

Deceit of Religion

Fred R. Coulter—November 3, 2007

How did the world end up so confused in religion, in particularly *Christianity*? This struck me, because this last Wednesday evening was actually Halloween night. I was on a radio program, which was with Gianni Hays on *the new world order disorder*, which explains a lot what's going on in the world today as far as what's happening politically and economically and things like this.

But some of the questions that were asked were very interesting. Since I have not done anything for years and years on religions in the world, I thought that I would cover some of it today. We're going to look at several aspects of it. But Jesus knew it was going to be that way. So, we look out and we see in the world a little over a billion Catholics who believe that they are Christian. We have hundreds of millions of Orthodox who believe they are Christians.

It's very interesting that each one points to the other and says, I'm right and you're wrong, which creates great problems. Then you have the Islamists today who are convinced that they are right and we are wrong. Now you throw in all the other religions of the world: Hinduism and Buddhism, native gods, demigods, Shintoism, satanism, voodoo, spiritualism and atheism.

What all of this reveals is that man is by nature a *religious* being. Even an atheist is religious. I heard an atheist say he was religious because of *his own* beliefs. Then we look at all of the churches that are there. The Protestants have 400 denominations. You have Sabbath-keepers and there are 400 denominations of those when you really get down to analyze it, and all of them have varying degrees of Truth and so forth. You have various categories of Christians:

- those who are acceptors
- those who are believers
- those who are professing
- those who are flatterers

Out of all of this, how does a person begin to make sense from all of these varying confusing things we're confronted with in the world?

We are told that God is not the author of confusion, and yet, in the Christian realm that's what we see. All the way from monks and monasteries to snake handlers, *all professing to be Christian*. So, we're kind of stuck in trying to say this one is right or that one is right or we give our opinion or we have our feeling.

What we need to do is look at the Scripture

to find out:

- What does God say?
- What did Jesus say?

We have to claim the promise that Jesus said that *if* you believe Him and follow Him—of course, the way *He* said—‘the Truth will set you free.’ Let's look at the spiritual state of the world today and then we will see that Jesus prophesied that this would be so.

If you look at what's happening in the world and you look what's happening especially in the United States we have never been at a time where there is such a spiritual warfare going on. There are many good people out there. Good in as far as that they are trying to hold certain values of Christian truth and trying to keep the society as much as they can in following with the Constitution.

However, there is a power out there that is working that the world does not see. That power is the power of Satan the devil, the *author of deception and confusion!*

Revelation 12:9: “And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, who **is deceiving** the whole world...” *The Greek there is a present tense active participle, meaning is deceiving on an ongoing basis!*

“...he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him” (v 9). *That event is yet to happen in the end-time again!*

But he **is deceiving**; he is **the deceiver**. He is **the liar** from the beginning. We find just like in the beginning Satan was the one who led Adam and Eve astray, so likewise, in the end-time we find the same thing. We find that Jesus prophesied that this would happen. So, let's see what Jesus said.

As Jesus was teaching His disciples, they wanted to know—just like we want to know today—‘Lord, when are You coming? How's it going to be? What is going to happen?’

We are going to try and answer some of these questions and we'll find a good many answers as we go along. What we will see is there is a unique history in the New Testament to show how it develop out of the true primitive Christianity that Jesus and the apostles taught. They were confronted with the forces of deception from the beginning from within and without, which we also at the end-time are seeing the fruition of that.

Matthew 24:1: “And after going out, Jesus departed from the temple; and His disciples came to

Him to point out the buildings of the temple.”

Now this was, as another Scripture says, on the Mount of Olives. You need to picture this: There’s the temple area, and then you come down through the Valley of Kidron and you walk up to the top of the Mount of Olives and you can see directly across to the temple. At that time it was a very spectacular thing, because from the bottom of the Valley of Kidron going straight up was a wall to support the platform of the temple. That was 450-foot high.

Then you have the whole temple area on top of that. Then you have the largest tower that was in the temple area that was 105-feet higher than the temple area. So, when you read there in Matt. 4 that the devil took Him to a high point on the temple and sat Him there, that’s where Jesus was. So, the disciples are seeing this. Whenever you see a building, it’s permanent it is tremendous.

Verse 2: “But Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things?... [take a good look] ...Truly I say to you, **there shall not be left here even a stone upon a stone that shall not be thrown down.**”

I’ll just make a few comments as we go along. Today where you see the Wailing Wall where the Jews go to pray, ***those are not the stones of the temple!*** Rather those are the stones of the platform for Fort Antonia, and was actually Roman property. So, the temple was actually south of where the Wailing Wall is. It’s quite an interesting thing.

Otherwise, if that were not so then what Jesus said here “...**there shall not be left here even a stone upon a stone that shall not be thrown down**” that prophecy would not have been fulfilled if the Wailing Wall was where the temple should be. So, another whole topic but the Mosque of Omar is not sitting on the area where the temple of God was.

