

Can We Today be as Deceived as Ancient Israel?

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We're going to begin the sermon today with a true story that pertains to the lessons that we need to learn during the Spring Holy Days. So, let's go back in time to ancient Israel and turn to Exodus chapter 2. And we're going to look at ancient Israel by way of introduction to see some of the things that they went through that might pertain to us today.

Let's go to Exodus chapter 2 and we're breaking into the context where Israel was in hard bondage and they were crying out to God and God heard their cry. We'll read verses 23 through 25 of Exodus 2.

Exodus 2:23. *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. (KJV)*

And the wonderful thing is that this sighing and crying God heard in verse 24.

Exodus 2:24. *[He] heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, [and] Isaac, and Jacob. 25) And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them. (KJV)*

He heard. He cared. And not only did He hear, but He answered.

Now, let's go to Exodus chapter 3 and we're going to read verses 9 and 10. We break into a talk that God is having with Moses. And He says:

Exodus 3:9. *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (KJV)*

Verse 10, He says:

Exodus 3:10. *Come now therefore, and I will send [you] unto Pharaoh, that [you may] bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. (KJV)*

God heard and God answered.

Then let's move to Exodus chapter 12 and see how He answered. And we'll read verses 41 and 42—what we commemorated last night. Exodus 12 verse 41:

Exodus 12:41. *And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the [Eternal] went out from the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

Exodus 12 verse 42:

Exodus 12:42. *It is a night to be much observed unto the [Eternal] for bringing them [forth] out from the land of Egypt: this is [a] night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations. (KJV)*

Now after coming out of Egypt, after all of the miracles in Egypt, and then the miracles in coming out of Egypt, you would think that Israel would be obedient and joyous and happy and thankful. But let's see what happened one week after they came out of Egypt. Let's turn to chapter 14 now and we're going to read verses 10 through 12. And, as you know, Pharaoh was coming in hot pursuit. We're breaking into this context, but notice Israel's attitude at this moment in time—less than a week after all the miracles.

Exodus 14:10. *And when Pharaoh drew [near], the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

Now, did they cry out in faith saying, "We know God's going to take care of us. We don't have anything to worry about. He's taken care of us before. Look at the miracles He did in Egypt."? No.

Verse 11:

Exodus 14:11. *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, [have you] taken us away to die in the wilderness? [Why have you] dealt [this way] with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? (KJV)*

Verse 12:

Exodus 14:12. *Is not this the word that we did tell [you] in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? (KJV)*

That's found back in chapter 6 and verse 9. They said, "We don't want to follow God. We want to stay where we are."

Exodus 14:12b. *For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (KJV)*

And it's very obvious that Israel was not ready to give their lives to follow God if necessary. They didn't have to. God took care of them, of course. We know that. But they weren't even close to being ready to follow God no matter what.

Then, let's look at—taking this thread of story now—let's look one month after leaving Egypt at chapter 16. And we're going to read verses 2 and 3. We break into a context where Israel was hungry. And in verse 2 of Exodus 16, we're told:

Exodus 16:2. *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*

3) And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the [Eternal] in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for [you] have brought us [out] into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. (KJV)

I mean this is after Pharaoh's army was destroyed. This is after the Ten Plagues. This is after other miracles. And what were they doing? They were remembering fondly their time in slavery! They were remembering fondly their time in Egypt.

Now, let's ask the question: Could we be just as deceived as they were deceived? Could we remember our time in the world, or parts of our time in the world, just as fondly? Want to go back into the world in certain situations, certain cases?

This was just one month after leaving Egypt. And despite all of God's mercy, after all of this, being rescued time after time, guess what Israel wanted to do next? They wanted to go back and worship idols! Now think about that. After all that God had done for them, they wanted to go back and worship idols.

Now, before we go to that account, let's establish the fact that Israel had a history of worshipping idols while they were in Egypt because Israel lost the identity of the Sabbath while they were slaves in Egypt. And we know God later had to restore the identity of the Sabbath in part through the miracle of manna. The fact is though—and this is something all of us have seen in the past—if you lose the identity of the Sabbath, you lose the identity of God. Israel lost the identity of the Sabbath and therefore, they lost the identity of God while they were in Egypt. And Israel undoubtedly worshipped idols when they were in Egypt.

You can keep your finger here in Exodus, but let's go quickly to Joshua chapter 24 and verse 14 and see where we are told plainly in the Bible, Joshua 24 and verse 14. It is also mentioned again in Ezekiel chapter 20 verses 5 through 7. Joshua 24 and verse 14:

Joshua 24:14. *Now therefore fear the [Eternal], and serve him in sincerity and in truth [Israel is being told by Joshua.]: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt [he's saying]; and [he says, And you serve God Almighty, you] serve the LORD. (KJV)*

But they are being told here very plainly, "Put away the gods which your fathers served in Egypt." And so they had a history of doing that.

God, then, intervenes to their cry. God performs miracle after miracle after miracle, rescue after rescue. And then look what happens. Let's go to Exodus chapter 32. Moses left for an extended period of time. This is the first time that's happened. And notice how quickly they went aside. Exodus 32, we'll read the first eight verses.

Exodus 32:1. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the [mountain], the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, (KJV)*

And notice what it says here!

Exodus 32:1b. *...the man [who took] us out of ... Egypt, (KJV)*

God was not in their thoughts! They're saying, "This man that took us out of Egypt. We don't know where he went. He was traipsing up the mountain the last time we saw him. And this is the one that brought us out of Egypt." Didn't even give God credit! Didn't even think about God! Notice how quickly they're turning aside.

They say, "We don't know what became of him." Verse 2:

Exodus 32:2. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*

3) And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4) And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made a molten calf: and said, These be [your] gods, O Israel, which brought [you] up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)

Giving something made with human hands—made actually with their own material that they owned. All of a sudden now, this is the god that brought them out of Egypt. Now, when you think about it, it is incredible how the human mind works apart from God's spirit.

