

Modern Devices

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The Church must remain expectant of Christ's return and be aware of Satan's attack on her, lest she fall into error and lose her Scriptural character and witnessing power.

Scripture: Matthew 7:20, Matthew 24:42, Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 2 Timothy 4:3, Hebrews 10:19, 2 Peter 3:3, Revelation 3:17, Revelation 13:3

Topics: "Christ's Return", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer emphasizes the importance of the Church's anticipation of Christ's return, warning against losing sight of this hope which leads to spiritual decline and worldly distractions. He highlights the necessity of true devotion to Christ, which naturally results in a deep desire to be with Him and eagerly await His return. Chafer discusses how Satan has strategically discredited the imminent return of Christ to establish his own authority and deceive humanity. He also addresses the rise of false doctrines and counterfeit systems that divert believers from the essential truth of Christ's atoning work, leading them astray with secondary truths and human-centered ideologies.

Transcript

It has been the privilege and duty of the Church throughout her history to be looking for the return of the One to whom she has been espoused. Had her eyes never wandered from that expectant gaze, she would have been saved much sorrow and shame at His coming, for she has lost her Scriptural character and much of her witnessing power whenever she has said "My Lord delayeth his coming." It is then that she has fallen to beating the manservants and the maidservants, and has become drunken with the wine of this world.

True devotion to Christ must naturally issue in a deep desire to be with Him and to see Him face to face; and though it is quite possible to have been misled or untaught in regard to the conditions of His coming, the contemplation of such a promise from Him can but kindle a glowing hope in a truly devoted heart. It is a direct contradiction to claim supreme affection for Him, and yet be careless of His promised return, or wholly contented while separated from Him. The world, that cannot comprehend such devotion to Christ, will easily chide the believer, and denounce him for what they now call his "other worldness" when his affections are set on things above, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," and when his heart rejoices in the certain hope that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

It was necessary for Satan to rob the Church, to a great extent, of her "blessed hope" of Christ's return, before he could attract attention to his own attempts at world improvement, and establish his own authority as ruler over this age. Expectation along the God-appointed lines must be abandoned, for the most part, before humanity can be federated, and religious institutions be made to co-operate in the Satanic program.

This vital key-truth of the imminent return of Christ was, therefore, first discredited, and then followed by an attack upon the deity of the Son of God and His sacrificial death; which attack is ever increasing, and must increase to the very end. The body of truth concerning the Lord's return is so extensive that there have always been some humble and devout souls who have dared to believe His promises, and thus the real Church, to some extent, her watch has been keeping.

The mighty tool in Satan's hands for the destroying of the hope of Christ's coming has been a simple one: zealous souls have been found who, ignoring the statements of Scripture, would attempt to fix the day of His coming. Then, as their prophecy failed, the world and many in the Church have laughed them to scorn. Unfortunately they came to laugh also at the very promise of God, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and in so doing they have fulfilled some of the very things that are predicted for the end of the age: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts (desires), and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (II Pet. 3:3, 4). Thus Satan's authority is being established.

The exact time of Christ's return has not been revealed; nor will it be announced by a prophet. Nevertheless, the "children of light and the children of the day" "are not in darkness that that day should overtake them as a thief" (I Thes. 5:4,5). It is their privilege to rejoice in every promise of His coming, and to recognize every new indication of His nearness, as eagerly as the betrothed awaits her beloved. The true believer's glory, as well as his union with loved ones in Christ, is imminent, and by faith he can look beyond the days of the earth's greatest anguish, and, seeing the triumph of all blessedness, he can rejoice in the hope of His Lord's coming, and be praying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is, therefore, impossible to know how much of time yet remains for the gathering out of the Bride and the development of Satan's rule; yet it is evident that within the last generation the exact fulfillment of those things which are predicted for the last days has begun, and is even now developing faster than the mind can comprehend.

Not all the signs of the times have a place in these pages, but only such as are directly connected with the working of Satan.

Since the blood redemption of the Cross is the central truth and value of the true faith, it being the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:23, 24), any counterfeit system of doctrine which would omit this essential, must force some secondary truth into the place of prominence. Any of the great Scriptural subjects which are of universal interest to humanity, such as physical health, immortality, morality, or religious forms, may be substituted in the false systems, for that which is vital. And while those subjects are all found in their proper relations and importance in the true faith, the fact that people are universally inclined to give attention to them furnishes an opportunity for Satan to make a strong appeal to humanity through them; using these subjects as central truths in his false and counterfeit systems. Many are easily led to fix their attention upon the secondary things, and to neglect wholly the one primary thing; especially

is this true since the secondary things are tangible and seen: while the one essential thing is spiritual and unseen; and Satan has blinded their eyes toward that which is of eternal value.

