

Grasping the Great End Time Deception: Understanding and Embracing Jesus' Warning to Watch and Pray

Key Passage: *"Watch out that no one deceives you."*—Matthew 24:4 (5, 10-11, 23-24)

The Greek word for "deception" means to cause to roam from safety, truth, or virtue:--go astray, deceive, err, seduce, wander, be out of the way.

Paul's warning to the Church: Another Jesus, a different spirit, the devil in disguise

*"For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** from the Spirit you received, or a **different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.*

*For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, **masquerading as apostles of Christ**. And no wonder, for Satan himself **masquerades as an angel of light**. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also **masquerade as servants of righteousness**."—2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15*

Point of Truth: The deception will be disguised. False teachers and Satan himself will come with a mask on, disguised as the Light and Truth. Many who were once believers will be deceived and turn away from true faith in Christ.

- Understanding the End-Time Deception

I. False Prophets and the False Teaching: Apostasy and the Anti-Christ

A. The Warning: False Prophets and Teachers Will Rise From Within the Church

- Peter warns about false prophets and teachers in the Church deceiving many and giving a bad name to true Christian faith:

*"But there were also **false prophets among the people**, just as there will be **false teachers among you**. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. **Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute**."—2 Peter 2:1-3*

- The prevalence of false preachers coincides with the increasing number of Christians who no longer tolerate sound doctrine:

*"For the time will come when people **will not put up with sound doctrine** (teaching). Instead, to **suit their own desires** (lusts, longings), they will **gather around them a great number of teachers** to say what their **itching (tickle) ears** want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (fiction/fables)."—2 Timothy 4:3-4*

Point of Truth: Today, there is destructive heresy being taught in Christian universities, where pastors are being trained, that denies the full and final authority of Scripture. There is an increasing number of people who claim to be Christian but who no longer view the Bible as the ultimate source or foundation for truth. In Romans 1 we are warned that many will *"exchange the truth about God for a lie"* (vs. 25).

B. The Deceiving Nature of the False Teaching

The early apostles and writers described the kind of false teaching that would lure people away from sound doctrine and Scriptural truth.

1. A Perversion of Grace—Sexual Immorality and Sexual Perversion

*“For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have **secretly slipped in** (settle in alongside, crept in unawares) **among you**. They are ungodly people, who **pervert the grace** of our God into **a license for immorality** and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”—Jude 4*

- The false teaching will be a perversion of Biblical grace, leading to a disregard for sexual restraints, boundaries, a disregard for sexual purity, which includes all sex outside the confines of a committed, covenanted marriage between one man and women before God, which is the Biblical standard.

*“In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns **gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.**”—Jude 7, 8*

- Why does Jude mention God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah? The Greek for “sexual immorality” is pornography and the word for “perversion” is literally **“going after strange flesh”** or homosexuality. (*Romans 1, “they exchange natural sexual relations for unnatural ones...men committed shameful acts with other men” (vs. 26-27)*)
- Jude indicates that these false teachers will divide the Church.

*“These are the people who **divide you**, who follow mere natural instincts and **do not have the Spirit.**”—vs. 19*

Point of Truth: Presently in the American Church there is an increasing number of churches that are perverting the grace of God into a license for sexual immorality. This teaching is especially focused on affirming homosexual marriage, which is dividing many denominations.

2. Increased Atmosphere of Hostility and Hatred: A Spirit of Offense and Racial Strife See Matthew 24:7-11

- Paul describes the last days as “terrible times”: A spirit of self-centeredness, self-love, pursuit of pleasure and a spirit of hostility will infect many believers

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slandering, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5

Point of Truth: With the advent of social media there has been an alarming level of anti-social behavior, marked by hostility, outrage, a cancel-culture, marked by a spirit of offense. This spirit has seeped into the Church, with many carrying offenses toward other believers. This spirit of offense is also manifesting in a growing racial divide in America.

C. A Promised Great Apostasy and the Rise of the Anti-Christ

In this crazy unstable climate a powerful figure arises in the world, who is described in the Bible as—a Man of Lawlessness, the Anti-Christ, the Beast

1. Demons and Deceiving Spirits are the Source of the False Teaching

Paul reveals that there will be Christians who abandon the faith and that the source of the false teaching is actually demons, deceiving spirit:

*“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will **abandon the faith** and follow deceiving (impostors, seducing) spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”—1 Tim. 4:1-2*

The word for abandon is revolt, rebel, withdraw, depart, refrain, fall away.