Verse 5:

Exodus 32:5. *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

Now this is just my speculation, but I think Aaron was trying to salvage as much of the situation as he could here by saying, "It's a feast unto God," although they're going to bow down before this golden calf.

Exodus 32:6. *And they rose up early [in the morning], and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. (KJV)*

If you read the commentaries, basically it's a polite King James way of saying they rose up to have an orgy.

And verse 7:

Exodus 32:7. *And the [Eternal] said unto Moses [now on the mountaintop], Go, get [you] down; for [the] people, which [you brought up] out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves so quickly]:
8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, [they've] worshipped it, [they] have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be [your] gods, O Israel, which have brought [you] up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

Now, stop and think for a minute. What was Israel doing? They were creating a god in their own image. They were creating a god that they wanted. And they were rejecting the true God.

We have to ask ourselves looking at that example: Could we do the same thing today? Thousands of years later, could we do the same thing?

Now, after all of this and after all of the trials and tribulations with Israel, God lamented that they would not change.

Let's now go to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and we're going to just skip through a few verses in Deuteronomy 32. God knew Israel, but He still lamented. He still wanted them to change. He wanted them to be obedient. He wanted them to be faithful. We're going to read, start in verses 20 and 21, Deuteronomy 32.

Deuteronomy 32:20. *And he said [God said], I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very [perverse] generation, children in whom is no faith. (KJV)*

Now obviously we've seen that in just what we've already read. They did not have faith in God. Verse 21:

Deuteronomy 32:21. *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; (KJV)*

In part because of that golden calf.

Deuteronomy 32:21b. *...they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (KJV)*

Now jumping to verse 25:

Deuteronomy 32:25. *The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the [nursing] also with the man of gray hairs. (KJV)*

Verse 26:

Deuteronomy 32:26. *I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: (KJV)*

Verse 28:

Deuteronomy 32:28. *For they are a nation void of counsel, (KJV)*

"They will not listen. They will not be instructed," God says.

Deuteronomy 32:28b. *...neither is there any understanding in them. (KJV)*

Understanding of God's way and God's plan and God's purpose. Verse 29:

Deuteronomy 32:29. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! (KJV)*

And, of course, God says that to all of us, to each one of us. We have to consider our latter end. And we need to hear counsel and be wise.

But you see Israel whined and complained about the consequences of their sin. Time after time after time after time, they whined and complained! But the fact is that they never saw the evil of their sins. They whined that they were being punished. They whined that they were reaping what they sowed, but they never understood the evil in the sins that they were doing.

And we have to ask the question with us, with each one of us at this time of the year: When we reap what we sow, do we whine to God because we're in pain? Or, do we go to God with humility because we see the evil we've done and we ask for His forgiveness and His mercy and for more of His spirit so that we don't repeat the process? We have to make sure that we do that.

But let's understand—we're still by way of introduction here; we haven't gotten to the point yet—but let's understand that Israel never learned and has to this day never repented. Never repented at all! The Jews, as well as the modern day Israelites, scattered all over the earth.

Let's go to Numbers chapter 21 and we're going to read verses 4 through 7. Israel never learned and never truly repented. Numbers 21 verse 4:

Numbers 21:4. *And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the [life] of the people was much discouraged because of the way. (KJV)*

Because it was a difficult walk. Now verse 5 of Numbers 21:

Numbers 21:5. *And the people spake against God, and against Moses, [Again saying, Why] have [you] brought us up out of [the land of] Egypt to die in the wilderness? (KJV)*

This is going on and on and on, time after time! They go on to say:

Numbers 21:5b. *...for [there's] no bread, [there's no] water; our [life loathes] this light bread. (KJV)*

Now the Hebrew word for "light" means worthless or contemptible. And they're calling manna, a gift from God—they don't have to go and till the ground. They don't have to fertilize it. They don't have to water it. They just walk out every morning and harvest it! And, yet, they're complaining, saying it's worthless and contemptible bread.

Verse 6:

Numbers 21:6. *And the [Eternal] sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and [many of the Israelites] died. (KJV)*

Verse 7:

Numbers 21:7. *Therefore... (KJV)*

Now, after people are dying all around, they've been bitten and they're suffering from the venom in their bodies. Now notice what happens.

Numbers 21:7. *Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the [Eternal], and against [you]; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. (KJV)*

And Moses did so and the serpents went away.

But why did they do that? They did it because they were in pain. They did it because people were dying. And they really didn't understand the evil in what they were doing. Because if they did, they wouldn't repeat it time after time after time. Because the next time they got they got thirsty or the next time they got hungry, they did exactly the same thing.

They were sorry because they were in pain. They were not sorry because they displeased their Father and they weren't willing to change. And we have to be very careful as we get closer to the end—and if you look at world conditions, we are getting closer and closer and closer—we have to make sure that we aren't deceived as they were. We aren't deceived to be sorry because of the pain we're in. We should not be deceived in that way. We should be sorry because we displeased God and we don't do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

And, as we know during the time of the Judges after Israel came into the Promised Land, I think we all know exactly the same thing happened again. We won't turn there, but a very familiar Scripture in Judges 17 and verse 6. It says,

"When there was no king in Israel," guess what the people did? "Everybody did that which was right in their own eyes." Didn't follow God. Didn't follow His Word.

And then they entered a series of cycles in the time of the Judges. They would sin. God would curse them and they would become oppressed. Then they would cry out to God as they did in Egypt. Then God heard and then God answered and God raised up a judge to rescue them. And then during the life of the judge, as long as he was alive, generally they at least on the surface followed God and there was a period of blessing and a period of peace. And then the judge would die. And after that they would go back into sin and evil. They would become oppressed again. And, then, the cycle would start all over. That's one huge message in the Book of Judges.