Verse 3: “And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, His disciples came to Him alone, saying, ‘Tell us, when shall these things be? And what *shall be* the sign of Your coming, and of the completion of the age?’”

This is the question that always comes up; everyone wants to know. From the time of Christ down to now, there been various times in history when men thought that Jesus was going to return. Here’s where the trouble begins:

Verse 4: “Then Jesus answered *and* said to them, ‘Be on guard, so that no one deceives you. For many shall come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’; and they shall deceive many’” (vs 4-5).

We’ll talk about *the many* here in just a minute. But if you’re going to deceive people

concerning Jesus Christ—there is a different gospel and there is a different Jesus—and all of these things down through time have been changed. The thing that is interesting, Satan does not come along and do things instantly. He works by change through *incrementalism*. A little change here a little changed there given over a period of time. Then he can completely change everything, to where

- evil looks good, and good looks evil
- truth becomes fiction, and fiction becomes truth

This is where we are today. Jesus said to ***be on guard that no one deceives you***, because they’re going to be saying that Jesus is the Christ. So, if you want to see today how that works, just go on the Trinity broadcasting network and just look at all of them there:

- Where is the Truth?
- Who has the Truth?
 - ✓ you’ll hear *some* Truth
 - ✓ you’ll hear some good things

however

- Is part of the Word of God sufficient?
- or*
- Do we need all the Word of God?

There’s a reason why we have the whole Bible. I submit to you it’s because we need all the Word of God.

So, let’s look at this and see what has happened beginning back then. In Mark 9 we see something very interesting. This was after Jesus cast the demon out of the boy when the disciples could not do it. This caused a little consternation with the disciples when they saw this happen.

Mark 9:38: “Then John answered Him, saying, ‘Master, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbid him because he does not follow us.’... [interesting set of circumstances] ...But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him; for no one who does a work of power in My name can easily speak evil of Me. And **the one who is not against you is for you**’” (vs 38-40).

This is quite interesting when we begin to analyze. Are there people beginning clear back in the days of Jesus, who used the name of Jesus who had *religious works*, but the question remains: Were they teaching the Truth unto salvation? *or* Were they, in spite of what they were doing and the good causes that they have, also deceived?

If you deceive you have to have a counterfeit. If you have a counterfeit you must have one that looks very close to the original. So again, let’s see what Jesus said. Here we have those who

are followers; who are clingers.

Let's look at another instance here. Let's see that there are a lot of people who were following Jesus for various reasons. Now, this is where He fed the fed the multitude, the 5,000. This was something! What an experience that must've been with the five barley loaves and the two small fish, to feed 5,000. Think about what the people thought when the 12 disciples went around and took the bread and broke it off and gave everyone some bread and gave everyone some fish, and yet, there were all those fragments left over. I don't know if in breaking off the bread, they can actually see the bread grow. But somehow it had to expand, which was a miracle in itself.

I tell you what, if you had that today you'd certainly have a crowd of people wanting free food. This is what we find here. There are people who come to Christianity for various different reasons just like this. So, when they finally found Jesus:

John 6:25: "And after finding Him *on* the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did You come here?' Jesus answered them and said... [because He knew the hearts of all men] ...'Truly, truly I say to you, you do not seek Me because you saw *the* miracles, but because you ate the bread and were satisfied.... [many people fit into that category] ...Do not labor *for* the food that perishes, but *for* the food that endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give to you; for Him has God the Father sealed'" (vs 25-27).

Here were those who wanted the physical food. Jesus said, the physical food is not what you want to seek. Then they said, which many people do:

Verse 28: "Therefore, they said to Him, 'What shall we do, in order that we ourselves may do the works of God?'"

A lot of people want to do something for God. A lot of people have ideas that they really want to work for God and do something for God. This is how we have so many different branches of churches start.

Verse 29: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God: that you **believe in Him** Whom He has sent.'"

- **to believe** Him as the Messiah
- **to believe** that He is the Son of God
- **to believe** what He taught

If you believe, **you will do!** So, this general statement then must be filled out, or if we could put it that way, expanded with the rest of the teachings of Jesus.

Verse 30: "Therefore, they said to Him,

'What sign will You perform, that we may see *it* and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written: "He gave them bread to eat *that came down* from heaven.'" (vs 30-31).

They're sitting there challenging Jesus, having in the back of their minds, 'Well, you fed us the physical food here, now wouldn't it really be great if we could have manna from heaven.'

Verse 32: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven; but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven.'" *Then He begins to talk about himself:*

Verse 33: "For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' Therefore, they said to Him, 'Lord, give this bread to us always.' Jesus said to them, 'I AM the Bread of Life; the one who comes to Me shall never hunger; and the one who believes in Me shall never thirst at any time. **But as I said to you, you also have seen Me, yet, you do not believe**'" (vs 33-36).