2. The Apostasy is Due to the Anti-Christ: By the Power of False Signs and Wonders

*“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come **until the rebellion occurs** and **the man of lawlessness is revealed**, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”—2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*

- Contrary to a pervasive Christian teaching that believers will be raptured before the tribulation and the rise of the anti-Christ, there is first a “rebellion”. The Greek word for rebellion is “apostasy” and means: defection from truth; to fall away, to forsake the faith.
- The great apostasy is due to the appearing of the Anti-Christ, the Man of Lawlessness:

*“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. **He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie**, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason **God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”—2 Thessalonians 2:9-12*
- This Man of lawlessness gets his power from Satan, enabling him to do signs and wonders that validate the lie, causing many who called themselves Christians to be deceived into thinking that Christ has returned, resulting in a powerful delusion that most of the world believes. (In I John 2:18-27, he is called the anti-christ)

Point of Truth: What is this powerful delusion? Without knowing it, people shift from worshipping Christ to the anti-christ—without understanding what they are doing. The powerful delusion is marked by a new structure or system of religion, new form of Christianity, that is political, cultural, and social. When believers depart the true faith, they shift to another faith, which I believe is some form of Christianity connected to a World Religion that is established by the anti-christ and where the anti-christ is worshipped.

D. The Great Tribulation: The Greatest two Attributes of an End-Time Christian

In Matthew 24, Jesus warns of the great distress (tribulation) we will face as true followers: (See Matthew 24:21-25)

Jesus makes some things very clear: 1. Christian's who are alive will be present during the tribulation. 2. The great tribulation is so distressing for true believers because we suffer the world's hatred and persecution for our faith in Christ. 3. During the great tribulation the reason so many believers fall away is because simultaneously there is a great deception perpetrated by false prophets and those claiming to be Christ, promising peace, safety, security (or an end to the persecution) for those who believe them.

➤ The two Great Attributes of an End-Time Christian: Endurance and Evangelization

*"but the one who **stands firm** to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be **preached in the whole world** as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:13-14*

II. Why the Prayer Room is so Critical to End Time Endurance and Evangelization

Jesus' first words in Matthew 24:4, "watch out" and last words, "keep watch" (vs. 42), serve as book ends to this whole section about the events surrounding the end times.

What does Jesus mean by "Watch"? Remember Jesus' words in Gethsemane?

*"The end of all things is near. Therefore **be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.**"—1 Pet 4:7*

1. The Renewed Focus on the Priestly Calling and Ministry of Every Believer

Jesus gives the end time Christian a new identity:

*"and has made us to be a kingdom and **priests to serve** (minister to) his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. "Look, he is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"; and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." So shall it be! Amen."—Revelation 1:6-7*

➤ Notice that the priestly activity of ministering to God precipitates the second coming of Christ.

*"You have made them to be a kingdom and **priests to serve** our God, and they will reign on the earth."—Revelation 5:10*

*"Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be **priests of God** and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years."—Revelation 20:6*

➤ At Jesus' second coming to earth, called the first resurrection for Christians, the believers' job description in the 1,000 year kingdom reign of Christ on earth is to minister to God's heart as a priest.

A Priest has 4 Main Responsibilities: Keep the fire of worship (harp) and Intercession (bowl) burning on the altar day and night, Scripture Meditation, Prophetic Witness, Expand the Boundaries of the Kingdom

2. The Renewed Devotion to the Public Reading of Scripture—Pouring Over the Word in Prayer (I Tim. 4:13)

In all the Biblical admonitions surrounding the warnings about deception there is the emphasis on the centrality of Scripture saturation:

*“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will **abandon the faith** and **follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons...**devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching...**Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.**”
—1 Timothy 4:1, 13, 15-16*

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work... In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and **in view of his appearing and his kingdom**, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”—2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:1-3*

3. The Renewed Focus on Prayer in the Spirit, Manifesting in Mercy for Prodigals

*“But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and **praying in the Holy Spirit**, keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”—Jude 1:19-23*

- Jude points out: 1. Our faith is built up when we pray, 2. That prayer aided by the Spirit keeps us (protects us) in God’s fiery love, since the first fruit of the Spirit is agape love, 3. That mercy is the fruit of Spirit infused prayer, resulting in compassion for those who are susceptible to the deception of the times. In this Spirit saturated prayer atmosphere marked by tangible faith, hope, and love (mercy), backsliders are restored to faith.

4. Renewed Focus on Purity and Holiness:
Making the Bride Ready for the Coming of the Bridegroom

*“You ought to **live holy and godly lives** as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming...So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, **make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.**”—2 Peter 3:11-14*

➤ In the climate of increased wickedness, the church increases in holiness

*“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and **his bride has made herself ready**. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”
(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)”—Revelation 19:7-8*

Conclusion: Jesus’ last warning in Matthew 24 is to keep watch for the Lord’s coming:

*“Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have **kept watch** and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”—Matthew 24:42-44*

The way we maintain spiritual alertness and deceive-proof our lives is by praying and worshiping Jesus (gazing into the throne room) and pouring over the Scriptures night and day!!!!