

# Beware of Deception

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Let me ask the question: Have you ever been deceived? Have you ever been deceived? I have. It's not a pleasant feeling when you've been deceived and you come to realize it and you come to see it because you feel foolish that someone has pulled the wool over your eyes or you were just blind to something. You didn't see it. You feel very foolish. And, as a result of that deception, you have based certain actions and thoughts on false information, on erroneous assumptions based on the deception.

With that in mind, let's turn over to Revelation chapter 3 and we're going to begin in verse 7 and then jump to verse 11. We're coming into the context of the letter to the Church in Philadelphia. Revelation 3 and verse 7 and we're going to apply this to this subject of deception by way of introduction. Revelation 3 verse 7:

**Revelation 3:7.** *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things [says] he that is holy, he that is true, he that [has] the key of David, he that [opens], and no man [shuts]; and [shuts], and no man [opens]; (KJV)*

So the context. Now let's jump to verse 11.

**Revelation 3:11.** *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which [you have], (KJV)*

Meaning: the right and the good things.

**Revelation 3:11b.** *that no man (KJV)*

That's interesting.

**Revelation 3:11 continued.** *no man take [your] crown. (KJV)*

I was talking with Harold Lee the other day and I think he was discussing this verse with Steve Buchanan. And he mentioned to me that the Greek word for "take" is Strong's 2983 and he mentioned that there's deceit involved there.

So I went and looked it up. I'd never done that before, never thought about it. And this word "take" is the Greek word *lambano* and it means to take by craft.

And it is applicable in the Greek particularly say you were talking to a fisherman or a hunter because a fisherman uses a lure. We call it a lure. Well, that's to lure the fish. It appears to be food, but it's not and the fish is caught by, in that sense, deception. Or if you have a duck blind as we would today. It appears to be part

of the landscape, but inside are men with guns. And they're after the ducks. So again it's a form of deception. And that is the way that this Greek word is used.

It means also to circumvent one by fraud or deceit.

So when Revelation 3 and verse 11 says, "Let no man take your crown," the implication is the crown is taken by fraud and by deceit. It's not that just somebody comes and muscles you aside and takes it away. It's that you give it away almost because you give yourself over to fraud and deceit.

And so Christ is warning His little brothers and His little sisters, which we all are, that we better hold on because a man—it's says, "Let no man take your crown." We're going to see that this man is motivated by the Adversary. This man is going to use or men will use deceit and fraud to take the crown away from us that has been reserved for us. And we have to be very careful.

So the title of the sermon is:

*Beware of Deception!*

We need, especially as we get closer and closer and closer to the end, we must beware of deception.

Okay, Point Number One, the First Point we want to make is to establish the fact that:

*1. Satan is the author of deception.*

If there is deception in the Church, if there is deception against God's people, guess who's behind it? There's only one being behind it. Let's go to Revelation chapter 20 and verse 3. I think it's Revelation 12 and verse 3. I'm sorry. No. I'm getting confused. Revelation 20 and verse 3—I'll go to Revelation 12 in just a minute. Revelation 20 and verse 3 talking about casting Satan into the bottomless pit and notice what it says.

**Revelation 20:3.** *And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him [So, he is sealed away.], that he should deceive the nations no more, (KJV)*

Well, obviously if he's shut up so he doesn't deceive the nations, it means prior to that time he has been deceiving the nations, has been deceiving everyone that will listen to him or that will be tuned in to his broadcasting as Mr. Armstrong used to refer it.

**Revelation 20:3.** *[and to do so] till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and [then] he [will] be loosed a little season. (KJV)*

Now he uses that deception to devour God's people, to eat up God's people. We know—we won't turn there—but in 1 Peter 5 and verse 8, we're told to be sober, to be vigilant because what? Your adversary as a roaring lion walks about

seeking whom he may devour. The Greek word for "devour" can also be translated destroy. And we also know from the Parable of the Sheepfold that the one who enters in not through the door, the thief, wants to kill, to steal, and to destroy. And this is Satan's motivation. He wants to destroy God's people. He does not want God's people to have eternal life. He wants to see them go into the Lake of Fire.

So make no mistake though. Satan can deceive us and destroy us if we are not close to God. If we get far away from God, if we separate ourselves from God somehow, through lack of study, lack of prayer, lack of a close intimate relationship with God, we are open to the deception of Satan and ultimately to the destruction that occurs to those who fall away, who go away from God.

So Point Number One:

*I. Satan is the author of deception.*

That leads us to the Second Point that:

*II. That men motivated by Satan are there to deceive also.*

Satan just doesn't do it by himself. What Satan wants is to get into the mind of men and to deceive them so that they will be tools in his arsenal to deceive others. He wants an army of deceivers out there if he can find them and if he can have them.

Now let's go to Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15 and look at what Christ said in His very first sermon. I mean He addressed this subject right in the beginning! And He did so because it's important. He did so because it is extremely crucial to God's people to understand. Matthew 7 verse 15, He says:

**Matthew 7:15.** *Beware of false prophets, [He says, "They're going to] come to you in sheep's clothing, (KJV)*

Meaning: deceptively, appearing to be one thing, when they're actually something else! He says:

**Matthew 7:15b.** *but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (KJV)*

That's the deception! They appear to be sheep. They appear to be brethren. They appear to have everybody's best interests at heart, but inside they're wolves and they want to eat you up.

Now with that thought in mind, let's go to Romans chapter 16 and read verses 17 and 18. This happened in the New Testament Church also. Men were being used by Satan to try to disrupt and destroy the New Testament Church. We'll get into that in a little more detail a little later. Romans 16, we'll read verses 17 and 18.

**Romans 16:17.** *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark [those] which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine [or the teaching] which [you] have learned; and [he says] avoid them. (KJV)*

Now verse 18, talking about those who are disruptive and who are trying to upset God's people and to lead them astray. Verse 18:

**Romans 16:18.** *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; (KJV)*

But notice!

