

Spiritual Deception

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Signs, Times and Seasons

Text: Matthew 24:4-5

- * If we don't know the Bible, if we don't know the doctrine, if we don't know theology, it is virtually impossible for us to identify false prophets.

The word **deception** is a perfect description of what we are seeing in our day. The Bible says that in the last days there would be world-wide deception and that we needed to guard against it. Today people are **exchanging** truth for a lie. Truth is being replaced with so called progressive thinking and it is affecting every part of our society. People are being **conditioned** through movies, television, through our schools and education systems from elementary to college and through the political systems to believe lies. **Isaiah 5:20**

It is not a question of if we ever hear the voices of false teachers and false teaching because we do every day. The question is whether or not we can **discern** which messages that we are hearing are false. If you watch any television, listen to the radio, if you keep up with the news, if you interact with social media and listen to media preachers and teachers you are being **exposed** to false teaching. You will even find it in "credible" Christian publishing and broadcasting. If you cannot identify any voices you hear as false, it isn't because you are not being exposed to it but because you are **falling** for it in some way.

Galatians 1:6-8, Colossians 2:8

Jesus listed many signs that would indicate that we are on the road to the end, but the very **first** sign was world-wide spiritual deception. He listed deception as the first and foremost indicator that the end of the age was upon us. Jesus warns us in Matthew 24:4 to take **heed** and guard against the last days deception. The words "take heed" were meant to jolt us to pay attention.

To guard against false teaching and deception we have to acknowledge not just the possibility of it but the **certainty** of it.

Matthew 24:24-25, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, 1 John 4:1-6, Acts 20:28-31, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 2 Peter 3:14-18

Notice that the false teachers and teaching don't just come from the outside but from among **us**; from within the church – "there will be false teachers from among you".

The word deceive is translated from a Greek word that means to '**wander** off course'. It is talking about someone who was once on the right track, once a follower of truth, someone who was once on solid ground but lost their bearings and deviated from what they had once believed and held as morally sound. This word can describe one person as an individual or an **entire** nation or even nations that have wandered away from moral and spiritual positions that they once held true. The word 'deceive' tells us that there will be a mass divergence from time-tested Biblical standards. Jesus was prophesying of a time when **society** would move away from the truth of scripture.

He was saying that the first sign of the end of the age would be this worldwide moral wandering and shift away from “normal” moral and ethical standard. People would exchange the truth for a lie, and right and wrong and good and evil would be considered the reverse of what is actually true.

We are watching the moral **confusion** and deception that is engulfing our most basics of life and morality. In the last few weeks a boy has won a women’s cycling event and a judge has ruled in Dallas that a mother has the right, over the objections of the father, to begin gender transitioning on an eight-year-old boy. Only in these last days have people even thought to buy into the term **gender** confusion. We must understand that false teachers will not just target churches but the hearts and minds of both the saved and unsaved. The confusion and deception are so deep that it is baffling even to the most thinking of people.

The spirit of the world is working hard to eliminate all remnants of a godly foundation in society and replace it with a last days **philosophy** and system of beliefs. This will ultimately usher in the time when the anti-Christ rules a lost world for a short period of time.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 What was once considered obviously moral and righteous will now be considered out of date and even evil itself. In the last days those who believe in God’s standards and teachings will be considered ignorant, hateful and intolerant.

~ D. James Kennedy ~ Many secularists may claim tolerance as our society’s highest virtue but, in reality, are proving to be increasingly intolerant of Christian beliefs. At one time tolerance meant letting the other person have his or her view. But tolerance has now been redefined and used to silence your Christian beliefs. Tolerance is the last virtue of a totally degenerate society. When you have an immoral society that has blatantly and proudly violated the commandments of God, there is one last virtue that they insist upon: tolerance for their immorality. For much of our society that is where we have arrived. Conversely, if that is the only “virtue” left, then there is only one “sin,” and that is judging, or what they would call “intolerance”—the act of judging another.

The apostle Paul stated that, at the end of the age, a great percentage of the world population would be controlled by **delusion**. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-11** Through false teachers and teaching the last days society will be duped, seduced and deluded into believing a lie. They will believe what is false over what is obviously true. **Romans 1:20, 2 Timothy 3:1-8** Notice that Paul had no problem naming names. Today we feel this is not fashionable but if you read the New Testament the Apostles called out false teachers by name.