And one of the lessons you can come away from when you read Judges is that Israel was the standard and not God. The people were the standard and not God's Word, not God's way.

And so we have to ask ourselves again: Could we be that deceived? Is it possible that we could be substituting our standards in front of God's standards? We have to ask that and we should ask that during this period of examining ourselves.

And then, if we come to the New Testament, guess what the New Testaments says? It says, "These examples"—the ones that we've just read and many, many others—"are there for a reason." Let's go to 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 11. They are there for a very specific reason that applies to us today. We're still introducing the subject here.

1 Corinthians 10 and verse 11, Paul is telling the Corinthian Church—this very dysfunctional group of people—verse 11, he says:

1 Corinthians 10:11. Now all these things... (KJV)

Referring—they didn't have the New Testament back then—referring to Old Testament examples:

1 Corinthians 10:11. Now all these things happened unto them for [examples]: (KJV)

The Greek word can also mean "types."

1 Corinthians 10:11. Now all these things happened unto them for [examples] and they are written for our admonition, (KJV)

Meaning, he's talking to the Corinthians then, but by extension he's talking to us today.

1 Corinthians 10:11b. ...upon whom the ends of the world are come. (KJV)

So, we're a lot closer to the end of the world today than back then. So, it should apply even more to us. And when we look back in the Old Testament, it's telling us, "Hey! There are examples there for us that we need to pay attention to because they apply to us today."

And we have to ask the question. Israel was totally deceived. Could this be a warning—what we just read today—for us, the modern day Church, the greater Church of God today?

And when you look at what's happening in the greater Church of God today, all the above sounds like a lot is happening in the Church today. It applies to us today. Israel was deceived and didn't know. And, just from my viewpoint, many in the greater Church of God are spiritually deceived today and they don't know it. Just don't know it! And that notion is reinforced. We won't turn there again. We go there so often, Revelation 3 and verse 17. We're told in the letter to the Laodicean Church, it says:

Revelation 3:17. *Because [you say], I ... have need of nothing; (KJV)*

That means just like Israel! People back then wouldn't hear God's counsel. God lamented that they wouldn't hear His counsel. They wouldn't change.

And when you look at the greater Church of God today, the modern day Church, the same thing is true. The greater Church today is in need of many spiritual things right now. And that includes all of us! And me more than anybody else! We need very much spiritual food, spiritual energy, spiritual character right now more than ever before.

And so that leads us to the subject today. We have seen the deception that Israel was under. So, we ask the question:

Can we today—meaning the greater Church and us as individuals as we examine ourselves during the Days of Unleavened Bread—can we today be deceived as ancient Israel was deceived? Is that a possibility?

Now, based on what we have read this far, Israel didn't really like God's world. And they wanted to go back to their old world. And Israel wanted to create a god in their image and not accept God as He truly was. And Israel whined and complained about the consequences of their sins, but they never saw the evil of their own sins.

And so, we ask the question: Could we be as deceived today as they were? Is it possible?

Let's look at Four Ways that this could happen. We'll spend the rest of the sermon on these Four Ways that this could happen to us today.

Now, granted, Israel was in a different circumstance. It was a different culture. It was a different time. We are thousands of years down that road and we are in a different culture and a different time, but the danger is still the same. So, we have to ask ourselves: Could we be just as deceived today as they were back then?

The First Way that this could happen is:

I. Today we can be deceived by comparing ourselves with our brothers and sisters in the Church.

Now, we're told to examine ourselves, but what we often do is examine other people and not examine ourselves. We should be examining us, as individuals, looking inside as Stuart was talking about in his sermonette. The fact is, though, that if we take our eyes off examining ourselves and we look at other people and their sins, we can come away with the conclusion "Well, they're sins are greater than mine. Therefore, I'm okay. I'm not as bad as they are." And we can be deceived if we see other people's sins as "greater." And I say, and we'll cover that in a minute, I put that in quotes. We can be deceived if we see other people's sins as "greater" than our sins. And then in that comparison, we come out okay. You know, "We're not as bad as they are." And I think maybe sometimes, if we're honest with ourselves, we'll think to ourselves and I've said it in the past; I've said, "Well, my sins aren't that bad!" comparing, thinking about somebody else. Or you think, "Well, at least I didn't do that!" comparing yourself to what somebody else did. And we've all done it, if we're honest with ourselves.

Let's go to 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 12. And Paul is telling this Church who had this very problem, he's saying, "You can't do this! You can't compare yourselves with other people and among yourselves," because there's only one standard. 2 Corinthians 10 verse 12, Paul is saying.

2 Corinthians 10:12. *For we dare not make ourselves of the number, (KJV)*

In other words, he's saying, "Don't put yourself in a certain category of people." 2 Corinthians 10 verse 12:

2 Corinthians 10:12. *For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: (KJV)*

He says, "Those who commend themselves, you know puff themselves up, elevate themselves:

2 Corinthians 10:12b. *...but [those people] measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (KJV)*

Now why is that? Because you're comparing yourself to another human being who is imperfect. And what we should be comparing ourselves to is Jesus

Christ, who lived a perfect life, and to God's Law, which is the standard, and not any manmade law or any other human being!

Notice what James says in chapter 4. We'll read verses 11 and 12. We have to be very careful that we are not deceived by comparing ourselves with other individuals. Or, in some cases, even in the greater Church today, people compare their group against some other group and draw conclusions. James 4 verses 11 and 12, James says.

James 4:11. *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. (KJV)*

He says, "Don't do that."

