

SPIRIT & TRUTH

A great deception has overtaken those embracing the name of Christ. A deception that now permeates God's people in such a great way that the church overall is characterized as having fallen from true Christianity as spoken by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Many will raise their voices against such a notion, but we must keep in mind that a deception does not take place with what is blatantly unchristian, but appears to be very much Christian when it has nothing to do with Christ and God. We must be clear that since we are in the last and the last of the last days, deceptive counterfeit religions and doctrines will deceive most claiming the name of Christ and those deceptions are at its peak. This is absolutely amazing, but most don't have a clue, or even a thought that they might be deceived and need to wake up.

The driving force for the widespread merger of the false with the true has been Catholicism. For the first 300 years of the church, false Christ's and false prophets have risen and deceived some, but their influence was mostly local and their followers minimal. However, this would change with the rise of Catholicism as it became a global influence with followers on every continent and in every city. Its deception took place in three ways: first it merged pagan practices with Christian terms in order to appeal to both Christian and pagans. Concerning this merger, C.J. Koster in his book, *Come Out of Her My People*, wrote:

"It is well known that the church, from the 4th century onwards, had accepted many pagan festivals, images, idol's names etc., into the church, with the apology that these things of idolatry have been "sanctified." Therefore, much of the frank idolatrous origin of these things became suppressed, ignored, or explained away." (p-v)

Another author, Ernest Loosley, writing in 1935 made this observation in his book, *When the Church Was Young*:

"A profound alteration has taken place in the character of the religion of Jesus. This difference is not merely one of externals nor is it inherent in the necessity of growing older. The evidence demonstrates that fundamental changes have taken place in the inner life of the church, in its relationship to Christ and to God." (Forward)

For the details of how this merger took place, I refer you to the above books.

The second thing Catholicism did to deceive was to resurrect the Jewish pattern of worship by resurrecting places of worship, the priesthood, rituals, order of service, etc. When the reformation took place, Martin Luther continued the form and structure of Catholicism, thereby establishing the pattern for every denomination after him, a pattern distorting the worship of the first 300 years of the church. Though this form and structure was at first rejected by the majority of Christians, it eventually became so established within Church culture that today most don't consider that is has nothing to do with the church Christ established. By the 6th century the deception had its roots deep and it was becoming more difficult to discern the church from the deception. Too often, when you live with something long enough, even if it is a lie, it becomes accepted as the truth and the norm.

The third thing Catholicism did to deceive was to focus on good works, works of penitence, works of penance, and works of tradition. Works truly give the image of being religious but have nothing to do with Christ when separated from the Holy Spirit within. When a religious person lacks the Holy Spirit, there is the tendency to be driven by works, but works without the Holy Spirit still makes a person utterly heathen. Rick Jones, in his book, *Understanding Roman Catholicism*, wrote the following quoting official Catholic doctrine:

“To be saved, Catholic doctrine requires the continual performance of good works.

‘Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved.’ Pg. 222, #837

These works include baptism (pg. 320, #1257), various sacraments (pg. 292, #1129) plus many additional works.” (chapter 2)

Catholicism was the driving force setting the stage for our present great deception where good-hearted people think they are Christian when they have nothing to do with God and Christ and are actually headed for hell.

MAIN TRAIT OF TRUE CHRISTIANS

The main trait of those who truly live for Christ is outlined in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:1-26. Read this passage then notice that in verse 21 Jesus responds to the woman’s statement in verse 20 in a most extraordinary way.

She stated:

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus responded:

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. “

Since the day the law was given to Moses, a prescribed physical order of worship, which included buildings, rituals, priests, holy days, etc. was given to the Jewish people. Jesus now tells the woman at the well that since he, the Messiah, is here these things are being replaced by something greater than the physical structure and practice which were then taking place. He also made it clear that even though the Jews were the ones given the revelation of salvation, which came through them to the world, they would no longer be the only ones given this privilege and all people would now be able to worship God directly wherever they might be (John 4:22-24). The Jewish people are no longer the only ones privileged to worship the living God as brought out in these verses:

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24)

In Hebrews chapters 8-10, the writer clarifies this issue. Please take a moment to read these chapters. Here it is made clear that the religious structure given to Moses was only an image of the actual structure that is in heaven and would be done away with when Christ opens up the door giving

us direct access to God in heaven through—not physical structures, rituals, and order—but through our spirit and truth.

These chapters are clear that the rules and regulations directing worship and service to God were changed, as well as the doing away with the physical structure (temple) of the old law (9:1). The old temple consisted of two areas called tabernacles. A tabernacle was considered the dwelling place of God and the place where God could be met (Exodus 25:8; 29:42). In the first tabernacle was the candlestick, table, and the showbread and is where the priests would go to perform their service to God (9:2,6). In the second tabernacle, called the Holiest, or Holy of Holies, is where only the high priest could go in alone and only once a year to offer a sacrifice for himself and the people (9:3,7). This second tabernacle had great significance in that while the first tabernacle continued to exist, the way into the Holy of Holies would remain closed to all except the high priest (9:8). This second tabernacle was a reminder that the service and works in the first tabernacle could not make the priest perfect, nor could it renew or transform his inner man and conscience (9:9-10). When Christ died on the cross he destroyed the veil separating the first tabernacle from the second, thereby opening up the entrance to God's presence; not just for one priest, once a year, but for all God's people 24/7. The physical destruction of the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies represented that the separation of man from God has ended and we are now able to enter God's actual presence because Christ's body is the real veil/door that gives access to God.