**Romans 18:16b.** *by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (KJV)*

We're talking about wolves in sheep's clothing. That's a level of deception. We see here it's fleshed out by Paul when he says, "They use good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple."

Now the Greek word for "simple" is very interesting. It's Strong's number 172. And it means "someone who fears no evil from others" or "someone who distrusts no one." Somebody that's just kind of naïve and just believes everything they hear and believes everything that somebody says to them.

We would say today, "believes everything they read on the internet" and somehow thinks "Well, it's got to be true." As the advertisement says, "Well, if it's on television, it's got to be true!" Well, that isn't always the case. If it's in print, it isn't always true.

And so what Paul is telling us is that we have to have a degree of not cynicism but skepticism. Meaning as the Bereans did, we better investigate what we hear to see if it is true. And just not naïvely accept things because Paul in Romans and Christ in Matthew 7 are telling us that there is deception involved. And people are going to come with nice words, fair speeches, but what they're saying isn't true.

Satan does not give any of God's people a pass. He wants any of God's people. Therefore, there are tares in every group. There are tares scattered throughout God's Church and they are used by Satan to deceive. And then those people, some of who have God's spirit and who are well meaning, are deceived and then they can lead others into deception. That is Satan's plan.

*Satan is the author—Point Number One.*

*Point Number Two: he will use people to further his plan.*

Now let's look at some examples.

The Third Point that we want to bring out is that:

*III. A man of God lost his life by allowing himself to be deceived.*

Now there's a huge lesson in this for us. A man of God! A man God used lost his life through deception. Let's go to 1 Kings chapter 13. We're going to start in verse 1. Read the entire account. And this is a man that was commissioned by God to go to Jeroboam and speak to him God's words, but we will see he was the subject of deception Himself. 1 Kings 13 verse 1:

***1 Kings 13:1.*** *And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the [Eternal], (KJV)*

God spoke to him in Judah and then He asked him to go to Bethel. Now Bethel was the center of idolatry in Israel. So this man of Judah was commissioned by God, given a message by God to travel to Bethel, and give a message to Jeroboam. Notice and it says when he arrived:

***1 Kings 13:1b.*** *and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2) And he [meaning the man of God] cried against the altar in the word of the [Eternal], and said, O altar, altar, thus [says] the [Eternal]; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon [you, referring to the altar.] shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon [you], and men's bones shall be burnt upon [you]. (KJV)*

This is a prophecy. Verse 3:

***1 Kings 13:3.*** *And he gave a sign the same day, saying, (KJV)*

God's saying, "I'm going to prophesy, but I'm going to give you a sign today to show you that this prophecy is true." He says,

***1 Kings 13:3b.*** *This is the sign which the [Eternal has] spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent [or torn apart], and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. 4) And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he [meaning Jeroboam] put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. (KJV)*

He told his minions and his troops to capture this man of God. Notice what happened when he did.

***1 Kings 13:4b.*** *And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. (KJV)*

It was out there and it shriveled up and he couldn't bring it back. Right in front of everybody! Verse 5:

***1 Kings 13:5.*** *The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the [Eternal]. 6) And the king answered and said unto the man of God, [Entreat] now the face of the [Eternal your] God, (KJV)*

He doesn't say "my God." He says, "your God."

***1 Kings 13:6b.*** and pray for me, that my hand may be restored [to] me again. And the man of God besought the [Eternal], and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. (KJV)

Another miracle!

***1 Kings 13:7.*** And the king said unto the man of God, (KJV)

Notice this!

***1 Kings 13:7b.*** Come home with me, and refresh [yourself], and I will give [you] a reward. (KJV)

Now in reality, this was a bribe. Obviously, he was thankful that his hand was not shriveled anymore. And part of it may be that he wanted to pay this guy off so to speak, but also offer him a bribe. Now notice what God had instructed this man.

***1 Kings 13:8.*** And the man of God said unto the king, If [you will] give me half [of your] house, [I'm] not [going to go] in with [you], neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: 9) For so [it was] charged me by the word of [God], saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that [you came]. (KJV)

So he obeyed God's word. Up to this point, he has done everything that God had asked him to do. Verse 10:

***1 Kings 13:10.*** So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel [which God asked him to do]. 11) Now there dwelt an old prophet (KJV)

Now this is a false prophet. Remember Bethel was the center of idolatry. This man lived in Judah. So there dwelt in Bethel an old prophet, an idolatrous prophet, a pagan prophet.

***1 Kings 13:11b.*** and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. 12) And their father said unto them, [Which] way [did] he [go]? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, [who ha] come] from Judah. 13) And he said unto his sons, Saddle the [donkey]. So they saddled him the [donkey]: and he rode thereon, 14) And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak [tree]: and he said unto him, [Are you] the man of God that [came] from Judah? And [the man] said, [Yes,] I am. 15) Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. (KJV)

The same thing that Jeroboam said to him! Notice now what happens. Verse 16:

***1 Kings 13:16.*** And he said, I [can't] return [unto you], [I can't] go in with [you]: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with [you] in this place. (KJV)

Exactly what he told Jeroboam. Now the deception begins. Verse 17:

***1 Kings 13:17.*** For it was said to me by the word of the [Eternal], [You shouldn't] eat [any] bread nor drink water there, nor turn [in] again to go by the way [which you came]. (KJV)

Now the false prophet said unto him in verse 18:

***1 Kings 13:18.*** ... I am a prophet [of the LORD] also as [you are]; and an angel spoke unto me by the word of the [Eternal], saying, Bring him back with [you] into [your] house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied to him. (KJV)

So here we have this prophet of God, this man of God and he has a choice to make. God told him not to do this. God told him not to go in. God told him to go a different way. God told him not to eat or drink in this place. And here's another man who's saying, "Well, I'm a prophet of God and this is what God told me." So you have a choice to make. He had a choice and his life was on the line.

Verse 19:

***1 Kings 13:19.*** So he went back with him, (KJV)

This is back in Bethel now.