James 4:11b. *He that [speaks] evil of his brother, and [judges] his brother, [speaks] evil of the law, and [judges] the law: [He says,] but if [you] judge the law, [Then, he's saying, you cease to become] a doer of the law, but [you set yourself up as] a judge. (KJV)*

And that's a sermon in itself. And you could go into many other Scriptures that show that there is only one Judge of mankind. And that's Jesus Christ.

Verse 12:

James 4:12. *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: (KJV)*

He says, "Who are you that sets yourself up as a judge and then judges your fellow man, your brother or sister in the Church?"

And so it is a huge deception to compare ourselves among ourselves. And, yet, I think if we're honest, we've all done it. And I think if we're honest and look around the greater Church today, we see it all the time. And it is a major deception that Satan has pawned off on spiritual Israel to think that we can do that and it's somehow pleasing to God.

And, so, as we examine ourselves during the Days of Unleavened Bread and, as we should have done prior to the Passover, we continue that process, we need just to remember that there's only one standard and there's only one Judge. And let's look to that standard and look to that Judge as our example. And let's not compare ourselves with other people. That's the First Point, the First Way we can be deceived as Israel was.

A Second Point is that:

II. Today we can be deceived by categorizing sin.

And this is a huge problem in the greater Church of God!

Now, what do I mean by "categorizing sin"? Let's say we know the Ten Commandments. Let's pick the Commandment that tells us we shouldn't lie.

And then we pick the Commandment that says we shouldn't murder. And we look at those two Commandments and let's say we've lied, but we haven't committed murder. And let's say somebody else we know maybe committed murder, but didn't lie.

Now who has the greater sin in our eyes? Which is the greater sin? Lying? Or murder? And I think certainly any human out in the world would say, "Murder is far worse than lying because, frankly, in the world today everybody lies and doesn't think twice about it."

But in the Church, even in God's Church, you can look at those two and come away with a conclusion that this one—the murderer—is worse than the lying. But that's not what the Bible says. Let's go to Revelation 21 and read verse 8. The Bible says that is not the truth. That is not the case. Second to the last [chapter] in the Bible and summing up matters quite succinctly, Christ revealing through John, notice what is said, Revelation 21:8:

Revelation 21:8. *But the fearful, and [the] unbelieving, (KJV)*

We talked about that a couple of sermons ago.

Revelation 21:8b. *...and the abominable, and [the] murderers [To be sure!], and [the] whoremongers, and [the] sorcerers, and [the] idolaters, (KJV)*

But notice this!

Revelation 21:8 continued. *...and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which [burns] with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (KJV)*

So what we're being told here is both of those result in the same punishment. And in God's eyes, they're equally bad. And one of the ways we can deceive ourselves is by thinking some sins are worse than other sins.

Now Israel, ancient Israel, they chose to obey certain commands, but, frankly, they ignored others and rebelled at others. They just wouldn't do it. They would pick and choose. If it was convenient, they would obey. If it was inconvenient or their stomach was hungry or their mouth was thirsty, then they would start rebelling.

The same is happening today. People pick and choose what commands they obey and what commands they don't obey or what commands they set up on high as "I'll never disobey this one," but then there are some other commands that are kind of well, they're kind of somehow okay or more acceptable to disobey than some others.

Israel chose to acknowledge some of their sins. Remember they said, "We have sinned"—we read that—but not others. And we do the same thing. Some of our sins we repent of and then others we kind of bury under the carpet and we ignore

because we view them as not as bad, maybe not as serious. Or maybe we think somehow God is not as displeased.

And today, we've all been there. Some of us become very sorry for certain sins, but we ignore other sins. And we pick and choose. And maybe we do so not even consciously. Maybe we just do it out of a gut reaction or subconsciously. The reason I bring it up is that's no excuse. We must understand that we cannot categorize sin.

We, frankly, here in the Pacific Church of God have had some people who left because they categorized sin. They decided for themselves which sins were the greatest. And they would not associate with those that they judged to be inferior than themselves or not meeting their standards or committing somehow sins that they judged as being worse than others sins. Horrible error! Huge mistake!

Let's remember what the Bible says about categorizing sin. You know the Scripture. We don't need to turn there, I John 3 and verse 4. It says, "Sin is the transgression of the Law." It's probably one of the first Scriptures we learned when we came into the Church. I John 3 and verse 4, it tells us what sin is. Sin is transgressing God's Law.

Then, in Romans 6 and verse 23, we won't turn there. We know that one by heart. "The wages of sin is death." So we're told that the definition of sin is transgressing God's Law and when we do that, there is a penalty. And that penalty is death. All sin brings the death penalty. Not just some sins. All sins bring the death penalty. That's why Christ had to die for each one of us. And that's why we should be sobered and why we should come to the Passover contrite because we understand that Christ had to die for my sins, my specific sins. All of my sins! Not just some of them, but all of them.

Now James brought this home very plainly because he said, "You cannot be partial in keeping the Law." You cannot pick and choose. You cannot decide for yourself what you're going to obey and what you're not going to obey or what's important and what's not important or which one is the greater sin. James says, "You can't do that."

Let's go to James chapter 2. Now in the first nine verses of James, he condemns partiality with respect of persons. We know that when he says if somebody comes into your Sabbath Services wearing a mink coat and driving a Mercedes versus the bag lady that comes in with a shopping cart and maybe doesn't smell quite as well. He draws the analogy that you can't discriminate and have respect of persons. He takes the first nine verses to talk about that.

But you see he carries that same subject over in verses 10 and 11 talking about the Law. James 2 verse 10:

James 2:10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [The word "point" is in italics.], he is guilty of all. (KJV)

Why? Because the penalty is the same.