A system of doctrine may, then, be formed which includes every truth of Scripture save one; exalting the Person of Christ, but not His atoning work, and emphasizing some secondary truth as its central value. This system will be readily accepted by blinded humanity, though the real power of God unto salvation has been carefully withdrawn.

Naturally it would be supposed that such Satan-inspired systems would have no value or power, since there could be no Divine favor upon them. Such a supposition would be possible only because of the prevailing misunderstanding as to the real power of Satan. If the description given of him in Scripture is accepted, he will be seen to be possessed with miraculous power; able to perform such marvels that the whole world is led to wonder and then to worship. He is free also to bestow this miraculous power upon others (Rev. 13:2). So it is no marvel if his ministers, who appear as the ministers of righteousness, are able to exert superhuman power when it is directly in the interest of the Satanic projects.

The great power of Satan has doubtless been active along these lines during all the ages past; for it is impossible that humanity should have worshipped other gods blindly without some recompense, and it is Satan himself who has been thus worshipped (Lev. 17:7; II Chron. 11:15; Rev. 9:20).

It is not final evidence, therefore, that a system of doctrine is of God simply because there are accompanying manifestations of superhuman power; nor is it final evidence that the Almighty has responded, simply because any form of supplication has been answered. The Divine movements are, of necessity, limited by the laws of His own holiness, and access into His presence is by the blood of Jesus alone; by a new and living Way which was consecrated for us through His flesh (Heb. 10:19, 20). Assuming to come before God in prayer, but ignoring this truth, is but to insult, with pollution, Him who is infinitely Holy and pure. Satan, who is aspiring to the place of the Almighty, may answer the prayer of his own subjects, even though that prayer is blindly addressed to the Supreme Being. Surely the Satan-ruled world does not come before God by the blood of Jesus.

Though false systems of doctrine have always existed, counterfeits in hypocrisy are a distinct characteristic of the last days of the present age. And it is a most significant fact that within the last generation such systems have appeared and are rapidly multiplying: systems that borrow every phase of the true faith, but one, and are conspicuous in that they emphasize some secondary truth with what seems, at times, to be miraculous power. Multitudes are being won to these creeds, both because of their apparent religious aspect, and by the actual results they accomplish.

There is probably no subject of more universal interest than that of physical health; and but recently "Christian Science" has appeared, which chiefly emphasizes physical health. While it gathers into itself some elements that are foreign both to Christianity and to Science, and appropriates much from the field of psychology, it assumes to be an infallible interpretation of Scripture, and makes Jesus its highest exponent and teacher. Yet it positively denies even the reality of sin and the need of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Its followers are won and held by these religious claims, and by the actual physical and mental transformations that are secured. Nothing but ignorance will attempt to deny that, to some extent, its claims are real. That it has assemblies, ministers, and mysteries deep and profound, and that it is able to demonstrate its claims of physical transformation, does not lift it above the level of Satan's power. That it denies even the need of the blood of the Cross, separates it, in spite of its claims, from the God of the

Scriptures, and brands it with every characteristic of Satan's counterfeit.

Another subject, already mentioned, which is of common interest to humanity, is immortality. How persistently man has sought to see beyond the veil! And yet how little of fact has been discovered, beyond that which it has pleased God to reveal in His Word! How strong is the desire of the heart to follow the departed into the great unseen! And how subtle is "Spiritism" in its election of a phase of the immortality question as its bait to beguile sorrow-crushed souls into a disregard of their only hope in the blood of Christ.

This system has existed from the earliest ages and has the unqualified condemnation of Scripture; yet in the last half-century it has taken new interest and dignity to itself under the modern title of "Psychical Research." With boldest assumption it claims to be the only safe exponent of truth, and to be working in the interests of science; changing science being accepted as more trustworthy than revelation. It offers as final evidence for its assumptions, what are represented to be the statements of deceased people.

Less is made of the Scriptures in this system: yet here, as might be expected, there is violent opposition to the doctrine of Regeneration.