***1 Kings 13:19b.*** [He ate] bread in his house, and drank water. 20) And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the [Eternal] came unto the prophet that brought him back: (KJV)

Now God whispers in the ear of this pagan prophet.

***1 Kings 13:21.*** And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus [says] the [Eternal], Forasmuch as [you have] disobeyed the mouth of the [Eternal], and [have] not kept the commandment which the [Eternal your] God commanded [you], 22) But [came] back, and [have] eaten bread and drank water in [this] place, of the which the Lord did say to [you], Eat no bread, and drink no water; [your carcass] shall not come unto the sepulchre of [your] fathers. (KJV)

You're not going to die a natural death.

Verse 23:

***1 Kings 13:23.*** And it came to pass, after he had eaten [the] bread, and after he had [something to drink], that he saddled for him the [donkey—the one that the pagan prophet had rode on], to wit, for the prophet whom he

*had brought back. 24) And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and [killed] him: (KJV)*

How would you like have your last days being eaten alive by a lion when everything started out so well?

***1 Kings 13:24b.** and his carcass was cast in the way [half-eaten carcass on the road], and the [donkey] stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass. (KJV)*

And it became a symbol of disobedience to God.

Now what is the lesson? If a man of God that God whispers in his ear can be deceived, so can we! Powerful message there! If a man of God can die through deception, so can we! Powerful message there!

That was the Third Point.

Now the Fourth Point; let's look at ancient Israel.

*IV. Ancient Israel listened to deceivers and they paid a horrible price for it.*

Let's understand deception can lead us down a road where there is a horrible price to pay! Let's go to Numbers chapter 13. We're going to skip through Numbers and then jump into chapter 14 and I will try to remember to key the verses as we go. Let's read the first two verses of Numbers chapter 13 to set the context. Israel is now coming on the east side of Jordan. They're getting close to the Promised Land. They've come out of Egypt and Moses is going to send a troop of men, forty men, into the Promised Land to spy it out.

***Numbers 13:1.** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, 2) Send [you] men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall [you] send a man, every one a ruler among them [a leader]. (KJV)*

So he picked leaders from every tribe—a number of them.

Verse 8:

***Numbers 13:18.** And see the land, what it is; and the people that [dwell] therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; 19) And what the land is that they dwell in, whether [it's] good or bad; and what cities [there are] that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; 20) And what the land is, whether [it's] fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be [you] of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land [meaning, bring samples back to the congregation]. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes. (KJV)*

Verse 25:



**Numbers 13:25.** *And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. 26) And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. (KJV)*

Verse 27:

**Numbers 13:27.** *And they told him, and said, We came to the land [where you sent] us, and surely it [flows] with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. (KJV)*

And undoubtedly they spread it out on the ground in front of all the people.

Verse 28—now things begin to change:

**Numbers 13:28:** *Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak (KJV)*

They were a tribe of giant men, very large men.

**Numbers 13:29.** *The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. (KJV)*

Verse 30; now people are starting to get upset a little bit, so Caleb jumps in here:

**Numbers 13:30.** *And [he] stilled the people before Moses, and [he] said, [Let's] go up at once [to] possess it; [we're able] well able to overcome it. 31) But the men that went up with him said, [We're] not able to go against [this] people; [they're] stronger than we. 32) And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that [eats] up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. 33) And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, (KJV)*

I doubt that was the case. People exaggerate for effect. They weren't like grasshoppers, but these guys were a lot bigger. That's for sure. And they said:

**Numbers 13:33b.** *and so we were in their sight. (KJV)*

"They were looking down upon us. We were just meat for their table."

Now chapter 14 verse 1:

**Numbers 14:1.** *And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2) And all the children of Israel murmured*

*against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! (KJV)*

Man! Notice what a few negative words can have in the minds of people! Verse 3:

**Numbers 14:3.** *And [why has God] brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? [Wasn't] it better for us [that we should] return [to] Egypt? 4) And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, (KJV)*

"We don't want this Moses or Aaron. We don't want the guys that God chose." They said, "Let's make us a captain and we're going to go marching back to Egypt." It got so bad! And when Moses and Aaron heard this in verse 5:

**Numbers 14:5.** *[They] fell on their faces before the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. (KJV)*

They prayed.

**Numbers 14:6.** *And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, [they tore] their clothes: 7) And they spoke unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is [exceedingly] good [it's a wonderful] land. 8) If the LORD [delights] in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it [to] us; (KJV)*

Just like He did when they left Egypt! Same power, same miracles! But they forgot!

He says, "He will give it to us, "a land which [flows] with milk and honey." Verse 9, he says:

**Numbers 14:9.** *Only rebel [you not] against the LORD, (KJV)*

"Don't rebel against God. Don't listen to these deceivers." He says,

**Numbers 14:9b.** *neither fear [you] the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not. (KJV)*

Just like in Egypt! He's hearkening back. "We will go through them like flour through a sieve. It's not going to be a problem." Verse 10:

**Numbers 14:10.** *But all the congregation [wanted to] stone them with stones. And the glory of the [Eternal] appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children (KJV)*

That was the only thing that stopped this! That God's glory—we don't know exactly how He manifested Himself, but it could have been a glow; it could have been smoke; it could have been a fire; it could have noise—we don't know—or all of that!

Verse 22, God is now speaking.

***Numbers 14:22.*** *Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; (KJV)*

This is what they got!

***Numbers 14:23.*** *Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24) But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and [has] followed me fully, him will I bring into the land [where] he went; and his seed shall possess it. (KJV)*

Now think about this: Israel was deceived at the very last minute! They were right at the cusp of crossing the Jordan and going into the Promised Land. The Promised Land was theirs! And remember, the Promised Land is a type of the Kingdom! It is a type of God's Kingdom. Therefore, the lesson we can learn is that we can miss the Kingdom through deception if we are not careful and we can do so at the very last minute!

And I don't think any of us doubts that we're in the last days. I mean you look at what's going on in the world today and what's happening in our nation and how fast it's going down. We are in the last days.