Verse 11:

James 2:11. *For he that said, [Don't] commit adultery, said also, [Don't] kill. (KJV)*

So, he's obviously referring to the Ten Commandments. He says:

James 2:11b. *Now if [you] commit no adultery, yet if [you] kill, [you are] become a transgressor of the law. (KJV)*

If you lie, but you don't murder, you become a transgressor of the Law. If you use God's name in vain and, yet, you keep the Sabbath, you become transgressor of God's Law. And Romans 6:23 applies—"The wages of sin is death."

So with Israel you see what we can do. We can make the mistake of creating God in our own image. And we can say, "Well, this one isn't that bad." Now when we do that, what we say is "I'm the judge now. I am placing myself in God's position. And I am deciding which is worse or which is better." And God clearly says, "You can't do that." And yet that happens over and over and over among God's people. It's happened in my life. It's happened in your life. And, as we examine ourselves, we need to make sure that we don't make this error that we are not deceived, as Israel was, into thinking that some sins are not so bad.

I had a lady tell me, "The sin of adultery is not so bad. That's just the sin of weakness. But this other sin is really bad," pointing to somebody else's sin. And you try to explain that to people. "That unh uh. This is a very dangerous path to walk down." And so we cannot allow that to happen. It is a huge, huge deception to categorize sin.

That leads us to the Third Area.

III. Today we can be deceived when we feel that we can continue in sin and still be in the Kingdom of God.

That we can continue in a pattern of sin and still be in the Kingdom of God. People say, "Well, God knows my weaknesses. God understands." Oh, yes, He does. He knows our weaknesses. And boy, does He understand. And He's asking us to overcome them and come out of them. And it is very easy—I've seen it happen. Sometimes I've done it myself—to selectively read the Bible and ignore Scriptures about our weaknesses and sins. And then selectively read the Bible and focus on other Scriptures about other people's sins thinking "I wouldn't do that. Therefore, I'm feeling okay about myself." When in reality, we subconsciously—and I believe a lot of it is subconscious—we just ignore those Scriptures that deal with us and put the spotlight on our sins because it makes us very uncomfortable. And human beings do not like that.

Thereby when we do that, when we focus on other people's sins or read Scriptures about sins that we don't have (that we don't happen to have a problem with), we begin to justify ourselves and justify our behavior. And Christ ran into a lawyer that wanted to do exactly the same thing. Let's go to Luke chapter 10 and we're going to read verses 25 through 29. Christ is talking. And the religious hierarchy of the day and the legal experts of the day wanted to trip Him up, wanted to test Him. And in Luke 10 verse 25, a lawyer stood up, trying to test Christ. I think you know where we're going. Luke 10 and verse 25, it says.

Luke 10:25. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and [tested Christ], saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? (KJV)

That's obviously the prime question in life. And Christ said unto Him, being a good Jew answering a question with a question, He says, "What do you see in the Law? How do you interpret it? How do you read it? How do you understand the Law? Tell me." (Verse 26.)

Verse 27:

Luke 10:27. And he answered and said, [You shall] love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your [life], with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.
28) And He said [Christ said back] to him, [You have] answered right [It's correct]; (KJV)

But notice what He said.

Luke 10:28b. [Go] do this and [Then you shall have eternal life, you shall] live." (KJV)

Now notice the man's response in verse 29.

Luke 10:29. But he, [willing] to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" (KJV)

Now obviously this guy had a problem because if you narrowly define neighbor, it might to be your own immediate family. And so then, I can treat everybody else like garbage and I'm okay. Or if you define your next door neighbor as your neighbor and not somebody else that's a little farther away, you might feel a little better about it.

But Christ then went into the Parable of the Good Samaritan right after that to define for this young man, this lawyer—maybe he's an older man—define for him "Who is my neighbor?" And we know the Parable of the Good Samaritan tells us that it is everybody. And we should be a good neighbor to everybody. But this man, you see, was trying to narrow things down, focus only on certain areas to justify his conduct, justify his beliefs. And we can be deceived if we do that. And if we continue in sin—

Let's say I'm just hypothetically talking about this lawyer again. Let's say he was arrogant and abusive to people that were outside his little circle of friends. And Christ said, "You can't do that," but he refused to do that, knowing the truth from the Master. Then, you begin to lead a double life. You begin to pretend to be one thing when you're something else. Or in certain areas you behave this way, or in other areas or locations, you behave a totally different way.

And if we continue in the Church and allow ourselves to sin, allow ourselves a pattern of sinning, then we become "two" people. And I've heard people say; I've heard a fellow say, "I've got my Church life and I've got my business life. I have certain rules that I obey in my Church life and, then, I have other rules that I obey in my business life." And he's saying that "I have two standards. I have a human standard over here. And I have God's standards over here." And I was thinking, "Well, why shouldn't God's standard apply to everything you do, rather than just a certain area like when you go to Church?"

Now James says that very plainly that this creates great deception and a great problem. Let's go to James chapter 1 and we're going to read verses 6 through 8. This is talking about those who allow sin in their lives while they are Church members and it results in some real problems. James 1 verse 6:

James 1:6. *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that [wavers]; (KJV)*

Meaning: doesn't have one standard, but in this example I was drawing has two standards.

James 1:6. *[He] that [wavers] is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

Just back and forth, back and forth. Verse 7.

James 1:7. *[And] let not that man think that he shall receive [anything] of the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

Now just stop and think about that. What he's saying is, "If you are double-minded, if you have two sets of standards, if you have two lives," he's saying, "You're not getting anything from God." Now, "anything" can also mean salvation. "Anything" can be God's Kingdom and eternal life.

So, he says:

James 1:7. *[Let] not that man think that he shall receive [anything] of the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

He goes on to say:

James 1:8. *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (KJV)*

Because you're living two lives. It's like an actor on a stage. He goes up on the stage and he pretends to be one kind of person, but then in his real life, he's a totally different kind of person. And James is saying the same thing. "You can't do that and be right with God."