- there are those who flatter
- there are those who accept
- there are those who use the name of Jesus

But they don't believe the way that Jesus says they ought to believe!

This is why we need the Word of God, so that we can understand what we need to do. ***This is why we need to always look to the Word of God!*** This is why we produced *The Bible Holy Bible in Its Original Order, a Faithful Version*, because many people have explicit faith in the in the version of the Bible that they have, and yet, many of the things in there are not correct doctrine; many have taken the liberty to change things.

Sidebar: I don't know if you've read the *NIV*, but they completely change this to make things conform to what they believe. But the truth is if you believe in Jesus:

- How do you conform your life?
 - Do we conform to His way
- or*
- Does Jesus conform to your way?
 - Do we believe Jesus
- or*
- Does He conform to our beliefs?

Same way with the Word of God!

Today we have so many translations and versions out there that run from the deficient to blasphemous. Let's look at just one little instance here. He talks about the traditions, washing of hands and so forth.

Mark 7:17: “Now, when He went into a house away from the multitude, His disciples **asked Him concerning the parable.**”

We’ll come back and we will we will look at the at the parable which was:

Verse 15: “There is nothing that enters into a man from outside, which is able to defile him; but the things that come out from *within* him, those are the things which defile a man.”

Jesus’ disciples asked Him what He meant (v 17). Why would they ask this question? They lived in Judea. They live their lives according to the letter of the Law. Did they reject God’s laws of clean and unclean meats? *No! They kept them!* So, this presented a difficulty. But the problem was that the tradition of the Jews was that you have to wash your hands to get every bit of dirt off your hands before you eat. So, this is what Jesus is talking about here

Verse 18: “And He said to them, ‘Are you likewise without understanding? Don’t you perceive that anything that enters into a man from outside is not able to defile him? For it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and *then* passes out into the sewer, **purging** all food’” (vs 18-19)—Greek: ‘kathairo’ means *to purge*. It also is the base word for *cleanse*.

The *NIV* says that He said, v 19: “...(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)” That’s a very interesting thing to realize with the Word of God. King James says it “...goes out into the draught...” which is the same thing that’s into the sewer. So, here we have what men like to do; they like to come along and *add* to what God has said and add to what God has given.

Let’s look at the tradition here since were right here in Mark the seventh chapter and here’s how confusion comes. Here is how traditions get established so that people believe it to be Truth.

Mark 7:1: “Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes from Jerusalem came together to Him. And when they saw some of His disciples eating with defiled hands (that is, unwashed *hands*), they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, holding fast to the tradition of the elders, do not eat unless they wash their hands thoroughly. Even *when coming* from the market, they do not eat unless they *first* wash themselves. And there are many other things that they have received to observe, *such as* the washing of cups and pots and brass utensils and tables. For this reason, the Pharisees and the scribes questioned Him, *saying*, ‘Why don’t Your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread **with unwashed hands?**’” (vs 1-5). *That’s the whole topic of it there!*

Verse 6: “And He answered *and* said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me.”’” *Another category of worshiping God!*

In this case they go to Sabbath and then march out and forget God. Or they would go offer their sacrifice at the temple and forget God. Honor God with her lips; in other words, *lip service to God*. We see this today don’t we in certain ways?

Today it’s called in Christianity, *those who have Christian values*. You hear that in the political realm, which means that *they push certain of their beliefs in the Laws of God that need to be maintained, and neglect others which are probably more important!* Now notice what this does:

Verse 7: “But in vain do they worship Me, **teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.**”

Now here’s a broad category because this is how a lot of the deception has come in from within and from without through tradition. It would be interesting to go back and study Jewish tradition, go back and study Catholic tradition etc.

Verse 8: “For leaving the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men, *such as* the washing of pots and cups; and you practice many other things like *this*.”

Yet, they were ‘religious,’ and these were ‘religious’ leaders. The same principle applies today *exactly*.

Verse 9: “Then He said to them, ‘Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your *own* tradition. For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother”; and “The one who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.” But you say, “If a man shall say to *his* father or mother, ‘Whatever benefit you might receive from me *is* corban’” (that is, *set aside as a gift to God*), “he is not obligated to help his parents.” And you excuse him from doing anything for his father or his mother, **nullifying the authority of the Word of God by your tradition**, which you have passed down; and **you practice many traditions such as this**” (vs 9-13). *This is how Satan has done it!*

Let’s see another warning that Jesus said. Because just as the Pharisees and the scribes and so forth were the religious establishment of their time, today we have a ‘Christian religious establishment’ that began after the days of the apostles. They use the name of Jesus, they preach the name of Jesus etc.