And so this Fourth Point of Israel missing the Kingdom at the very last minute, obviously, has application for us today.

Now that leads us to the Fifth Point. What about the New Testament Church?

***V. The New Testament Church from the very beginning was in danger by deception. And it worked!***

Let's go to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and read the first two verses. What was happening is that there were deceivers who were writing letters as though they came from the apostles and sending them out to the Churches to deceive the Churches.

This was serious stuff back in those days. They didn't have television. They didn't have telephones. They didn't have the internet. And messages were the only way to communicate with the outlying Churches. And so, deceivers were caught up into that. Where did the thought come from? But deceivers began writing false letters and were pretending to be apostles.

2 Thessalonians 2, the first two verses, Paul is saying:

***II Thessalonians 2:1. [We now] beseech you, brethren, (KJV)***

Of the Thessalonica Church because there was a danger! He says:

***II Thessalonians 2:1: We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [or concerning when Christ is going to come], and by our gathering together to [see] him, (KJV)***

Uh oh! Well, somebody's saying that "Christ is here. Christ is there. Christ is coming." Verse 2:

***II Thessalonians 2:2. That [we] be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, [Notice this!] nor by letter as from us [as though it comes from us], as that the day of Christ is at hand. (KJV)***

So there were letters going around saying, "You've got to go here. You've got to go there. Christ is coming next week. Christ is coming in a month. I've got it all figured out by the calendar that this is when He's going to be coming and this is where He's going to return to. Leave your jobs. Go out and meet Christ."

Now this has happened in the modern day Church! I can remember people going out into the wilderness. This was back in the 70's and 80's, leaving the Church. Several hundred went into the wilderness in the Middle East. And some others in the United States saying, "Christ is going to be on this mountain. He's going to come on such and such a day." And none of that happened! This is exactly what was happening back then.

And I'm telling you, "It's going to happen again!" You just watch. It's going to happen again. A letter as though somebody is saying, "Well, I was praying last night and Christ spoke to me." Or "I had a vision and Christ came to me and told me to do this or told me to do that or told me to tell all of you. And if you don't do this, you're going to be left behind. Or if you don't go here, you're not going to the Place of Safety." It's going to happen again. You just watch!

So the Fifth Point is:

***V. The New Testament Church was in danger of deception.***

And we know that. We have a time limit here, but we could go through Scripture after Scripture after Scripture in the New Testament Church about deceivers and about people falling away and being dragged away.

Now that leads us to the Sixth Point.

***VI. God warns us that many will deceive many.***

God warns us that many people will deceive many people. Now Christ, when He walked this earth, in one sermon, He warned of that three times in one sermon. We know God repeats things for emphasis twice. He says in Matthew 7 "by their

fruits you shall know them" twice. But in this case, Christ said it three times. Let's go to Matthew 24, talking about the end time. That is the subject—the end time. Matthew 24, we're going to read first verses 4 and 5.

***Matthew 24:4.*** *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceives you. (KJV)*

Now we need to listen to this!

***Matthew 24:4b.*** *Take heed that no man deceives you. (KJV)*

He's saying two things. Deception is going to come and it's going to come from a man. Now we already know who is motivating the man, but it's going to come from a man. Verse 5:

***Matthew 24:5.*** *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; (KJV)*

They're going to preach Christ! They're going to preach in many cases the Truth about Christ from the Bible.

***Matthew 24:5b.*** *saying I am Christ; [but He said in doing so, they] shall deceive [not a few, but] many. (KJV)*

That's the first time He says it. Now look at verse 11.

***Matthew 24:11.*** *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. (KJV)*

False prophets saying, "I've got it figured out. I've got a new understanding here. God's revealed it to me and this is going to happen and that's going to happen. And you've got to go here and you've got to do that." Or you have to change this or change that. Second time!

Look at verse 24:

***Matthew 24:24.*** *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; (KJV)*

Now let's just stop there. Think about this: There's going to be false prophets, but there's also going to be false Christs. Meaning: People are going to say, "I am Christ's representative. Christ talked to me. I had a vision. I had...." You know reminds you of the gold plates in the Mormon tradition. "I had this. I have seen that. I have heard this. I am Christ's man on earth. The words that come out of my mouth are directly from Jesus Christ." So let's understand:

***Matthew 24:24b.*** *[they] will show great signs and wonders; (KJV)*

Meaning: There might be miracles associated with this! There might be things that get people kind of wondering, "What's going on?" And He says:

**Matthew 24:24b.** *[They're going to] show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* (KJV)

Now what He is saying is the every elect are not going to be deceived, as we will see, because they have their mind; they have their heart, they have their intelligence; they have their vision on God's Word. And they have a close relationship with God that they know the Truth and they're not going to be deceived.

So Christ warned three times in one sermon. Then He did it again! Let's go to Luke chapter 21 and we're going to read verses 5 through 8. Luke 21 verse 5, setting the context:

**Luke 21:5.** *And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts,* (KJV)

You know, "How marvelous this Temple is! How beautiful it is!" And it was beautiful. But in verse 6, notice what he said:

**Luke 21:6.** *As for these things which [you] behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* (KJV)

Referring to what was going to happen in 70 AD. Verse 7:

**Luke 21:7.** *And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be [when the Temple will be thrown down]? [But they also said,] and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? 8) And he said, Take heed that [you are] not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time [draws] near: go [you] not therefore after them.* (KJV)

Don't follow them! And that applies to us today. They were concerned about when the Temple was going to be torn down. We're concerned about when Christ returns, but the principle still holds. Don't go after them if they say something that's contrary to what you read in the Bible.

Just like that man of God was told by God directly—Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament—"Don't stay in Bethel. Don't eat there. Don't drink there." And then this false prophet comes and tells him something different—different than what God told him.

Now it applies to us today that what we read in the Bible. If somebody says, "Well, I've got a new vision. The plan is changed. God's revealed something to me." We should be close enough to God that we do not listen to that.