I know of a deacon. He was ordained a deacon. And it came out a I think a few months or years later that he was an alcoholic and he was a wife-beater, but yet when he came to church, he was the model Church member—dressed nicely, talked well, said the right things, talked to people, came up, greeted people, maybe sucked up a little bit too much to the minister at the time. But the fact is that this man had two lives. And it only came out when his wife went to the hospital. And then it all fell apart. And he was an alcoholic and he had abused his wife for years. And yet, he was living a double life.

Now, maybe our lives aren't to that extreme, but the fact is that in certain areas of our lives, sometimes we get awfully close to living a double life. And we think somehow it's okay or somehow God understands. The human mind can convince itself of a lot of things when it wants to follow its lusts, and yet, wants eternal life. And what James is saying, "It's going to make you crazy over time." It will make you crazy over time.

And let's understand in this Third Point that we can't continue in sin and be in God's Kingdom that there is coming a day of reckoning. There is coming a day when it all will be made plain. And there is coming a day when we all have to account for our lives.

Let's go to Galatians 5. There are many other Scriptures, but we'll just pick one for the sake of time. Galatians 5, we're going to read verses 19 through 21. Now these are the works of the flesh and we often just kind of quickly read through them and jump to the fruits of the spirit, but there's a sentence in here that we need to focus on. Galatians 5 verse 19:

Galatians 5:19. *Now the works of the flesh are evident, (NKJ)*

He says. "They're plain. They're evident, which are...." Then he goes on to name the works of the flesh. Now there are a bunch of them here. Now, Christ said that not only do we sin physically, but we can sin up here between our ears. We can sin in our minds. So as we go through this list, it just doesn't apply to physical acts. It also applies to thoughts in our head.

Galatians 5:19b. *(NKJ)*

"Adultery"—Christ said, "You can commit adultery in your mind as well as do it physically."

"Fornication"—same thing; it's very important for our young people to understand.

"Uncleanness"—that means unclean thoughts, unclean deeds.

"Lewdness"—we know what that is, people just lewd in their mind or in their body.

Galatians 5:20. *(NKJ)*

"*Idolatry*"—not just bowing down to, as ancient Israel did, to a golden calf, but putting anything in front of God. It doesn't make any difference what it is.

"*Sorcery*"—*and involved in witchcraft*. And one of the root words for sorcery, the word is *pharmakeia* (*far-mak-i'-ah*). And it can also, in essence mean, taking drugs, things that alter the mind.

"*Hatred, contentions*"—arguments fights.

"*Jealousies*"—where one person envies another person and creates problems.

"*Outbursts of [anger]*"—sometimes outbursts of anger occur inside. We can bottle it up. We're chewing on our tongue. We're biting our lips, but we need to get to the point where we don't have anger inside.

"*Selfish ambitions*"—putting ourselves in front of other people, putting our welfare in front of others.

"*Dissensions [divisions], heresies*"—believing wrong things, getting into wrong doctrine.

He goes on to say:

Galatians 5:21. (NKJ)

"*Envy*"—wanting what somebody else has or somebody is successful, being upset about that.

"*Murders*"—now murder can be physical murder, but it can also be slander where you murder somebody's reputation.

"*Drunkenness, revelries*"—just wanting to party all the time, not a serious thought in one's head.

...and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that... (NKJ)

Notice this last sentence.

Galatians 5:21b. ...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJ)

Now, we tend to ignore that last sentence! Now, all of us in a moment of weakness or a moment of emotionalism will come out with any of these. We can think wrong thoughts in our head. We can be angry or jealous or envious and then we just clamp on it, get down on our knees and repent. And if it's gone and we've overcome it, then, it's gone.

But he's saying "who practice" this over time. And what he's saying is like the wife-beater and the alcoholic. That went on for months and years, actually years, and there was no change. And so we have to be very, very careful that we don't fall into a huge deception to think that we can allow ourselves a certain amount of sin. And I've done that! We allow ourselves a certain amount of sin.

In fact, one of the Catholic Cardinals once said, "The key is to decide how much sin you allow yourself." Can you imagine? God is the standard. And God says we need to have a pure mind, a clean mind, unspotted from the world. And so

let's not fall into the deception that we can think that we can sin and allow it to go on and we're in a good standing with God.

I had a friend of mine once—this goes back thirty years ago. And he said, "God's going to have to take care of this sin that I've got. I can't do it. God's going to have to clean it up when I get in the Kingdom." And that's very dangerous ground to be on because we're saying, "I want this sin. I just after this. And I'm not going to change. And so, God's going to have to clean me after He resurrects me into His Kingdom." Well, see God's not going to do that! God is simply not going to do that.

It is a huge deception to be in a pattern of sin and think we can be in the Kingdom of God. So, let's not be deceived as ancient Israel was deceived.

The Fourth and the Final One is that, and this, frankly, is the biggest one"

IV. We can be deceived today by denying that we have a problem.

We can be deceived by denying that we have a problem, denying that we sin, denying that we fall short, denying that we have a weakness in a certain area.

In Israel's view, they didn't have a problem! It was that they couldn't do what they wanted to do. And every time they tried to do what they wanted to do, they suffered the consequences. They whined and complained. And they said, "We don't have a problem. We just want to do what we want to do. And our problem, if you really break it down, our problem is with God, because this God won't let us do what we want to do." And you see we can't fall into that deception.

And it was the same with the Jews in Christ day. Notice Romans chapter 2. It was evident in Christ's day, but also evident in the days of the disciples. Paul is mentioning this and it can apply to us today. Romans chapter 2, we'll read verses 17 through 22. He's talking to the Jews here, part of Israel, descendants of those that came through the Red Sea. Romans 2 verse 17:

Romans 2:17. Behold, [you're] called a Jew, and [you rest] in the law, and [the Law is your foundation, and he says] you make your boast [of] God [because you have the law and you're a Jew and you're a descendent of Abraham. (KJV)

Verse 18:

Romans 2:18. And [you know] his will, and [approve] the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; (KJV)

You have the Law and you think you're okay. And if you follow the Law, you will be okay.

