

Destroying the Lies

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John wrote, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 Jn. 3:8) There are many aspects of the devil’s work that could be examined here but since deceit is his greatest and most natural weapon (Jn. 8:44), it would seem prudent on our part to consider some of the lies which Jesus is intent upon destroying. After all, if we find ourselves caught up in these deceptions when Jesus consummates the destruction of them, we may well be swept away with them. Jesus’ warning of the sign of the end of the age and of His return still stands: “Take care that *no one* deceives you.” (Mt. 24:5)

John also wrote, “No lie is of the truth.” (1 Jn. 2:21) Will we ever learn that *God* is not deceived by these lies in any way? He knows which aspects of our lives are founded upon truth and which are founded upon error and deception. If we would have our lives be of Him and founded in Him, we must learn to separate *all* lies from the truth and jettison them from our lives – no matter how much we cherished and clung to them before we discovered them to be lies.

Before we came to know God, some of us proclaimed (with our words or with our lives) that there is no God. This lie held us in great bondage as we believed ourselves free but in reality we were bound for hell, bound up in addictive sins and devoid of hope in a dark and dying world that continually demonstrated its dead-end nature. Jesus destroyed that lie by presenting Himself to us repeatedly and in ways we could not deny. He arranged for someone to speak truth to us that led us to know Him more deeply and more accurately. This *is* His way of destroying the lies that cripple and kill us. It does no good to reject or persecute either the first messengers or the later ones who bring us the truths He intends to use to liberate us from our bondage to deceptions.

Some, after coming to know there is a God, still believe there is no hell. Well, these will admit, perhaps there is for other people but not for them because they are now under “grace” – and if this is not a conscious belief, it is at least a subconscious one because these continue to live their lives as if there will be no judgment day in which all the sins they continue to practice will be judged. It is not that these struggle against sin – that is the nature of the genuine life that is submitting to having the lies destroyed by Christ – but rather that these somehow think that Christ and God will simply overlook their ongoing sins for which they are unrepentant by the magic of the “finished work” of Christ on the cross. Make no mistake here – *Christ’s* work to provide redemption and grace (power and mercy) for mankind is done but *our* work in overcoming all the deceptions of Satan is not. Sometimes this is more clearly expressed (in words or attitude) by the idea that “There is no sin in my life” or “There is no need for me to repent.”

It seems strange that in a discussion of such a clear declaration from the Scriptures that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8) that we must even address the idea that some who claim to follow Jesus believe there is no devil! Or, if there is a devil, he’s just a tired, defeated, toothless old tiger who was rendered incompetent and imbecilic at his defeat at the cross of Christ. Satan was certainly and soundly defeated at the cross and stripped of his power over death and mankind but he has not surrendered nor ceased his warfare or his strategies (wiles, con-games of

immense proportion – Eph. 6:11) against the people of Christ – nor will he ever voluntarily cease or surrender. He will be taken prisoner and locked away. (Rev. 20:1-3) The end time followers of Christ will face perilous times and be required to overcome him yet again. (2 Tim. 3:1, Rev. 12:11) And those who loudly proclaim the incompetence, harmlessness or non-existence of the devil are those who most clearly demonstrate the fruit of deception and even possession in their lives, showing that the devil is much more alive and effective in his work than they have ever imagined.

But perhaps the most cunning lie that Christ must destroy is the one that says “My ‘church’ is a good ‘church.’” The multiple layers of this deception are so intertwined and laced together that it is difficult to even discuss which parts are truth and which parts are deception. “Church” (the English word as can be found in any worthwhile dictionary) refers to the “Christian”

- 1) building,
- 2) clergy,
- 3) religion and
- 4) people.

When we compare these meanings to the New Testament, we find that

1) “The Most High God does not dwell in buildings made by human hands” (Acts 7:48) so the “church” building is *not* His house.

2) There is no exalted clergy class whatsoever in the New Testament excepted to be forbidden (1 Pet. 5:3) yet the clergy derives their name from the Greek word used in this very verse that originally described *all* the people (and not a select, exalted few “leaders”) as God’s heritage or portion. (see *kleros* [2819])

3) “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (Jas. 1:27) More money is spent on “church” buildings and clergy salaries than on all outreach, charity and missions combined and showing how much like the world we can be and still be a “Christian” is a very acceptable norm at many, if not most “churches.”

4) The word “church” has historically been used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. [1577] This word *ekklesia* is a political word that refers to the political assembly that gathered to attend to the affairs and issues of their particular locale. The Christians appropriated the word (just as they had with other words such as *agape* [26] which now refers to God’s unique and transcendent love for mankind) and thus *ekklesia* refers to the people who have been translated from darkness to light and are now to gather to attend to the affairs and issues of Christ’s kingdom as they need addressed in their particular

locale. Thus *people* – the *fourth* definition of the English word “church” – is the only sense in which the word “church” has any relationship with *ekklesia*.

