

God or Good

Good morning...

Let me start this morning with a scripture... Turn with me to Matthew 24:23-27 CEV

Someone may say, "Here is the Messiah!" or "There he is!" But don't believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will come and work great miracles and signs. They will even try to fool God's chosen ones. But I have warned you ahead of time. If you are told that the Messiah is out in the desert, don't go there! And if you are told that he is in some secret place, don't believe it! The coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning that can be seen from east to west.

We are in a time when the church is in peril. What do I mean by that? Let me illustrate. When we see evil in the world it has always been easy for the church to make clear lines of delineation. Evil is clearly evil. This morning I ask you to consider ISIS. In your mind, with what you know about the Lord and his ways and the practices of this organization, would you characterize their efforts as evil?

Seems like a pretty clear choice and an easy judgment of evil doesn't it? Consider WWII, the actions of the Nazis clearly are evil. Now I am not judging individuals of a system or a government. Often evil affects and is a tragedy to those closest to it first. What I am trying to point out is that as Christians we have a pretty well established set of ideals regarding what is evil and what is good... don't we?

The church is in peril because many have become complacent. Bible illiteracy is rampant and many of those who identify with Christianity have good moral character and ideals, but are not really conversant with what God has to say on various subjects.

Have you ever been in sales?

A common technique is to ask several questions in a row to which the answer is an obvious yes, before asking for a commitment to the sale. The person becomes used to answering yes and before they know it they have agreed to something they never intended.

Let's look at this closer... Consider a lie. Let's say your daughter comes to you and tells you that she wants to go to a party at Sam's house. You ran into Sam's parents a couple of days ago at the grocery store and they told you that they were going away to the Bahamas to celebrate their 25th anniversary and they are excited about it... You ask your daughter if parents or adults will supervise the party. Your daughter tells you yes, Sam's parents are going to be there and that they told her. You ask her if she is sure and she says absolutely, she knows for sure they will be there. You check with Sam's parents without her knowledge to verify and find they had no idea about it.

Now, you know she is lying... it is clear, she has told you a mistruth, you have the facts and know that she is trying to deceive you. It seems pretty clear this is wrong and deserving of punishment. She has lied to you. She has clearly told you a lie.

Now let's consider another scenario. Let's say that you are a person who is interested in learning about Jesus. A well-known and widely respected person tells you the following:

- 1) They believe in Jesus - check
- 2) Jesus came in the flesh - check
- 3) Jesus fulfilled prophesy from the Old Testament - check
- 4) Jesus died and rose again - check
- 5) Jesus loves you - check
- 6) Jesus was Michael the Archangel incarnate - NOPE...

Now 5/6 things they have said are correct aren't they? I mean, after all they believe in Jesus, they acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh and was a real person not a myth. They acknowledge that Jesus fulfilled prophesy from the Old Testament. They declare that Jesus died and rose again, that's right. Every Christian knows that Jesus loves us, so what could possibly be wrong with what they are telling me. I mean even if they are wrong doesn't the 80/20 rule apply?

First off the best lies and deception hide in the truth. Many truths are given to establish credibility then a person is lead astray. We read above that even God's chosen people, the elect may be deceived. The deception can be subtle... We often make assumptions.

Let's look closer...

What Jesus do they believe in? Is he the Son of God without whom, no man comes to the Father? No clearly based on their 6th statement they believe that he is an incarnation of Michael the Arc Angel.

Jesus came in the flesh... True he did, but he was also fully God a fact that is not recognized here, not only was he real but he was real and fully God.

Jesus fulfilled prophesy from the Old Testament... Very true he is the promised messiah. Jesus died and rose again... another truth. Jesus loves you... yup

The last one... that Jesus is Michael the Arc Angel is the deception; it denies the truth of the deity of Jesus.

On the surface the first statements are given to establish credibility and trust.

Does this one thing really matter?

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:1-7 HCSB

When I came to you, brothers, announcing the testimony of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom. For I didn't think it was a good idea to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a powerful demonstration by the Spirit, so that your faith might not be based on men's wisdom but on God's power.

What Paul is telling us is that our primary doctrines are who is Jesus Christ and how are we saved. He goes on to warn us about the wisdom of mankind.