Verse 19, he says:

Romans 2:19. *And [you are] confident that [you yourself are] a guide [to] the blind, (KJV)*

You have such faith in yourself, such faith in your own ability, your own deeds, your own actions that, as Stuart was saying in his sermonette, you're a light to the world! You're the city way out on a hill that you can see from miles around. And what Paul is saying, "You Jews, you think you're that city. You think you're just a light to everybody."

Romans 2:19b. *...a light [to] them which are in darkness, (KJV)*

Verse 20, he also says, "You think you're:"

Romans 2:20. *An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which [has] the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. (KJV)*

You just look at yourself and think you've got it made. You've just got it made. "We've got Abraham. We've got the Law. We're Jews."

Verse 21:

Romans 2:21. *[You] therefore which [teach] another, [he says, Don't you teach yourself? Don't you apply it to yourself? [You that] preach a man should not steal, [he says, do you] steal? (KJV)*

And he knew that some of them did. "You're out there standing in front of everybody preaching you shouldn't steal." And he's saying, "Are you stealing?" That's why the Bible says, "You that are teachers will suffer the greater condemnation because you who are teachers stand up and say all these things, you better be doing them yourself!" And that's what he's saying to the Jews.

Verse 22:

Romans 2:22. *[You] that [say] a man should not commit adultery, [do you commit] adultery? [he's saying.] [You] that [abhor] idols, [do you] commit sacrilege? (KJV)*

Well they did! But they weren't aware of it you see. They didn't admit they had a problem. They had an enormous blind spot, the Jews.

And the biggest problem, certainly in counseling Brethren that are in trouble, is getting them to admit they have a problem. That's the first hurdle—to get somebody to admit, "Yeah, I've got a problem." Because much of the time, much of the time is spent getting them to see that. And if they don't see it, nothing can change. Nothing will change.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10. We'll read verses 11 and 12. We read verse 11 earlier. 1 Corinthians 10:11:

1 Corinthians 10:11. *Now all these things happened unto them for [examples]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (KJV)*

Notice the very next verse though, 1 Corinthians 10 verse 12.

Romans 10:12. *Wherefore let him that [thinks] he [stands] take heed lest he fall. (KJV)*

What he's saying is, "You look at these Old Testament examples, you better pay heed to them because you might be deceived as ancient Israel was and the Jews were if we stand when we're teetering close to falling. We have to be very careful."

And we can't fix a problem if we don't admit we have a problem. That's fundamental. You can't fix something you don't know that's wrong. You can't fix something that you don't think is broken. And if we do not acknowledge our sins, how can we repent of them if we don't acknowledge them? And this is part and parcel of what we go through in the Church today during these Spring Holy Days.

So, what I'm saying is that all of us need to be open to the possibility that we might have a spiritual blind spot. I have had huge spiritual blind spots in years past. And my fear is I have spiritual blind spots now that I don't see, because I have been deceived about my conduct and my beliefs. I thought I was okay doing certain things, particularly running roughshod as a new elder over people or not showing love and compassion and mercy and patience thinking you're okay, but that's not what the Bible says. Huge blind spot!

Remember—again, we won't turn there—Revelation 3 and verse 17, "I have need of nothing." You see, "I'm okay. I have no problem. I don't need to change because I'm okay. I don't need anything." And that is the mantra of the Laodicean Era. Many in the Laodicean Era—remember it says, "Don't you know that you are wretched and poor and" what? Blind and naked. And we have to understand that the Laodicean Era is blind. And we don't want to be part of that. So, we have to admit the possibility that we could be wrong or we could be in a pattern of sin that we're not aware of.

The overall key to this Last Point here of denying that we have a problem, the overall key is to acknowledge that we are capable of being deceived. Ancient Israel was deceived. We have to say, we have to acknowledge, we have to go before God and say, "I know I can be deceived. Satan's far stronger and more subtle than I am. And I know it. I can be deceived. Show me my sins."

Because remember all deception is authored by Satan. Remember what happened in Genesis chapter 3? The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field—very shrewd, very smart. And he appealed to the eyes and to the flesh and to the lusts of the man and the woman. And he got them! They are capable of being deceived. He said, "No, you won't die." Boy, what a deception! And they were deceived. If they can be deceived, we can be deceived. Deception from Satan was already at work in Paul's day, already at work in his day.

Let's go to Colossians 2 and verse 8 and see that. It had been going on for millennia, but it was injected into the Church in Paul's day and it continues in the Church today. Colossians 2 and verse 8, I'll read it out of the NIV. Paul is urging the Church at Colossi and us today, when he says:

Colossians 2:8. *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow [That means empty.] and deceptive philosophy [philosophy designed to deceive, philosophy authored by Satan], which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (NIV)*

And we have seen people leave God's Church through hollow and deceptive philosophies. And we have to be very, very careful that we don't allow deception to come in and we not recognize it as such.

Let's go to 2 Thessalonians 2 and we're going to read verses 7 through 10 taking about something that started in Paul's day but that is going to accelerate in our day. 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 7 through 10 and I'm going to mix up the King James and the Twentieth Century New Testament because it makes it a lot more clear than the King James does, but the King James just for a foundation. 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 7 in the King James:

II Thessalonians 2:7. *For the mystery of iniquity [does] already work: (KJV)*

Now in that verse, The Twentieth Century New Testament says:

II Thessalonians 2:7. *Wickedness, indeed, is already at work in secret; (TCNT)*

And then the Twentieth Century New Testament goes on to say:

II Thessalonians 2:7b. *...but only until he who at present restrains it [this wickedness in secret] is removed out of the way. (TCNT)*

Verse 8 out of the King James:

II Thessalonians 2:8. *And then [after the one that is restraining it stops restraining this wickedness, then] shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: (KJV)*

Verse 9 out of the Twentieth Century New Testament:

II Thessalonians 2:9. *For at the Coming of the [Eternal] there will be great activity on the part of Satan, (TCNT)*

And boy! That is happening now. You look at the trouble in the world, the evil in the world, the killings, the serial killers, the serial rapists, all this kind of stuff! It's just demonic going on in the world.

