyard with you, on a moonlit, cloudy night, with the cemetery gates creaking open and slamming shut, and you'll see what I mean.

Pew Research reported that 1 in every 3 Americans have some type of contact with the dead, 1 in 5 had an encounter with a ghost, while about 1 in 6 have consulted with a psychic at one time or another. Then 1 in 4 believe in astrology, the same believe in reincarnation, etc. What's interesting about these statistics is the number of Christians that have either dabbled in or believe in these things runs about the same as the average person.

Spiritualism is about the greatest deception Satan has ever concocted. And before Jesus comes back you're not going to believe your eyes. This issue is incredibly significant.

Revelation 16:14: "For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

There will be spiritualistic manifestations. Spirits of devils will roam about this globe telling people that they have come back from the dead. We see it already with

apparent visitations by Mary. There is a spirit world. And there are things that go bump in the night. Now it might be squirrels, or raccoons, or they might be spirits of devils causing mayhem. Are there haunted houses? You better believe it, but it's not Uncle Larry rattling around in there. That would be some devil causing us to believe the dead are not really dead. Of course, the dead really are dead:

Job 16:22: "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." (cp. Job 7:8-10)

Psalms 146:4: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (cp. Ps. 104:29)

Psalms 115:17: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence."

Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6: "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun."

John 5:28, 29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Death is but a momentary sleep. One day, those who are asleep in Jesus will be raised from their slumber to live forever.

Wednesday – Sabbath & The Theory Of Evolution

Revelation 14:7, 9, 10

In the 1920's American society was undergoing a social transformation. People were dancing to the new jazz music, and debating the ideas of a Dr Freud. People's ideas and attitudes were changing. They were deciding whether to cling to the past or jump into the future. At that time, the state of TN had a law known as the Butler Act, making it illegal for anyone to teach evolution in public schools, as it contradicted the creation account of the Bible.

Against that background a young high school biology teacher in Dayton, TN named John Scopes agreed to be used in a test case against the Butler Act. The trial received worldwide publicity. In tiny Dayton huge crowds attended the court case daily. What was going on there and what people were talking about was whether or not God was the Creator. In fact one of the lawyers representing the prosecution said the case was a matter of evolution v Christianity, and it would be a duel to the death. He said that the question on trial was creatorship. Was God responsible for

creating human beings or did we begin long ago in the primordial soup as single cell amoeba?

According to God's final gospel message the question that's going to be agitated all around the world is creation, and creatorship. Just as the "Scopes monkey trial" as it was known, received worldwide publicity, so this question will receive worldwide publicity once more as it's debated all around the planet.

Revelation 14:7, 9, 10: "Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters...And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God"

The seventh-day Sabbath was instituted at the creation of the world (Gen. 2:2, 3) and enshrined in the Ten Commandments as a memorial of Christ's creatorship (Ex. 20:8-11; John 1:1-3). The devil would like nothing more than for the world to forget that Christ is Creator and thus worthy of worship. Already he has duped most of Christianity into worshipping on the wrong day. And for a long time now, he has also undermined Christ's creatorship by backing Darwinian evolution.

To doubt that there is a Creator is the equivalent of saying that the pyramids of Egypt didn't have builders and merely grew up all on their own out of sand, or that the Golden Gate Bridge didn't have engineers and simply produced itself, or the Great Wall of China had no brains behind it and materialized out of thin air. There are some things we cannot deny and remain sensible and reasonable all at the same time. Our planet has countless evidences that an Intelligent Designer has been at work.

Probably worse than the belief of Darwinian evolution is the belief of theistic evolution. It's the belief that God made the matter, but it evolved on its own to what we see and experience today. Through "survival of the fittest" and major metamorphosis of species over millions of years we arrived at our current state. But this oxymoron (like "wise fool") undermines the testimony of the Bible, is opposed to Christian conduct, and is unworthy of a God of love. No Christian can accept the unholy matrimony of creation and macro-evolution.

Thursday – The Counterfeit Trinity

Revelation 13:1-5, 11-17

The concept of the triune nature of God is found all through the Bible. However, in the context of end-time deceptions, the book of Revelation reveals a counterfeit trinity composed of the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast of Revelation 13. **Revelation 13:1-5, 11-17.**

The dragon here can be seen as a counterfeit of the Father in that he is the one in control. He also gives power and authority and a throne to the sea beast, the one counterfeiting Christ.

The sea beast receives its authority from the dragon, reminiscent of what Jesus said about receiving His authority from the Father (Matt. 28:18). The sea beast also faced a death and then a resurrection like Jesus (see Rev. 13:3). Also, this beast is described as exerting his authority for “forty-two months,” or three-and-a-half years—a prophetic counterfeit of Christ’s literal three-and-a-half-year ministry.

The land beast promotes the interests of the sea beast, just as the Holy Spirit glorified not Himself but Jesus (John 16:13, 14). Also, just as the Holy Spirit performed a powerful act in bringing down “fire” from heaven (Acts 2:3), the land beast performs something similar (see Rev. 13:13).

“At the end, the land beast performs a counterfeit of Pentecost! For what purpose? To prove to the world that the counterfeit trinity is the true God.” (What the Bible Says About the End-Time, p. 111)

We don’t need to be deceived in the last days. If we know God, His Word, and His Son, Jesus Christ, we will be safe from the delusions of the devil.

Friday – Further Thoughts

“Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” (The Great Controversy, p. 588)