Three parts deception, one part truth – tells the story very nicely. What will make most people squirm though is that these three parts of deception are destined to be *destroyed by Christ*, the One whose name is used to create and propagate these things!

But if all this doesn't suffice to bring enlightenment, consider further that Jesus never once used the word “church” (it's an English word, after all – and English wouldn't come into existence for almost 1500 years!) and further, He most likely didn't even use the Greek word *ekklesia*. (Having been sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” – Mt. 15:24 – Greek studies are not likely to have been high on His list!) Thus we can observe that Christ proclaimed the kingdom of God but it was the *ekklesia* and then the “church” that took the preeminence. Matthew alone puts the word *ekklesia* into Jesus' teachings (3 times in 2 verses – Mt. 16:18, 18:17) and on that scant basis some scholars have even tried to get us to believe that “church” is therefore a major theme in Matthew's gospel! Three usages do not a major theme make!

But the story does not end there. In 1611, perhaps in response to King James' arbitrary edict to retain “certain of the old words: viz a viz, church,” his translators put “church” in one place where “temple” obviously belongs (Acts 19:37) and three times used “assembly” to translate *ekklesia* more accurately (Acts 19:32, 39, 41), displaying, for those who could see it, the confusion the King's edict would cause. It is simply undeniable that deception abounds in the treatment of this word *ekklesia* and it can also be observed that ecclesiology (the study of the governing and organizing of Christ's people) suffers perhaps the most (in comparison to the other categories of Scriptural insight – soteriology, eschatology, etc.) from deceptive linguistic subterfuge and confusion. It has been rightly said that the best way to restore the lost concept of *ekklesia* is to incorporate it back into English in its transliterated form as has been done here. Only in this way will we have a communication basis by which to begin to even discuss which is original and genuine and which is appended or even counterfeit, that is, which is “church” and which is *ekklesia*.

Fitting like a hand and glove with the “church” paradigm deception described above is a second deception which Christ must inevitably destroy – that of the “pastor” behind a pulpit upon a platform as the chief executive officer (CEO) of the “church.” Let us examine this deception with the most easily demonstrable item first.

- The pulpit cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament – neither can the platform. They simply don't exist there. But they are center stage (literally!) in almost every “church” around the world. The pulpit is the centerpiece of all furniture in the “Christian” religion yet it cannot be found anywhere in the pages of the New Testament. This alone should cause those who truly want to follow Christ and God to hesitate to participate in its usage – but when one discovers where it does truly come from, genuine followers of Christ should want to burn it! The pulpit and platform were imported directly from the pagan temples of the 2nd and 3rd centuries into the “Christian” temples that were funded by Constantine. The pulpit was called the “ambo” and the platform demonstrated the exalted qualities of the pontiffs (“bridges” – note well how the Catholic sect imported this title as well for its clergy) between the people and the gods. Yet the New Testament tells us that there is only one mediator between

God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:5) This discrepancy is routinely overlooked or ignored.

- Jesus said, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them are given the title Benefactor. But you are not to be like that.” (Lk. 22:25-26) Any person who holds any position that they think gives them the right to exercise authority over other believers is deceived. If the “pastor” holds the power of a CEO, he or she is deceived, a victim of this second of Satan’s schemes against the people of Christ.

- The Greek word poorly translated “pastor” is *poimen* [4166] and it really means “shepherd.” It is used 18 times in the New Testament and only 1 time is it ever rendered “pastor” – and even then the word is plural! There simply is no evidence in the New Testament of there being a single “pastor” over any assembly and there is certainly no place for “pastors” being in some sort of chain of command over other believers.. The evidence shows that it was only in the ante-nicene era (the years directly after the original apostles passed from the scene) that “bishops” began practicing and teaching what church history calls “the ascendancy of the bishopric,” that is, the “bishop” standing over the people as the lord or president of an assembly. Paul prophesied to the Ephesian elders, “From your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30) This is precisely what happened. From the ranks of the elders “bishops” rose up and distorted the truth so as to keep those who followed after them “safe” in “the truth” (as they saw and taught it – which too often was neither truth nor even scriptural!) The people of Christ have yet to recover from succumbing to this deception but Christ will destroy it soon.