Notice a prophecy for our day in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 1. 1 Timothy 4 and verse 1, I'm here to tell you that this has already happened and it is happening as we speak. 1 Timothy 4 and verse 1:

**1 Timothy 4:1.** Now the Spirit [speaks] expressly, that in the latter times (KJV)

It couldn't be any more clear!

**1 Timothy 4:1b.** some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons]; (KJV)

"Doctrines of demons" come from Satan himself.

"Seducing spirits", it is very interesting what that Greek word "seducing" means. It's Strong's 4108. And it's the Greek word *planos*. And it means "misleading, leading to error." Or it can apply to a person meaning "a corrupter, a deceiver, or an imposter."

And there are seducing spirits out there, spirits inside human beings that make them deceivers and imposters and corrupters. And yet, they "appear as angels of light." Yet, they are in "sheep's clothing, but they are ravening wolves" inside. This is, as I said, happening to God's people today as we speak.

Now let's go to 2 Peter chapter 2. Peter had something to say about this and it applies to us today. He was warning the New Testament Church and he was warning the New Testament Church in his day and the New Testament Church in our day. 2 Peter 2, we're going to read the first three verses and then jump to verse 10. He says:

**2 Peter 2:1.** But there were false prophets also among the people, (KJV)

We just read of one.

**2 Peter 2:1b.** even as there shall be false teachers among you, (KJV)

Meaning: in your midst.

**2 Peter 2:1 continued.** who [privately] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the [Eternal] that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (KJV)

He's setting the stage of what's going to happen. Verse 2:

**2 Peter 2:2.** And many shall follow their pernicious (KJV)

I'm reading out of the King James. It means "lascivious":

**2 Peter 2:2b.** ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (KJV)

And we've seen that. When somebody says, "You can't speak to your mom and dad because they're not of our fellowship," boy, the Truth is easily evil spoken of when somebody does that!

Verse 3:

**2 Peter 2:3.** *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: (KJV)*

"Oh, you've got to stay with us! If you go anywhere else, you're not going to be in the Place of Safety. You're not going to be in the Kingdom of God."

**2 Peter 3:3b.** *whose judgment now of a long time [lingers] not, and their damnation [slumbers] not. (KJV)*

Verse 10:

**2 Peter 2:10.** *But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. (KJV)*

The New International says, "despise authority." "Nobody's going to tell me what to do!"

**2 Peter 2:10b.** *Presumptuous are they, [Notice this!] self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (KJV)*

As the King James says; the Greek means government or dominion. Thereby, causing division! They're not afraid to speak about that and they cause division as a result.

**2 Peter 2:11.** *Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the [Eternal]. 12) But these, as natural brute beasts, (KJV)*

We would refer to them today as "tares."

**2 Peter 2:11b.** *made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; (KJV)*

Tares going into the Lake of Fire!

Verse 13:

**2 Peter 2:13.** *[They] shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they count it pleasure to riot in the day time. (KJV)*

Now notice it tells us who these people are.



**2 Peter 2:13b.** Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; (KJV)

They're in our midst! And I'm speaking of the greater Church of God. They are scattered everywhere!

Verse 14:

**2 Peter 2:14.** Having eyes full of adultery, (KJV)

That can be physical adultery, but spiritual adultery is what? Having itching ears, wanting to go after new teachings that are not true! Same thing! It can apply in a dual way—physical or spiritual.

**2 Peter 2:14.** Having [itching ears] full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable [lives]: (KJV)

Unstable people, in other words, people who are not grounded in the Truth, people who have drifted away from God, people who are not praying and studying as they should, not putting God first in their lives.

He says:

**2 Peter 2:14b.** an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; [they are] cursed children: (KJV)

Pretty strong language from the apostle Peter! Very strong language!

Therefore, because of what we've read, we should not be astonished if and when we find this in the middle of God's Church. It's prophesied. It's there. It's going to happen. I mean look at the warnings in the New Testament.

Let's go to Ephesians 5 and verse 6, the Church at Ephesus.

Again, we're going to go through four Scriptures, each to a different Church or to the Church at large, and each one talks about deception! It is a big warning throughout the New Testament.

Ephesians 5 and verse 6, it says:

**Ephesians 5:6.** Let no man deceive you with vain words: (KJV)

Don't do it!

**Ephesians 5:6b.** for because of these things cometh the wrath of God [on] the children of disobedience. (KJV)

Men with vain, empty words! Vain means empty, not of substance, not based on the Bible.

2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 3 to the Church at Thessalonica, Paul wrote a letter to Ephesus warning them. He's writing to the Church, the second letter to the Church in Thessalonica. 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 3, he's warning them. He says:

***II Thessalonians 2:3.*** *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, (KJV)*

And where have the tens and tens and tens and tens of thousands gone? You know after the death of Mr. Armstrong, to today? Great falling away!

***II Thessalonians 2:3b.*** *and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (KJV)*

Since Mr. Armstrong's death, depending on how you count the numbers, fifty thousand, a hundred thousand have fallen away! They're not here any longer.

Now notice what he says to Timothy. He's instructing a young minister. 2 Timothy chapter 3, we're going to read verses 12 and 13. Timothy traveled. Timothy was Paul's messenger and he wanted Timothy to espouse the same warning and the same message. 2 Timothy 3 verses 12 and 13, he says:

***2 Timothy 3:12.*** *[Yes], and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (KJV)*

That's going to happen, has happened down through the centuries. Verse 13:

***2 Timothy 3:13.*** *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, (KJV)*

But notice this! They are deceiving other people, but he says:

***2 Timothy 3:13b.*** *[they're] being deceived. (KJV)*

Satan deceives men. They're deceived. And then they go on to deceive other people who are deceived in addition. The mass of people being deceived is going to grow and grow and grow. And Paul is saying to Timothy, "We've got to stop this. You've got to do what you can to ground the people in the Truth so that they are not shaken, so that they are not deceived."