We will tie Matt. 7:13 together with where we began in Mark 9. With so many professing

Christianity and then you throw at all the other 'religions,' because they want to amalgamate all of the religions together and have that fit into the coming new world order which is on its way. That's why Gianni Hays has her *new world order disorder*, because many people can see it coming. Let's think about what we see in the world today.

Matthew 7:13: "Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it." ***How can we identify this?***

Verse 14: "For narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it."

That ties in with what Jesus said in Matt. 22, 'Many are called but few are chosen.' Then He gives this to clarify how that is going to happen. Again a warning;

Verse 15: "But beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, for within *they* are ravening wolves."

You can tie that in with Rev. 13 about the false prophet that looks like a lamb and speaks as a dragon.

Verse 16: "**You shall know them by their fruits...**" *You have to judge them by their fruits!*

- Do they love God?
- Do they keep His commandments?
- Do the brethren love each other?

You have to put it together with all the rest of the Scriptures! Then He gives a parable of something that is true.

"...They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire. Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits" (vs 16-20).

Then He gets very particular in what He says. So this is a point of being able to look out and see all of the confusion that is out there and begin to make some sense of it, because you go by the words of Christ. He is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life,' and He only taught those things that the Father told Him to teach. That's what we have here in the Word of God. This counterbalances what we read in Mark 9 to begin with, about *those who are not against us or on our part*.

Verse 21: "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but the one who is doing the will of My

Father, Who *is* in heaven." *That is quite a Scripture!*

- What is the will of the Father in heaven? *It's stated in the Bible!*
- Is it the will of the Father—Who is perfect, Who has given perfect laws and commandments—to abolish them?
- Is it the will of the Father to replace the teachings of God Old and New Testament with the traditions of men?
- Is the will of the Father that there be great vast ecclesiastical empires such as the Roman Catholic Church?

—which is really a religious political system. It has ambassadors from every country in the world.

"...but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven. **Many...**" (vs 21-22). **Who are the many?** *The many that went through the broad gate! The many preachers who were using the name of Jesus Christ!*

Verse 22: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?'" *Using the name of Jesus!*

That's why where we started, Jesus said, '***Let no one deceive you, be on guard. For many shall come in my name saying I am the Christ.***' Notice Jesus' answer to them:

He did not say it's a good thing that they followed 25% of His teachings. 'I commend you for that.' He did not say it's good thing you followed 50% of His teaching. 'You're better than the other group.' This other group over here kept 75% of His teachings. 'Now that's really quite an improvement.' ***Jesus didn't say that at all!***

Verse 23: "And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.'" **What is lawlessness?** *At the end-time we are going to be fighting against the mystery of lawlessness (2-Thess. 2)! **What is lawlessness?***

- where they *use* the name of Jesus
- where they change the laws of God for *their own traditions*

Think about what has happened with the traditions. It happened to the Jews, it's happened to the Catholics, it's happened to the other Christian denominations and so forth, ***where they have their own traditions!*** Where does that leave them in the light of Jesus' words here? *He expands it further:*

Verse 24: "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine... [they're recorded for us

today] ...and practices them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.”

Who is the Rock? *Christ is the Rock!* In the Psalms He is called *the Everlasting Rock!*

Let's analyze this just a bit here. You have to hear the words of Christ. What you have to do with them? Accept them? Believed them? *Yes!* You need that. But is that enough? No! You have to practice them or do them. The Greek word there 'poieo' means *to practice them.*

“...I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock” (vs 24-25). The Rock that followed them (Israel) *was Christ* (1-Cor. 4)!

Verse 26: “And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.” *You find the sand many places, in dry creeks!*

Verse 27: “And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Compare what Jesus was teaching, and what the scribes and Pharisees were teaching.

Verse 28: “Now, it came to pass *that* when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He taught them as One Who had authority, and not as the scribes” (vs 28-29).

Let's add just a little bit to this. 2-Tim. 2 is the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Yes, and it is true he wrote more than any of the other apostles. Yes, it is true he understood and taught more of the grace of God than any of the other apostles.

Paul is talking to Timothy the evangelist, so here's a message for all ministers; 2-Timothy 2:15: “Diligently *study* to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of the Truth.” *There's a right way to divide it, and there's a wrong way to divide it!*

Verse 16: “but avoid profane and vain babblings because they will *only* give rise to more ungodliness, and their words will eat away at the body like gangrene; of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus” (vs 16-17).

We'll see in a little bit, that beginning within the Church there was an apostasy, which then was systematized in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Verse 18: “Who have gone astray from the

Truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place, and are destroying the faith of some. Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands firm, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who calls upon the name of Christ depart from unrighteousness’” (vs 18-19)—*sin and iniquity.*

- What does this mean?
- What other test do we have?

Let's see how this began to develop!