Jesus also said that many would come in His **Name** saying, “I am the Christ” and deceive many. **Matthew 24:5** The word many comes from the Greek word ‘polli’ – this word refers to large multitudes. So many false teachers will come and deceive **many**. Many will come in His name. Although there have been many who claim to be Jesus Christ himself, there are many more who claim to come on the strength and reputation of the Name of Jesus. They **claim** to be from Him and speak for Him but they do not. **Jeremiah 23:16** Jesus was prophesying that just like the false prophets of the Old Testament there will be deceived Christian leaders who have wandered from a solid Biblical path that will lead others in the last days down that same path of deception. **1 Timothy 4:1**

Jesus and the apostle Paul are making us aware that just before Jesus comes, some from within the church will slowly depart from the sound teaching of scripture.

2 Corinthians 11:4 Two things that we need to be aware of is the even the very elect will be deceived and people will put up with the teaching that is going on. The elect are those knowingly chosen by God for special ministry and those who are truly mature and have chosen to go after God with all of their heart.

What is it about the false prophets and teachers the has the ability to seduce and beguile those who are truly sold out to Christ? **Mark 13:21-22** If it is possible to fool the elect, it will be the lying signs and wonders that follow the false teachers.

One of the reasons we will see people put up with false teaching is because they will have developed an appetite for things other than sound doctrine. **2 Timothy 4:3-4** Doctrine is simply stating what God's word says. Today in some places there is very little Bible teaching to arouse, inspire, heal and direct in the ways of God. People prefer a pep talk, an uplifting story or a psychological or philosophical message as opposed to Bible centered teaching. Many are turning aside to fables; this is the Greek word for fantasies.

Paul instructed Timothy - **2 Timothy 4:2**

How do you spot or recognize false teachers and prophets?

Jesus tells us that we are to examine both their teaching and their living.

False teachers are not just false in what they say, but in how they live. The Bible says that you will know them by their fruits. **Luke 6:43-45, Matthew 7:15-20** It is only out of good roots that you get good fruits. Knowing someone by their fruits sounds easy at first but remember trees do not bear fruit overnight. The leaves may be green, but it takes time to discover if the fruits are good or not. We are not only to pay attention to what people say but to how they live. False teachers may be difficult to discern in the moment, but time will reveal.

When Peter addresses dealing with false teachers, he gives three verses to discuss heresy and wrong teaching. **2 Peter 2:1-3**

The rest of Chapter 2 deals with their behavior and the fruit of their lives and follows the blueprint laid out in the first three verses of the three main areas that affect character and conduct.

- Pride **2 Peter 2:1, 12-13, 18**
- Sensuality This deals with a love for pleasure and comfort, popularity and sex.
2 Peter 2:2, 10,14,19
- Greed **2 Peter 3, 15-17** The Bible calls these teachers wells without water.
These false teachers fleece the flock.

Another mark of these false teachers is that they cause **divisions** .

1 Corinthians 1:10, Romans 16:17-18

Along with being prideful they have a deep desire to be **noticed** . They not only lack in humility, they believe they have a right to be served instead of coming to serve. Some also are legalists who preach one thing and do another, they make being a Christian harder than God intended it to be. **Matthew 23:1-12**

These people will be recognized by their **polished** speech and presentations. These men speak of freedom and make great promises of deliverance but they themselves are captive to sin.

2 Peter 2:18-22

True ministers understand that their lives and teaching will be evaluated, and they welcome the scrutiny; they are to be held to a **higher** standard. **James 3:1**

Here are some things to ask yourself when making sure that those who speak into your life are following God:

- 1) Are they **scriptural** ? Does what they teach line up with the word of God?
- 2) Do they draw attention to themselves or to Jesus?
- 3) Are they **humble** or prideful? Do they always have to be the center of attention?
- 4) Do they evidence the fruit of the **Spirit** ? What comes out of them when they are stressed, around people they don't relate well with, are they prickly or standoffish or welcoming?
- 5) Do they live **holy** lives? Is their speech pure or are their jokes off color? Are they involved in questionable entertainment or immoral behaviors?
- 6) Do they desire and seek out appropriate covering and accountability? Do they live with integrity?
- 7) Do they work within a church **structure** or do they set up their own empires?
- 8) Are they true servants or do they expect to be served?
- 9) Do they put an undue premium on wealth and **money** ? Do they do what they do for monetary gain?
- 10) Are the messages they give always **smooth** ? Are they able to give the whole counsel of God without compromise and without for concern for the push back they may receive?
- 11) Are they willing to pay the price for their calling and suffer for the cause of Christ or are they looking for comfort and fame?