And then finally let's go to 1 John chapter 3 verse 7. John writing to the Church at large, he, again, this is one of the last epistles written and the message is the same! Take care about deception. "Take heed," as Christ said. 1 John 3 verse 7:

***I John 3:7.*** *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that [does] righteousness is righteous, even as he [It should be a capital H. Jesus Christ is] righteous. (KJV)*

What he's saying to you: "Don't be deceived. If somebody claims to be righteous, in their personal life, they better be righteous." Can't just speak the words! Just can't say, "Well, you ought to be doing this and you ought to be doing that." He's saying, "You look into their personal life because in their personal life they're righteous there also." No double standards! We have to live it as well as talk about it!

We have to live it as well as preach it! And it's a double burden on those who preach because their condemnation is a greater condemnation. But shame on them if they say one thing and do something else!

And so he is saying, "Be careful that no man deceive you and you judge it by the fruits." "He that claims to be righteous is righteous." Meaning: in his deeds, in his actions, in his words.

So let's understand the Sixth Point is that:

*VI. God warns us that many are going to deceive many.*

Now, let's look at the Seventh and Last Point.

*VII. What are the areas where deception can occur?*

Obviously, they can occur in just about every area. But what are the areas where deception can occur particularly in our day?

Let's go to Ephesians 4 and verse 14, again another warning. And then we're going to amplify that warning into specifics. Ephesians 4 and verse 14, Paul says:

***Ephesians 4:14.*** *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro [meaning unstable], and carried about with every wind of doctrine, (KJV)*

Teaching, new understanding, new teaching, carrying people this way and that way as the wind blows leaves!

***Ephesians 4:14b.*** *[and] by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (KJV)*

"The sleight of men and cunning craftiness" meaning: they want to take a following; they want to take people after themselves. And they will deceive and they're laying in wait to deceive, but they're motivated by Satan. As we'll see, in many cases they don't realize it. It's all of our faults. Shame on us if we're deceived! But we'll get into that in just a minute.

Now let's understand that there are ways we can be deceived today. In looking around and talking to the people that I talk to and frankly, seeing a few people walk away, a few people go in directions that you just scratch your head, and you

think, "Oh, my! There's going to be a horrible price to pay!" Let's look at a couple of areas.

The first one is:

- 1. We see people focus on a man and on an organization, instead of focusing on God and Christ.*

That's one thing we try as hard as we know how in the Pacific Church of God. We do not focus on men and we do not focus on an organization. We must have our focus on Jesus Christ and on God the Father. But there are people out there that focus, rather than on the Bible and God and Christ, they focus on a human leader or they focus on a human organization.

Several out there have appointed themselves—and I say that, I mean that, I'm saying it on purpose—have appointed themselves as apostles and saying, "I'm the leader of the New Testament Church. The mantle has been passed to me after Mr. Armstrong's death. I am the only representative of Christ on the face of the earth! Our group is the only group that Christ is dealing with at this time! And if you're not part of our group, you're going into the Lake of Fire! Or you're going into the tribulation." And there's obviously some fear tactics there, but it is also having people look to a man. And that is a huge deception!

And some people even go so far, because they're deceived into thinking they're being loyal to God by actually being loyal to a man, is they put the words of the man, the human leader, above the words of the Bible!

And I had an instance the other day. Someone asked a member of our group and said, "Do you believe that every word Mr. Armstrong said is true?" And the woman thought about it for a minute and she says, "Well, no. He was a human. He made mistakes like we all did." And I think we know that. If you read Mr. Armstrong's words, he made mistakes! He was a human. And this other person got very quiet and then implied if you don't believe every word Mr. Armstrong said, you're going to go into the Lake of Fire! Equating what he said to the level of the Bible, the canonized Bible of God's Word! And so, you, therefore, must study every word that Mr. Armstrong wrote.

And what I find and as I come in contact with people, they study the booklets and the articles that Mr. Armstrong wrote and only study the Bible as they appear in those booklets and articles! In other words, if a statement is made and then there's a Scripture, they'll go look up the Scripture, but then go back to the booklet. And the booklet is the source. It is the foundation, rather than the Bible being the foundation. And they don't study the Bible as the Bible. But they use the Bible only in relation to the booklets that are produced by this leader.

And some did that to Mr. Armstrong and others are doing it to leaders today. That they study what the leader writes and only use the Bible when it's mentioned in the booklets or the articles written by a man! And by doing so, what they're doing is they're putting the sayings of a man above the sayings of God and the Bible. That is blasphemy! And they're being led astray. They're being

deceived by thinking that "We're so loyal! We're loyal to God by being loyal to this organization and being loyal to this man." And it is a focus on a man and an organization and they will go into a ditch. They will go into a ditch!

And we cannot do that! We have to be God-centered and Christ-centered. And boy, if we find something in the Bible, we better obey it! We better obey all the Bible—not just part of the Bible! And not selectively choose bits and pieces of the Bible that satisfy maybe a predetermined notion, or something we want to accomplish, or an agenda that we might have. We have to look at the entire Bible! And we try our very best to look at all the Bible and to do it God's way and not the way that seems right to a man. That's one area where people can go astray focusing on a man and an organization.

*2. Others focus on knowledge as though knowledge will get them into the Kingdom of God.*

Now it's not wrong to have knowledge. But if your prime focus is on history, archeology, and Greek and Hebrew, it's not wrong to study that, but if you study that to the exclusion of everything else just to be able to spout dates and places and Greek and Hebrew or to be able to impress people by quoting great parts of the Bible just from your head, if that is the purpose, then that's the wrong purpose. Just the acquisition of knowledge will lead people astray. Yes, we have to have knowledge. Yes, we need to study Greek and Hebrew and archeology and history, but that can't be the main focus of our study as we're going to see in just a minute what our focus ought to be. That's a second way.