(go to the next track)

In 2-Cor. 4 the Apostle Paul approached this. Then we'll look at some of the problems that he was confronted with, and some of the problems that the Church in Corinth was confronted with.

Let's remember that on the last Passover of Jesus, who was there at the beginning? *Judas!* Who was inside Judas? *Satan!* Satan already put it in his heart to betray Jesus, and when Jesus gave Judas the sop, Satan entered into him. That means Satan was there! Satan likes to be where there are those he can confuse and cause those who are the followers of Christ to go *his* way. Paul had this confrontation, too. 2-Cor. has an awful lot to do with it, and we will see how he was battling it.

2-Corinthians 4:1: “Therefore, having this ministry, according as we have received mercy, we are not fainthearted. For we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain, not walking in *cunning* craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully...” (vs 1-2).

We just read earlier that we have to *rightly divide the Word of God.* If you don't rightly divide the Word of God, *you handle it deceitfully!* As I mentioned on the radio program, even Cardinal Gibbons, who was Cardinal of Baltimore, said you can search in Genesis to Revelation and *there's not one word sanctifying Sunday!* How did that come about?

So, if you've never read *Rome's Challenge to the Protestants* {booklet at truthofGod.org} it might be an interesting read.

Rev. 13 talks about the other beast that looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon, *deceitfully handling the Word of God!* Catholics even say that they don't need the Bible. What did Jesus say? *‘Do you practice My words, which are the words of the Father?’* Let's see how He was bringing this out and confronting the problem here.

“...but by manifestation of the Truth...” (v 2). *The Truth is manifest with God's Spirit with His Word, it's why we have the Bible!*

“...we are commending ourselves to every

man's conscience before God" (v 2).

In other words, Paul is not trying to have an ecclesiastical empire. He is not putting himself above the brethren. He is not taking the authority that he has as an apostle to Lord it over the brethren.

Verse 3: "But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing; in whom the god of this age **has blinded the minds of those who do not believe...**" (vs 3-4). *Whenever it talks about believe in the New Testament, it means the full belief:*

- that you hear
- that you believe
- that you practice
- that you act upon
- that you live by

"...lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is *the* image of God, should shine unto them. For we do not preach our own selves, but Christ Jesus *the* Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (vs 4-5).

Let's see some of the problems they had right there. Remember, this was happening within the church. Now we'll go back and see where some of this started. But let's see how it was developing during Paul's time, and then we will see how this developed a little later.

2-Corinthians 11:1: "I would *that* you might bear with me in a little nonsense; but indeed, do bear with me. For I am jealous over you with *the* jealousy of God because I have espoused you to one husband, so that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ.... [How could that come about?] ...For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus... [different Jesus] ...whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit..." (vs 1-4)—*because there is spiritual power that follows along with these false teachers!*

"...which you did not receive, or a different gospel..." (v 4). *You have to know and understand and define what the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is!*

"...which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something good*" (v 4). ***In other words they were broad-minded!*** 'We'll listen! What is your opinion? What do you think?'

It's kind of like the Israelites of old during the days of Elijah. He was the only prophet of God left and he called all the Israelites together and the prophets of Baal, and he started out by saying, 'How long halt you—the Hebrew means *jump you*—from one opinion to another opinion?' That's what we

have today, *opinions*, rather than following the Word of God. "...you put up with it as *something good*."

Like this famous smiling preacher that's on television, one who is really held up as a wonderful model—he's called the smiling preacher—he won't dare mention sin. He just says, become your better self. Well you can't become your better self until you repent of your sins.

Verse 5: "But I consider myself in no way inferior to those **highly exalted so-called** apostles." *That's the real meaning of the Greek!*

This is not a competition between the other apostles of Christ and Paul, though there was a problem with Peter in Gal. 2, which when you really analyze it carefully, *it had nothing to do with the laws of God but with the traditions of Jews!*

Verse 6: "For although *I may be* unpolished in speech, yet, *I am* not in knowledge; for in all things I have demonstrated this to you. Now, did I commit sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you freely?... [they were criticizing him for that] ...I robbed other churches receiving wages from them for ministering to you (vs 6-8).

Verse 13: "For such *are* false apostles—deceitful workers..." That's where we started out with Satan is deceiving the whole world. He has workers to work for him, and he rewards them.

"...who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works.... [tie in Matt. 7] ...Again I say, no one should consider me a fool; but if otherwise, receive me even as a fool, that I also may boast a little. What I am *now* saying, I do not speak according to *the* Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.... [then he goes on explaining about it] ...Since many boast according to *the* flesh, I also will boast" (vs 13-18). What were they boasting about?