I'll repeat it again.

II Thessalonians 2:9b. ...there will be great activity on the part of Satan, in the form of all kinds of deceptive miracles, (TCNT)

Those haven't happened yet, but they will be deceptive miracles.

II Thessalonians 2:9 continued. ...signs, and marvels, as well as wicked attempts to delude. (TCNT)

People saying, "Homosexuality is okay." You can go to jail for saying that in some countries. Or saying, "Yeah, premarital sex is fine. Gotta try it out. Might as well. Drive a new car before you buy it, "that whole kind of attitude.

And it says, "Wicked attempts to delude."

Now in verse 10, King James:

II Thessalonians 2:10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (KJV)

In this passage it talked about deceptive miracles, attempts to delude, all deceivableness. There is deception by Satan out there trying to get at God's people and we fall into that if we don't admit the possibility that we could be deceived. And I think if we're honest with ourselves, at sometime in our Christian life we have been deceived, maybe more than once. I have—more than once! And we have to be very careful. This mystery of iniquity, this deception, is working in the greater Church of God today and we must acknowledge that we are capable of being deceived by it.

So, let's remember this Fourth Point. We can't solve a problem if we don't admit we have a problem. We can't fix something that's broken, if we don't acknowledge that it is broken. So, this is the time of year to examine that.

Now, let's conclude. Let's wrap this up. The message and the Scriptures that we have covered today is very simple—that we can be just as deceived as ancient Israel was. There is a possibility. It happened in the New Testament Church. It happened with ancient Israel. It can happen with us.

The message of these Scriptures is that we can be deceived into thinking that we're in good standing with God when we actually are not. We can be deceived into thinking that "Yeah, my conduct's okay. Not as bad as somebody else's. The world kind of does it. Everybody does it." And so, somehow God will wink at it or nod at it and it's okay.

Many have been deceived in God's Church and are presently being deceived. And we understand, going back to ancient Israel—we won't turn there but in Deuteronomy 5 and verse 29—God said, "Oh, that there were such a heart in

them that they would obey Me and keep My commandments always that I could bless them." And God was lamenting but He knew that they didn't have God's spirit, they didn't have His spirit. And so, they didn't have the capability of keeping the Law.

But the good news is that we have the heart. We have the ability to keep God's Law because of what happened that we commemorated on the Passover, Christ's resurrection, Christ's giving His Spirit to the early apostles. And then by baptism and laying on of hands, it comes into each one of us. And so the good news, you see, is unlike ancient Israel we have help that they didn't have. We have power. We have support. We have a new mind that opens our mind to the possibilities that we could be deceived, opens our mind to understand the spiritual applications and the spiritual intents of God's Law. We have that you see. And that's the wonderful news!

And so, we need, as we go forward, we need to understand and exercise this new heart that we have that ancient Israel did not. We have to exercise that.

Let's turn to one final Scripture in Romans chapter 8.

This is very important that we, during the Days of Unleavened Bread, focus on the fact that we are not impervious to deception. And Satan is not going to give God's people a free pass. Just because we've been baptized and we're now in the Church, we are a greater target than people out in the world. He already has the people in the world. He's already got them deceived. What he wants to do is deceive God's people so that in John chapter 10 the Parable of the Sheepfold, the thief comes in to steal and to kill and to destroy (John 10:10). So, let's understand that.

Now Romans 8 verse 10, it says:

Romans 8:10. *And if Christ be in you, (KJV)*

And Christ is in most of us sitting in this room.

Romans 8:10b. *...the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness [because of what Christ did]. (KJV)*

Verse 11:

Romans 8:11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead [dwells] in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also [make alive] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that [again, dwells] in you. (KJV)*

Verse 12:

Romans 8:12. *Therefore [because of the spirit dwelling in us and because of God's power], brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, [not] to live after the flesh. (KJV)*

That's exactly what ancient Israel wanted to do. "Let's go after the gods that were in Egypt. Let's go after the nations that were around us." That's a series of sermons in itself. Israel wanted to follow the gods of the nations all around them after they came in the Promised Land. And they wanted to live after the flesh. Huge, huge deception!

I'll repeat verse 12.

Romans 8:12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors ... [not] to live after the flesh. (KJV)*

Verse 13:

Romans 8:13. *For if [you] live after the flesh, [you] shall die: but if [you] through the Spirit do [kill] the deeds of the body, [you] shall live. (KJV)*

Verse 14 is the key.

Romans 8:14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, (KJV)*

Not just have God's spirit, but allow God's spirit to lead their minds and their actions and their words and their deeds.

Romans 8:14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)*

So, all of us want to be God's sons. All of us want to have eternal life. And the key is we must be led by the spirit. Not just lay back and say, "Okay, I've been baptized. I have God's holy spirit. That's all I need." (Again Revelation 3:17.) "I don't need anything else. I'm fine." But we're told here the only way we can be children of God is to be led by the spirit of God.

So, let's use these Spring Holy Days to deeply and truly change our hearts from the heart that we had before we were baptized, and that Israel had, to the new heart, the soft heart. Not the heart of stone, but the soft heart, the clean heart, the pure heart. And let's not be deceived as ancient Israel was deceived.