A third way is by:

*3. Majoring in the minors by making relatively small things gigantic things. Thereby you replace the important things with these small things.*

There are people that spend great amounts of hours and days and weeks talking about conspiracy theories. "Oh, there's this underground organization that's controlling the finances and controlling government and deciding who's going to get elected and deciding all the policies and manipulating the European Union" and all of this kind of stuff. Well, that may be. We don't know. And if it is or it isn't, it doesn't make any difference because God's will is going to be done! And if God's using some shadow organization to fulfill His wishes, then fine. We don't need to study it or investigate it. We don't need to spend hours doing that as opposed to studying the Bible.

You know one-world government—same thing! And then people that get involved in politics. I can't believe the number of e-mails I get! "Well, the Democrats are doing this" or "the Tea-Partyers are doing that" or the Republicans are doing this". And it just goes on and on and on. And you can tell people are getting all wrapped up in it! And they want this guy elected and they want that person not elected and they're spending all this time getting involved in politics and particularly U.S. politics—but I assume it happens in other parts of the world too—that it gets people's focus off the important things!

We have people paying attention to minute details of prophecy, minute details of teaching. We're not talking salvational doctrines, but way out on the twigs and the little tiny leaves and forgetting the trunk of the tree. Mr. Armstrong says, "Focus on the trunk of the tree! Don't get out on a little twig because you're going to fall off! It's not going to support you." And then minute details! "Well, the place of safety is here," or "There's two 144,000 and not one 144,000" and there's this and that and endless arguments and debates and research and to what purpose? Not that we shouldn't study prophecy. But if that's our focus, then shame on us.

Then we have people majoring in the minors that get all focused on what other groups are doing or what other leaders are doing or what this group's saying or what that group's saying when, you know, that's God's responsibility. We have no control over any of that!

And we shouldn't spend endless hours focusing on other people or other groups because you see what happens is by majoring in the minors and by focusing on men and an organization or by just the acquisition of knowledge, it deflects us from the prime thing we should be doing! And that is: Changing ourselves to be in the image of Jesus Christ!

And what Satan wants is to get us all on these other areas and focus all of our time and all of our energy and pointing fingers and all of that instead of looking at ourselves and asking the question: "Where do I need to change to be in the image of Christ so when the wedding supper occurs, He will recognize me and will want to marry me?" Spending time with all of these things rather than changing who we are!

So what we need to focus on, rather than all of this, is the following. It is very simple. The Bible talks about the simplicity that's in Christ. You don't need a Greek scholar to teach us the Truth. You don't need to go to seminary to understand the Truth. There is a simplicity in the Bible, if we focus on the trunk of the tree.

Let's go to Matthew chapter 22 and we're going to read verses 35 and 40. You know where I'm going but this is the trunk of the tree. This is what we have to focus on and not be deceived into going other areas. Matthew 22 beginning in verse 35, it says:

**Matthew 22:35.** *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, [testing] him [Jesus Christ], and saying, (KJV)*

Verse 36 of Matthew 22, I mean this is the important thing. He's asking an important question. His motive was not right, but he's asking the right question.

**Matthew 22:36.** *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37) [And Christ] said unto him, [You shall] love the Lord [your] God with all [your] heart, with all [your life], and with all [your] mind. 38) This is the first and great commandment. (KJV)*

When are we going to get it? It's not white sugar! It's not health foods! It's not when we have services! It's not where the Feast is going to be! It's not any of that. It's when are we going to love God with everything we have! When is that going to happen? And I'm saying, "It better happen right now!" That should be our prime motivation.

But then Christ says, "That's not enough!"

***Matthew 22:39.*** [He said] the second is like unto it, (KJV)

He could have stopped right there you see, but He chose not to because He's amplifying. He said, "The second is very close, very similar."

***Matthew 22:39b.*** [You shall] love [your neighbor] as [yourself]. (KJV)

Not just your Church member, but your neighbor as yourself!

He goes on to say:

***Matthew 22:40.*** On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (KJV)

Every one of them hang on these two. And shame on us if we don't focus on these two, if we don't do that! And that we know that these two sum up the Ten. We're not ignoring the Ten. They sum up the Ten.

"You shall have no other gods before Me"—First Commandment. "No other gods before Me!" Well, we have to be careful that we don't make our desires our god, our wants our god.

The Second one: "Don't make unto Me any graven image. Don't bow down to anything but Me!" So, do we bow down to the world and its influence? Do we bow down to television and the morals of the world?

You can't take the LORD'S, your God's name in vain. He will not hold somebody guiltless that does that. Do we take God's name in vain by claiming to be a Christian and then acting otherwise? Shame on us!

"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Do we pursue our pleasures on the Sabbath as we find in Isaiah 58? Or do we pursue what we really need to be pursuing on holy time?

Honoring your father and mother—that could be a sin of omission. Have a sermon on that shortly, the sins of omission. But by neglecting father or mother we can sin by omission. My mom and dad aren't here. I wish I could show them the respect they deserve, but they're not here any longer. So those of you who have moms and dads, who are alive, don't neglect the time.

"You shall not kill." We can kill people's reputation through slander and through gossip.

"You shall not commit adultery." Well, what did Christ say the source of adultery was? Lust—lust for power, lust for prestige, lust for a lot of things! And so, we have to focus on the Ten!

Shall not steal. Taking credit for somebody else's idea, taking credit for something that's not ours! That happens all the time in business. Hopefully it doesn't happen in the Church!

Bear false witness against your neighbor. What's my motivation in doing so? What's my motivation? Do I have to lie so that my pride isn't hurt? So that when I made a mistake I don't have to admit it? And so, I blame it on other people and, in that sense, I bear false witness.

Coveting. Coveting occurs in the mind. It's the only one of the Ten that in the Old Testament times that talked about the mind, what goes on between the ears. So let's understand.