Verse 19: "For since you are *so* intelligent, you gladly bear with fools.... [sounds like political correctness today] ...For you bear *it* if anyone brings you into bondage, if anyone devours *you*, if anyone takes *from you*, if anyone exalts himself, if anyone beats you on the face. I speak as though we were under reproach for being weak; but in whatever way anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I also am bold. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they *the* seed of Abraham? So am I..." (vs 19-22).

So where did a lot of these false prophets

come from, but the Holy Land? How many of them were from the crowds that followed Jesus? That accepted some of the things that He taught as good things, and now they're preaching in the name of Jesus, but they're false prophets and bringing a different gospel.

Verse 23: "Are they servants of Christ? (I am speaking as if I were out of my mind.) So am I, above *and beyond measure...*" *Then he shows what he went through!*

Let's look at one of the first encounters that the apostles had with a false prophet. If you want to do some interesting reading I'm sure they have it online. But go online and look up the name Simon Magnus. Let's see what happened. Let's see where false prophets come in, and what he wanted to do. Let's also see who was he? Was he ever really a disciple of Jesus or not, regardless of what he may have claimed after this encounter?

Acts 8:5: "Then Philip went down to a city of Samaria *and* proclaimed Christ to them; and the multitudes listened intently with one accord to the things spoken by Philip when they heard and saw the signs that he did, for unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many of those who had *them*; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But *there was a certain man* named Simon..." (vs 5-9)—*a particular man*. So, he's going to be described here.

"...who had from earlier times... [meaning even during the ministry of Jesus Christ] ...been practicing sorcery in the city and astounding the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be some great one" (v 9). *Here's a great religious leader who had the power of Satan behind him!*

Verse 10: "To him they had all given heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.'.... [remember that the Samaritans also followed the book of Moses] ...Now, they were giving heed to him because *he* had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip, who was preaching the Gospel—the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ—they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself also believed; and after being baptized, he steadfastly continued with Philip; and as he beheld *the* signs and great works of power *that were* being done, he was amazed" (vs 10-13).

- Here we have someone who believed, but did he repent? *No, he didn't!*
- Why did he believe? *Because he saw the power!* What did he want?
- *He wanted a position of power!*

Verse 14: "Now, when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them... [the two leading apostles; so, this was a big-time problem] ...who, after coming down *to Samaria*, prayed for them, that they might receive *the* Holy Spirit; for as yet it had not fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (vs 14-16).

Here's another clue being baptized and not receiving the Holy Spirit does not make you a Christian. You have to receive the Holy Spirit, and but Peter said that *God only gives only the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him!*

Verse 17: "Then they laid *their* hands on them, and they received *the* Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, he offered them money, saying, 'Give this authority to me also, so that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive *the* Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'May your money be destroyed with you because you thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter... [that means and apostleship] ...for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this your wickedness, and beseech God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you; for I perceive *that* you are in the gall of bitterness and *the* bondage of unrighteousness'" (vs 17-23).

How is that so? *By using satanic powers for his religious endeavors!* Also, that involves idolatry.

Verse 24: "But Simon answered *and* said, 'You beseech the Lord on my behalf ...' *He wasn't willing to repent!* 'You do it for me!' ***No one can repent for anyone else!***

"...so that none of *those* things which you have spoken may come upon me" (v 24). *So, here is the first encounter with a false prophet using witchcraft or sorcery!*

There was a Simon who did go to Rome in 42_{AD}. And there was even a statue or a bust to Simon 'the god.' So, you read in history about Simon Magnus and you will see that he used the name of Jesus, he preach the name of Jesus and he had a following. He also had a female consort Helen, and he used demonic powers for his preaching. So, he falls into the category that we read there in Matt. 7 that did many wonderful works in the name of Jesus. But it was not Jesus doing the works. ***It was Satan!***

How do we determine, when we look out and see these things in public going on, who is telling the Truth and who is not telling the Truth? *Because it is the Truth that we have to be concerned with!*

Let's look at another false prophet that Paul encountered during his first evangelistic tour.

Acts 13:6—here we find a sorcerer: “And when they had gone through the island as far as Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* Bar-Jesus.... [the son of Jesus (not Jesus Christ)] ...He was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, who called Barnabas and Saul to *him*, desiring to hear the Word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so was his name interpreted) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith” (vs 6-8).

God took care this just like he did with the assault of the residents of Sodom when Lot was taking care of the angels.

Verse 9: “But Saul, who *was* also called Paul, being filled with *the* Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him, *and* said, ‘O full of all guile and all craftiness, *you* son of the devil *and* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the straight ways of *the* Lord?’” (vs 9-10).

Wow! That tells you a lot! What was he doing? *He was preaching the way of the Lord, preaching another Jesus; yet, he was a sorcerer!*

Verse 11: “‘And now behold, *the* hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.’ And immediately a mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking someone to lead *him* by the hand.”