The third effective deception that Christ must destroy in order to separate us from the idea that the way we practice “church” is good in His eyes is one Paul said was already at work in his day – the mystery of lawlessness. (2 Ths. 2:7) If all we have is an intellectual’s understanding of this word, we will come up short. A mystery must be revealed by God or it will not be rightly understood. Lawlessness (Greek *anomia* [458]) is literally “no law” or “without law.” Since we have been delivered from the clutches of the law (Col. 2:15, etc.) why is being “without law” such a sin that we would be eternally dismissed by Christ? (see Mt. 7:23) Lawlessness is best described as “doing what is right in one’s own eyes.” This was the condition of the Israelites who had no king (Jdgs. 21:25) and it is the condition of many “Christians” today who do not literally and actively submit to Christ as King and Lord but instead use His name as some kind of feel-good crutch to prop up their self-focused lives as they continue to do whatever seems good to them according to their own tastes and preferences. This is how they choose which “church” to attend, which “theology” to embrace, which “man of God” to submit to and support, etc. But this is merely and only lawlessness, doing what is right in one’s own eyes. Paul wrote that lawlessness, what is right in one’s own eyes, has nothing in common with righteousness, what is right in God’s eyes. (2 Cor. 6:14) This mindset of doing what is right in one’s own eyes (called relativism in secular philosophy) is one of the chief methods by which a believer is lured away from diligent obedience to Christ and God and into self- or demonic-

directed activities. Jesus said that in the days before His return, “lawlessness will abound and the love of many will be cold.” (Mt. 24:12)

The fourth deception that Christ by His Spirit of truth must destroy is that which we were warned of by Peter. “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” (2 Pet. 2:1) Most often we think that “destructive heresies” here is referring to “error,” blatantly false teachings that stand in stark contrast to the standard, basic teachings of the New Testament. This false understanding is aided along nicely by the KJV’s mis-rendering of it as “*damnable heresies*.” But this is simply not so.

The Greek word here is “*hairesis*” [139] and it has several meanings. It can refer to “the act of taking or capturing,” as in storming a city. It can refer to “choosing, choice or that which is chosen.” It can refer to “a body of men following their own tenets” (sect or party like the Sadducees, Pharisees and even Christians). Or it can refer to “dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims.” It is a direct opposite to the concept of the body of Christ which is based in unity and oneness. “Hairesis” is dividedness and multiplicity.

Peter is not referring to error, but divisions, dangerous divisions – various groups of “Christians” (some even possessing genuine faith in Christ Jesus) each separating off into its own little place and refusing to have much, if anything, to do with other groups who claim to have Christ but who also have a different understanding on some doctrine, tenet, practice or feature of “Christianity.” Today, we call that denominationalism – and it is the accepted order of following Christ. It is a truth, as is said in many “churches” these days, though not for the reason they suppose, that it doesn’t really matter which denomination (“*hairesis*”) you follow or adhere to – it doesn’t matter because attaching yourself and adhering to any one of them will keep you from inheriting the kingdom of God! (Gal. 5:21) Serious business indeed!

When Peter says these divisions were secretly introduced, it is meant in much the same way as what Jesus said about how the tares were planted – men slept. (Mt. 13:25) And when Peter says that these divisions deny the Lord who bought them, he has, in a prophetically “cryptic” way, told us that those who are in these divisions do not practice submission to the Lordship of Christ Jesus. (see *despotes* [1203]) The “church” with its many denominations merely gives Him lip service but does not produce many true saints who do the work of the kingdom of God.

Churchianity *is* the great falling away from the faith that occurs before the return of Christ. (2 Ths. 2:3, Mt. 24:10) The systematic dividing of the people of Christ into various groups is no accident – it is a scheme of the enemy to keep us from being unified. When we are unified, the world will know that we are believers in Christ and it will clearly demonstrate – even to the world – that Christ came from God. (Jn. 17:21-23) Is it any wonder Satan would strive mightily to concoct a grand strategy to secretly bring in division among the people who name the name of Christ? And what does it say about the vast majority of people who claim to follow Christ but see nothing wrong with practicing denominational division in His name? Only that the prophecies about the *great* falling away are being fulfilled before our very eyes and that the vast majority of “Christians” are just like the Jews of Jesus’ day who had eyes but did not see and ears but did not hear.

Jesus said, “When the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth.” (Jn. 16:13) In order for Him to guide us into all truth He *must* lead us out of all deception. If we do not love the truth and we refuse to leave behind the deceptions, then God will give us over to strong delusion so that we should believe the lie that whatever we prefer really is God (or at least

approved or tolerated by Him) so that we may be rightly condemned because we did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Ths. 2:11-12) And in the Revelation, we are warned that “whoever loves and practices a lie” will be banished from God’s eternal city, the new Jerusalem. (Rev. 22:15)

When God showed John that Jesus intended to destroy the works of the devil, He meant it. (1 Jn. 3:8) We do well to believe it.

Let he who has ears hear.

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