Let's go to Matthew 23 and verse 23. Christ is saying, "These two commandments hinge everything!" And then He said something very profound in Matthew 23 and verse 23 that we cannot ignore now. We just can't. Matthew 23 and verse 23, the whole chapter He's railing on the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. And He is telling them, "Woe, you vipers, you snakes, you scoundrels!" And He's warning the people, "Don't do what they do. Don't follow their example." Verse 23:

***Matthew 23:23.*** *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for [you] pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, (KJV)*

And notice what they are! Three:

***Matthew 23:23b.*** *judgment, (KJV)*

Judgment which really should be translated "justice." That means being fair in everything we do.

***Matthew 23:23 continued:*** *mercy, (KJV)*

Willing to forgive, willing to look the other way if somebody insults us or hurts us.

***Matthew 23:23 continued:*** *and faith: (KJV)*

This is in addition—this is an overview of the Ten. Because by applying spiritually the Ten and applying the two, we arrive at justice; we arrive at mercy; we arrive at faith. Those are the weightier matters of the Law.

Now, yes, we still have to count out the leaves and make sure we tithe properly. But I'm telling you, "Compared to justice, mercy, and faith, barley, grain, and sugar don't come up to that level!" And we get off the track so easily!



Notice a final Scripture under this last point. We'll go to James chapter 1 and we're going to read verses 22 through 25. This time out of the New King James because it's a little more clear. We cannot ignore this Scripture. We can't just talk about God's Word. We have to live and do it! James 1 verse 22, he says:

**James 1:22.** *But be [you] doers of the word, and not hearers only, [Notice what he said!] deceiving [yourselves]. (NKJ)*

If somebody thinks that they can get up and preach the word and then that wipes away all their private sins because they're doing something for God, they're deceiving themselves! You have to do it. And he says the greater condemnation is the teachers because if you teach and you don't do, there's a greater condemnation. Verse 23:

**James 1:23.** *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing [himself] in a mirror; 24) for he observes himself, [and he] goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. (KJV)*

In other words, he does not see himself! He's looking in the mirror but does not see himself. That means he is deceived. He looks in the mirror and sees one thing, but it's not there. He's being deceived.

He says:

**James 1:25.** *But he who looks into [this] perfect law of liberty and continues in it [meaning doing it], [he's] not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in [his doing]. (NKJ)*

Now let's understand. We have been deceived in the past. We all have. We've been deceived since we've been baptized. We've been deceived sometimes when we've been in God's Church. And shame on us though if we are deceived now because we should know better by now.

Mr. Armstrong said—he pointed out the great danger in deception. Mr. Armstrong said, "Someone who is deceived does not know they are deceived because are deceived." If you are deceived, you don't know it because deception is deception. And if you're under deception, you don't know it. You think you're doing right but you don't know it and therein lies the danger of being deceived!

That's why—we won't turn there, but—the Scripture we read before Passover, 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5, says, "Examine yourself whether or not you be in the faith." And he says, "Don't you know your own selves how that if Christ is not in you, you are reprobates?" If you aren't led by the spirit of God, Christ being in you, you are reprobates. We don't want to be there. We don't want to do that. We can't do that.

Let's go to Psalm 91. We have two more Scriptures before we close. Psalm 91 and we're going to read the first nine verses. And I want you to read this in conjunction, with the background in your mind of everything we've covered. I want you to read this from the standpoint of deception and falling away because I think we have not fully applied this Scripture as God intended. We've applied part of it, but not all of it. Psalm 91 verse 1:

***Psalm 91:1.*** He that [dwells] in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (KJV)

Very familiar set of Scriptures!

***Psalm 91:2.*** I will say of the [Eternal], He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3) Surely he shall deliver [you] from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4) He shall cover [you] with his feathers, and under his wings [shall you] trust: his truth shall be [your] shield and buckler. (KJV)

The Truth that's in the Bible! Verse 5:

***Psalm 91:5.*** [You shall] not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that [flies] by day; 6) Nor for the pestilence that [walks] in darkness; nor for the destruction [We'll come back to that word in a minute.] that [wastes] at noonday. (KJV)

Then we go on and read:

***Psalm 91:7.*** A thousand shall fall at [your] side, and ten thousand at [your] right hand; it shall not come [near you]. 8) [But] Only with [your] eyes [shall you] behold and see the reward of the wicked. 9) Because [you have] made the [Eternal], which is my refuge, even the most High, [your] habitation; (KJV)

Now when I came in the Church, this Scripture was often quoted about the end time and regarding war. We're going to see people dying through war and through pestilence and all of that. And I'm not minimizing that at all. We have assumed that this Scripture referred totally to warfare.

But I'm going to ask the question. Could it be that this Scripture also refers to those who fall by our sides from deception and who leave the Truth? Could it be that? Could it refer to God's people being lost by falling away?

Because He says, "Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday." Well, "destruction" can be the destruction of God's people because we know what Christ told us again in the Parable of the Sheepfold that one of the things the thief wants to do is to destroy God's people.

"A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand by your right hand." Those are people we went to the Feast with! They were right beside us. We walked into the big buildings together arm in arm in many cases. We walked out to the

parking lots together right by our side. And they're not here anymore. They're not here.

So we have to realize that we can be part of those tens of thousands that have fallen by the wayside, if we're not careful, through deception. And let's understand that Psalm 91 is not just talking about physical warfare. It's talking about spiritual warfare and destruction from spiritual warfare! Let's understand that!

And let's understand that we have to come close to God and be closer and closer and closer to God so that we will not be deceived as so many have been in the past.

Now let's go back where we started in Matthew 24 and we're going to read verse 4 and verse 24 again just for emphasis.

***Matthew 24:4.*** *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. (KJV)*

Now how do we overcome deception? How do we not be deceived?

By taking heed, by being aware, by not being naïve, by understanding there are tares out there. Satan is out there. Demons are out there. People being motivated by Satan and his demons are out there. Just because it appears on the internet, just because it appears on television, just because somebody says it, or you read it in a booklet doesn't mean it's true! It's only true if it corresponds with the Word of God.

Verse 24:

***Matthew 24:24.*** *[There] shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (KJV)*

Let's take heed, as Christ said, and make sure that we are among "the very elect."