There is great symbolism in that, too. If you are preaching a false Lord, a false Jesus, ***you are walking in blindness!*** When proconsul saw that he believed.

Let's see some of the other problems that happened right within the Church. Let's see what Paul said to the elders, *because even within in the ranks of the Church came false teachers!* Isn't that something? That's why we find that Jesus said, ***The one who endures to the end the same shall be saved!*** And it's not how you start, it's how you finish!

Acts 20:21: “Earnestly testifying, both to *the* Jews and *the* Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” *That's the whole Gospel! It's called the Gospel of Grace!*

Verse 22: “And now behold, I am bound in the spirit, *and* am going to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall happen to me there; except that the Holy Spirit fully testifies in every city, saying that bonds and tribulations await me. But I myself do not take any *of these* things into account, nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I received

from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify **the Gospel of the Grace of God**” (vs 22-24).

It is true, you're not going to be saved by anything but by the grace of God!

Verse 25: “And now behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the Kingdom of God, will see my face no more; wherefore, I testify to you on this day that I am pure from the blood of all, for I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood” (vs 25-28).

This is warning to every minister, teacher, elder or preacher; high or low or in between; when you're dealing with the brethren of God, ***they belong to Him!*** Not to a church not to an organization.

When we get together and so forth we are the assembly of the *called out ones*, that is true. ***But you've been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ! He owns you! He is to be in you!*** Christ is the Head of the Church. Notice this warning:

Verse 29: “For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves” (vs 29-30)—*that's quite a statement!*

Now let's see what the Apostle Peter said, because these warnings and these histories are right in the New Testament for us to learn by. 2-Peter 2 is pretty strong. How far did this go?

It went so far that when Jesse Lyman Hurlbut wrote *The Story of the Christian Church*, that he said after the death of the Apostle Paul ‘*a curtain fell upon the Church through which we vainly trying to look but when the Church emerges on the other side we see a church that was completely different*’ from the church of the apostles. Here's why:

2-Peter 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will ***stealthily*** introduce destructive heresies...” ***Deceit by incrementalism!***

That's how all deceivers work. Pay attention to what Congress is doing in the political realm. Yes, everyone was jubilant when they defeated the amnesty bill. But now they're just coming back and introducing it a bit at a time. ***Deceit by incrementalism!*** What do they end up doing?

“...personally denying *the* Lord who bought

them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves.... [that's pretty strong language] ...And many people will follow *as authoritative*... [that's what it means] ...their destructive ways; *and* because of them, **the way of the Truth** will be blasphemed" (vs 1-2).

- What is the way of Truth? *Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'*
- Did He not say that? *Yes!*
- Did we not read about another spirit, another Jesus? *Yes!*

Verse 3: "Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for gain; for whom the judgment of old is in *full* force, and their destruction is *ever* watching."

Here we have a prophecy of these things right with in the Church. How far did it go? This is quite astounding. That's why Jesus said to the little flock, *'It is the Father's pleasure to give you the Kingdom.'* **It is the little flock!** Not the big churches that are in the world. When you start comparing what is preached in the world to what Jesus and the apostles preached as recorded in the Bible and New Testament, it is a vastly different thing.

Ephesians 4:11: "And he gave some as apostles..." *Apostles were sent bearing the authority of Jesus Christ to witness of the Truth of the Gospel and His resurrection!* Not as popes; not as authoritarians.

"...and some prophets..." (v 11). *Prophets do not necessarily mean alone foretelling of the future, but the telling forth of the Truth!*

"...and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (vs 11-13).

Jesus put it another way, He said, 'It's sufficient that the disciple become as a teacher' (John 10). That's quite a job! To help perfect the saints to come to *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ!* Which then God obviously is going to finish at the resurrection!

Verse 14: "So that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error." *The error that the false prophets were preaching!*

They were systematizing it just like Peter told there in 2-Peter 2. Here's what we are to do: this is why we have to prove everything by the Bible;

believe the Truth of the Bible and follow the way of God.

Verse 15: "But holding the Truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even Christ.*" *That's the fullness of conversion that God wants us to follow!*

Revelation 14:12: "Here is the patience of the saints..."—*the called out ones!* Not those nominated by the Catholic Church to become statues and objects of worship. Everyone who has the Spirit of God is a saint, because saint means *one who is sanctified or made Holy*. If you have the Holy Spirit of God you are sanctified and you are Holy before God.

Notice the description, because this helps us define how we can find our way out of all of the confusion that's in the world. Everyone claims they're right! They can't all be right, but who is truly right? *Christ the Word of God!*

"...here are the ones who keep the commandments of God **and** the faith of Jesus" (v 12). *So you have both together!*

Does it take faith to keep the commandments of God? *Yes indeed!* You can't keep the commandments of God without faith. Faith is not against the commandments of God.