So far we have been given a warning that even the chosen of God, the elect if you will could be lead astray in deception. We have been warned that we don't have to go to any specific geographic location to find Jesus. When he returns it will be evident to all.

Rev 1:7 says:

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Remember what we read in Matthew 24?

But I have warned you ahead of time. If you are told that the Messiah is out in the desert, don't go there! And if you are told that he is in some secret place, don't believe it! The coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning that can be seen from east to west.

We have also see that it is important to know the scriptures so as not to be deceived.

Let's change gears for a minute here:

How many Christians here are seduced by blatant evil? Do you want to commit atrocities or heinous crimes against humanity? Of course not!

Let me give you two scriptures to consider:

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 16:25

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Just because something is socially acceptable doesn't make it right before God
Just because something is politically acceptable doesn't make it right before God

Just because something is legally acceptable doesn't make it right before God
Just because something is culturally acceptable doesn't make it right before God

Now listen closely...

Just because something is religiously acceptable doesn't make it right before God

You need to know God's opinion on things. You need to read and pray diligently.

Let me talk to you seriously for a moment. Eve the mother of the human race takes a lot of flack over her choice with the apple doesn't she?

Turn with me to Genesis 3:6 YLT

And the woman seeth that the tree is good for food, and that it is pleasant to the eyes, and the tree is desirable to make one wise, and she taketh of its fruit and eateth, and giveth also to her husband with her, and he doth eat;

My friends, Eve didn't see the evil aspect of the tree she saw the good. She saw it was desirable, she wanted good sustenance, she wanted the beautiful of the tree, she saw the desirable aspects of wisdom...

If you get one thing today let it be this...

It was the desirable aspects of the tree; that which she saw was good, that she was attracted to. It wasn't the evil... As Christians we watch out for evil but like we have established today the best lies are couched in truth. The best deceptions have an element of truth to them. For some reason if something seems good to us it slips past our guard. When eve saw that it was good, pleasant and desirable she partook of the tree...

Here again is the warning for today:

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

The peril to the church is that the enemy who was once an angel of light will deceive and lead people away from the truth with a message that seems good and right.

Jesus tells us in Luke 21:8:

And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them

Remember our example? What Jesus are we talking about? The Son of God or Michael?

Here is a bombshell... There are actually churches that actually believe that Jesus is Michael, I didn't make that up!

Jesus the Son of God said in John 14:6:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Some churches believe that good living and good deeds will get you into heaven...

Deception again!

Time and time again we are warned not to be deceived and many sit confident that they can recognize sin based on their moral code, upbringing, culture and so on. Many arrogantly assume that evil will be evident when they are exposed to it. But deception is a wolf in sheep's clothing. In our modern churches, evil is masked as good, and we really need to know God's opinion before doing what Eve did and embrace that which looked good to her.

What is truly hard is that the person who becomes deceived believes with their whole heart that they are right... This is why we don't attack, but we ask question and use the scripture to teach and correct gently. We humble ourselves to bring people who have been lead astray back to Christ. When we have trust and relationship we can speak and be heard. When we attack in anger we are accused of having a wrong spirit and shut out.

Love people, build relationship, teach them to read and pray, show them the real Jesus!

This morning, I need to ask some questions...

- Did you know that evil is able to masquerade as good?
- Will you be vigilant?
- Will you study the scriptures?
- Will you show the love of Christ in a culture of honor one to the other?
- Will you pray for your leadership, each other and your families?

Matthew 7:15-19 HCSB

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither

can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

The enemy will try to attack the church as a wolf in sheep's clothing be vigilant.

We need to know what is Good and what is Evil, but today I would encourage you to know and be able to discern what is of God from that which simply appears Good...

HOW?

Open your bible! Read, study, take notes, ask questions

2 Timothy 3:13-17 HCSB

Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Jesus has also said in John 16:13 HCSB

When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come.

The Holy Spirit will illuminate the scriptures to you. The bible is the inerrant, living rhema Word of God.

- Read his word so that you as his chosen will not be deceived
- Pray so that you learn to hear and obey the voice of God
- Seek the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and allow him to guide you
- Study and ask questions... Be Bereans!

Prayer