

Christianity's Great Deception

Is it possible that the great Christian churches of today are unknowingly engaged in a plot to repudiate the very faith they claim to embrace? The words of Jesus Christ strongly suggest that this is exactly what is taking place at this very minute. This profound truth is revealed in the beginning of one of the greatest prophecies in all the Bible.

The Olivet Prophecy

When the disciples questioned Jesus about the end of the world and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth (Mt. 24:3), they couldn't possibly have known how He would answer them. Regrettably, the Messiah's words are still a mystery to the overwhelming majority of people who consider themselves "believers." Those who doubt this need only to ponder the Messiah's first warning, a warning that has gone almost totally unheeded in the professing Christian world today.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Mt. 24:4-5)

A Religious Babylon

Today we live in a world full of religions, with new faiths emerging every day. But Jesus was addressing a faith that asserted a belief in Him: "Many will come saying I (Jesus) am the Christ and shall deceive many." How is this possible? How can those who profess Jesus Christ be guilty of deception? The answer is simple. The vast majority of professing Christians today are not true Christians. They do not teach what Jesus taught, believe what Jesus believed, or do what Jesus did. Instead, most Christians believe they have the right to decide for themselves how they will worship God and His Son. As a result, most "believers" have embraced a faith that is light years away from that found in the scriptures. Consider just a few examples.

In the Protestant world, the two most "holy" times of the year are Christmas and Easter. However, these days are not Biblical, but rather come from ancient Pagan worship. This is a fact that even leaders in professing Christian churches will admit. However, their admission is usually followed with words to the effect of: "It doesn't matter because God looks on the heart," or "It's ok because we confiscated it for Christ." This justification despite the fact that God's word says, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer.10:1) and despite the fact that God's word prohibits integrating Pagan practices into the true faith. Notice God's command to the children of Israel.

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (Dt.12:30-32)

Consider the power of these words; "you shall not add to nor diminish from it." Here the Eternal God is stating in the strongest of language that man does not have the moral authority to decide for himself how he will worship his Creator. God alone has that authority.

Despite this command, millions who consider themselves true believers actively promote festivals that not only contradict the scriptures but actually mock the very God of the Bible. They embrace Pagan festivals and reject the days God set apart as holy convocations (Lev. 23). The prophet Amos once recorded

God's opinion of man's holidays and festivals and his words were not flattering.. God declares they are abhorrent to Him.

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. (Amos 5:21-22)

The Result of Defiance

The great prophet Ezekiel was used by God to warn Israel that His judgment and their captivity would come upon them because of their defiance to Him and His law. Specifically mentioned was Israel's profaning of God's Sabbath and Holy Days.

And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. (Ezk. 20:11-13)

Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. (Ezk. 20:16)

Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. (Ezk. 20:21)

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God also said that if man wants to make up his own faith, it is his right. However, if he chooses this course, God will not accept his expressions of love toward Him.

As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. (Ezk. 20:39)

God's Holy Days

God's true Sabbath and holy days are clearly defined in the scriptures (Lev. 23). They picture a great plan of salvation and have been observed by God's people in both Old Testament Israel and the New Covenant church. Paul kept the seventh day Sabbath, not Sunday (Acts 13:42, 17:2, 18:4). He observed the Passover, not Easter (Acts 20:6, 1Cor. 5:7, 11:23). He kept the day of Atonement, not Lent (Acts 27:9). But it doesn't end there. Paul as well as all the apostles taught that God's law was alive and well in the New Testament, not abandoned by Him simply to be replaced by Pagan myth.

Tragically, however, much of Christianity today is deeply rooted in fables. The apostle Paul understood this reality and wrote of it to the evangelist Timothy. Notice what Paul observed.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2Tim. 4:3-4)

False Ministers Look Good

Make no mistake about it; false ministers are persuasive. Their message resonates with their audiences because it sounds so good. That is the danger with deception. It sounds like the truth. This is true in part

because the ones delivering these messages are for the most part sincere and appear to be decent and God fearing men and women. Additionally, many are brilliant scholars with what appears to be a great command of the scriptures. Their words seem true. The apostle Paul described such ministers in his letter to the church at Corinth.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2Cor. 11:13-15)

The great prophet Isaiah wrote of the end time and described it as a period when God's people would despise His law. At that time they would desire their ministers to preach "smooth" things.

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits... (Isa 30:8-10)

When speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, God excoriates ministers who claim to be his servants but speak lies and fables. Notice what God says.

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart. (Jer. 23:25-26)

In the professing Christian world today, there is a plethora of beliefs that are found nowhere in the scriptures. The Bible does not say the soul is immortal, that the saved go to heaven, that the condemned suffer for all eternity in an ever-burning hell. Nowhere do the scriptures claim that God is trying to save all mankind at this time or that God accepts you just as you are. But these beliefs are taught from the pulpits of Christian churches every Sunday. If true believers in the first century church were alive today, they would be astonished at where the faith has gone.

Password: Christianity

For those who think that all one has to do to enter God's Kingdom is utter "a sinner's prayer" and profess "Jesus is Lord," think again. Christianity is a way of life, not a password or slogan. It is a walk, not words. It requires steadfast dedication and commitment. The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews describes great champions of faith that were prepared to give up everything - including their lives - for God's Kingdom. This is the loyalty God requires. Nothing else will do. It is a loyalty that puts God and His Kingdom first (Mt. 6:33). Jesus described such loyalty this way.

He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. (Mt. 10:37-38)

Tragically, there are many who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, but reject the very law He ordained as the God of the Old Testament, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The consequences for this behavior are very serious. Jesus said as much. When giving what is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described a period of judgment involving people who claimed they were Christian but were not. Notice what Jesus said.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?

and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Mt. 7:21-23)

The word "iniquity" used by Jesus in this passage is better translated "lawlessness." Therefore, Jesus was saying, "you that break the law..." But that is exactly what the vast majority of professing Christians do and teach. They claim God's law is done away, that it was nailed to the cross. These words represent the justification in the Christian world for breaking God's Sabbaths and embracing festivals that come from the Pagan world. Some have even suggested that God's law was a burden and that Christianity today is liberated. However, notice what your Bible says.

By this 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 grievous [burdensome]. (1Jn. 5:2-3)

When giving the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned of the grave danger of thinking that God's great law would somehow no longer be in effect as a result of the work He would do on earth. Notice what Jesus said.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Mt. 5:17-19)

It is hard to imagine that the words of the Messiah could be more clear. Those who argue that New Covenant Christians have no obligation to honor God's law will one day stand in judgment for such thinking.

A Great Moral Code

God's law is His great moral code that not only defines sin (1Jn. 3:4), but also defines love (Rom. 13:10). That law reflects the very mind of God Himself. And if those who claim to be His servants speak contrary to it, God says it is because they are in darkness. Notice the words of the great prophet Isaiah.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (Isa. 8:20)

Today, the vast majority of professing Christian ministers are truly in darkness. As hard as this is to believe, it is true. Jesus' words in the Olivet Prophecy regarding religious deception (Mt. 24:4-5) stand as a powerful reminder that God's law and the true faith will be under a relentless attack and that a false Christianity will masquerade as genuine and truly will deceive many.