Now see the battle again against the false prophets going around teaching in the name of Jesus.

2-John 3: "Grace, mercy, *and* peace shall be with us from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." **The Truth of God will foster the love of God:**

- toward God
- toward the brethren
- toward your neighbor
- toward your enemies

Verse 4: "I rejoiced exceedingly that I have found among your children those who are walking in Truth..."

Do an interesting Bible study in Psa. 119, because there it says **all your commandments are Truth and Your Law is Truth!**

"...exactly as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech you, lady, not as though I am writing a new commandment to you, but that which we have *observed* from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is the love of God... [here's a definition of it]: ...that we walk according to His commandments.... [walking in the Truth; walking according to His commandments] ...This is the commandment, exactly as you heard from the beginning, that you

might walk in it, because **many deceivers have entered into the world...**" (vs 4-7). *So, by the time he writes his General Epistle here is the apostasy coming out of the Church!*

"...those who do not confess *that* Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.... [one aspect of it] ...This is *the spirit of* the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out for yourselves in order that we may not lose the things we have accomplished, but *that* we may receive a full reward" (vs 7-8).

Now notice another warning. This is really quite a powerful little epistle packed with a lot of things in it:

Verse 9: "Anyone who transgresses... [sin is the transgression of the Law] ...Anyone who transgresses and does not continue in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. *But* the one who continues in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not say to him, 'Welcome!'.... [they were really having some tough times] ...For anyone who says, 'Welcome!' to him is partaking in his evil works" (vs 9-11). *This shows how desperate the situation was!*

Verse 12: "I have many things to write, but I do not wish to *convey these things to you* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face in order that our joy may be *completely* full."

Now let's look at a couple of other definitions here concerning the love of God and commandment-keeping. As we will find, anyone who says that Jesus abolished the Law... Telling *the Lawgiver Who is perfect and the Law is perfect* (Psa. 19)

1-John 5:2: "**By this standard...** [Greek: 'en touto'] ...**we know** that we love the children of God: **when we love God and keep His commandments.** For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (vs 2-3).

Anyone who says well no one has kept the commandments perfectly. No one has kept the commandments perfectly—except for Jesus Christ. But can people keep the commandments? *Sure they can!*

- If you're not committing adultery are you keeping the commandments? *Yes!*
- If you're not killing are you keeping the commandment?
- Do you have any trouble with those?
- Are those not easy to do?

When it comes to hatred in the heart—where murder really starts—then that's a case of real deep

conversion, etc.

These are the first distinguishing things concerning the Word of God that you need to watch out for to know who is teaching the Truth. Now remember, this is the Apostle John, the one whom Jesus loved, and this was the longest-lived apostle to whom Jesus gave the book of Revelation.

1-John 2:3: "And by this *standard* we know that we know Him: **if** we keep His commandments"—*that's the condition!*

You might ask, 'Which ones, Lord? *The ones that He gave!* That's why in *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* we have Appendix H: How Did Jesus Fulfill the Law and the Prophets?

Does any man have the authority to tell God that His commandments have been abolished when they been done in truth, uprightness and endure forever? *Food for thought!*

Verse 4: "The one who says, 'I know Him' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him."

Can a secular pagan Roman emperor by the name of Constantine, give an edict and abolished the Sabbath and God recognizes that?

Verse 5: "On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word..." So, it gets right back to where we covered: ***the will of the Father!***

"...truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this *means* we know that we are in Him. **Anyone who claims to dwell in Him...**" (vs 5-6).

Here is the obligation if you profess the name of Christ; v 6: "**Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked.**"

Jesus never authorize the making of any statues, Sunday-keeping or the traditions of men!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* (except where noted)

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 12:9
- 2) Matthew 24:1-5
- 3) Mark 9:38-40
- 4) John 6:25-36
- 5) Mark 7:17, 15, 17-19, 1-13
- 6) Matthew 7:13-29
- 7) 2 Timothy 2:15-19
- 8) 2 Corinthians 4:1-5
- 9) 2 Corinthians 11:1-8, 13-23
- 10) Acts 8:5-24

- 11) Acts 13:6-11
- 12) Acts 20:21-30
- 13) 2 Peter 2:1-3
- 14) Ephesians 4:11-15
- 15) Revelation 14:12
- 16) 2 John 3-12
- 17) 1 John 5:2-3
- 18) 1 John 2:3-6

Scriptures quoted, not referenced:

- Matthew 4; 22
- Revelation 13
- 2 Thessalonians 2
- 1 Corinthians 4
- John 10
- Psalm 119;19

Also referenced:

Booklet: *Rome's Challenge to the Protestants*
{truthofGod.org}

Book: *The Story of the Christian Church* by Jesse Lyman Hurlbut

Appendix H: How Did Jesus Fulfill the Law and the Prophets? (*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*)

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