When Christ came he became our true and last high priest, revealing a third tabernacle. This tabernacle was not made of any earthly material, nor was there any need for any earthly sacrifice since Christ became the only sacrifice needed to obtain eternal redemption (9:11-12). The sacrifices of the first covenant could not cleanse our conscience. Christ's sacrifice cleansed and purified our conscience to enable us to truly serve the living God (9:13-14). For the first time ever it is now possible to eliminate the temptation to sin (inner man/spirit) before it ever becomes sin (words and actions).

Since Jesus is the mediator of a whole new agreement between God and man, and because of his death on the cross to redeem the transgression that was under the first covenant, those who belong to God in spirit and in truth are now able to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (9:15).

IN SPIRIT

When Jesus told the woman at the well that we can now worship God in spirit, this refers to the fact that we can now receive a part of God (the Holy Spirit) to live within our bodies (the new home of God). Through the merging of our spirit with the Holy Spirit, we can now enter into the actual presence of God and live in continual fellowship with him 24/7 365 (Hebrews 10:19). The religious structure up to the time of Jesus was not able to bring us into this intimate fellowship with God. The old structure was void of God's Spirit, whereas now our relationship is filled with and dependent upon His Spirit.

IN TRUTH

Concerning the words of Jesus that we can now worship God in truth, we can go to Hebrews 10:22 for insight into what was meant:

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

To draw near in worship and fellowship with God with a true heart is to 1) have a heart that does not doubt, but has “full assurance of faith” (knowing without a doubt that the things Jesus spoke of are real, though we can’t see them as yet), 2) have a conscience cleansed of sin, and 3) have behavior cleansed with the behavior of the Holy Spirit (pure water). It’s amazing that sin can be eliminated within us before it ever becomes a word or behavior. To worship God in truth is to worship God without hypocrisy so that we are truly on the inside what we appear to be in word and action on the outside. This is only possible when we eliminate sin and the temptation to sin within us before it ever becomes a word or action of sin.

THE LAW WITHIN

When Jesus fulfilled worship, he moved it from the earthly shadows and image to the heavenly reality. He moved it from outside a person to within a person. He took all the outward laws and commands that were required under the Old Testament and placed them within the hearts of His people so that wherever they are and in whatever they do, *they are* God’s holy place. No longer is it required to “go to” another place to worship and be instructed by God. Wherever we are, God is there; through this relationship God will be our God and we will be His people. Without this relationship, seeking to worship God with external trappings and works keeps us removed from relationship with Him. Concerning this law within the author of Hebrews writes:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 8:10-12; see also 10:16)

How living with the Holy Spirit is different than living in obedience to outward laws, commands, and structures begins with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-18:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

When Jesus came to do away with the then present religious system of temples, priests, ritual, order of service, etc., he did not come to destroy the religious system they represented, but to fulfill it by establishing the reality they represented. How the fulfillment came was then explained by Jesus. Take a moment to read Matthew chapters 5-7. Now let’s look at how the law was not destroyed, but fulfilled.

In the below chart observe the command given by the law in Matthew 5 and then the new command given by Jesus to fulfill this law. I find this study to be absolutely mind blowing.

THE LAW	THE FULLFILLMENT	SCRIPTURE
Do not kill	Do not be angry	Matt 5:21-22
Do not commit adultery	Do not look with desire	Matt 5:27-28
Divorce permitted	Permitted for 1 reason	Matt 5:31-32
Perform oaths to God	No oaths, let yes be yes	Matt 5:33-37
Eye for Eye	Suffer the injustice	Matt 5:38-42
Hate your enemy	Love your enemy	Matt 5:43-48

Notice that when the law is fulfilled it no longer gives permission for any sinful word or action. The law against the action of killing was replaced with the law against the emotion of anger that leads to killing. The act of adultery was replaced with looking with the desire that leads to adultery. When we serve God within our spirit and in truth, the emotions and thoughts that cause the sinful act or word are removed before they ever become a word or action. The fulfillment of the law no longer gives permission for any act or word of sin experienced through our body. The oaths once permitted must now be our word coming from a heart without hypocrisy. The injustices done to us are to be endured so as to not cause suffering to others, even if they have done evil to us. We are not to return evil for evil (Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9). Our enemies are not to have evil done to them but are to be loved as we love even our neighbor.

When the law is fulfilled, it gives us the ability, through the Holy Spirit, to be perfect by dealing with the cause of our sinful behavior and words within our spirit and our thoughts (Matthew 5:48). We no longer have to kill or commit adultery or commit any sin because we now have the ability to remove the anger and the lust from our spirit and our thoughts before they ever become an action. Concerning this, the Apostle James had this to say:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.” (James 1:13-16)

Notice that James is clear that sin is committed because 1) a person is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed; 2) when the lust and desire is not removed; 3) sin is then committed. James is telling us the same thing as Jesus: the action of sin begins as a desire or thought from within the spirit and mind. When the sinful desire or thought is removed, the sinful word or action will not be committed.

In these last days the difference between true and false Christians is that the true, Spirit filled Christian, has the power of God’s Spirit to remove the emotions and thoughts that causes sin before they ever become a sinful word or action. It is true that we will continue to be tempted, but it is not true that we have to let our temptations lead us to sin. Sin can be removed.

~2011