It cannot possibly be denied that there is an intelligent response to the human appeal from the Unseen; and messages are being received and mysterious acts are being performed with increasing frequency. It cannot, however, be proven that this response is from the spirit of the person named, for a lying spirit could easily know enough of any person's life to represent him in every detail. That the whole system could be of Satan is evident, and since it denies man's only hope of redemption, it is no part of the real truth of God. It, too, bears all the marks of the workings of Satan.

Another system of thought called "New," but which is as old as human philosophy, appropriates every phase of metaphysical belief. The central idea of the "New Thought" is the complete development of man,--body, soul, and spirit. Every possible human power is utilized; there is recognition of the Creator; the Word of God is appropriated in convenient texts; and Christ is claimed by its followers to be the complete example and embodiment of all their ideals. Newly stated theories of psychology are included in this system, and the whole teaching stands as the embodiment of all the ideals of the one who first suggested to humanity that they, by their own efforts, become as God. The system wholly denies Scriptural regeneration, both as to its necessity and as a fact; and is a veritable worship of self, as predicted for the last days (II Tim. 3:2). It substitutes the development of the will as a power for victory in the life, in place of the God-provided victory over sin by the Spirit. Its followers seem to be utterly blind to the plainest truths of the Scriptures, and are marvelling at what they suppose to be a discovery; when, perchance, they are able to comprehend some secondary truth of the Word of God. This system, like "Christian Science," numbers its followers by the hundreds of thousands. They support many periodicals, and their teachings are read and accepted throughout the world.

In all these doctrines there is included much of the precious truth of God, but this is employed only as a bait to cover the relentless hook of Satan, by which he seeks to draw human souls away from God and into perdition. Not one positive word is said of the future state of man, or of his fitness to meet his God, and any belief in immortality is borrowed from the revelation of God; for the systems themselves are given over to distracting and diverting man from the thought of his need of a Divinely wrought preparation for eternity. It is commonly stated by the followers of these systems that it is of little importance what one believes, for it is the life that counts. Thus the great and necessary fact that any true character as well as

any eternal blessedness depends upon what one believes, rather than on the life, is discredited.

These systems are mentioned only as examples of the almost innumerable doctrines that are sweeping the world to-day. They often reappear under new and misleading titles. The truth they acknowledge, and many forces they employ, are God's gracious provision for His saints; yet when these truths and forces are used alone, where the real purpose of God is skillfully omitted, they become only the hypocrisy that covers and garnishes a lie.

Again, many are deluded by the emphasis upon the mere outward forms of the visible Church. When these forms are analyzed, they appear to represent a church ministered to by a recognized ordained minister who depends upon his own personality for his power; and who preaches ethics and morality drawn from Scripture texts and other ethical writings. Prayers are offered, imploring the Almighty to aid humanity in its attempts to commend itself to Him by a more or less faithful practice of religion. The pleasures of music as an art are provided at fabulous cost, in place of the praise that is inspired by the Spirit of God. Social gatherings are held, to take the place of the unity of the Spirit and the love of the brethren. Humanitarian appeals for the betterment of the world are made, in place of the evangelical regeneration by the Cross; and not one reference to the real Gospel is made from one year to the next, unless it be in a covered denial. The sleeping congregations are seemingly satisfied with a mockery of the truth, and are content with a doctrine that proposes to educate souls into hell, and which encourages them to make a few efforts toward self-development while on their certain road to perdition. It is no longer good form in society to be without some church relations, yet the one and only true basis for salvation may never have been comprehended or accepted by a multitude of these members. Truly the god of this world is accomplishing his end, and his blinded followers are coming to be numbered with the faithful. The evil birds are flocking to the mustard tree, and the corrupting leaven is permeating the measures of meal.

The last development of the earth history of the visible Church is predicted to be a condition in which the Church is saying, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." The passage continues, "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:17-20). If Scripture language and figure mean anything, this is a description of an unregenerate Church over which the Lord is pleading. It is from this Church that He has withdrawn; and is seen outside, standing and knocking. His hope is not centered upon reforming the whole mass of professing members; for his offer is to the individual "any man" with whom He will then have personal communion and fellowship.

Sad is the spectacle of these churches; meeting week after week to be beguiled by the philosophy of men, and raising no voice in protest against the denial of their only foundation as a church, and of their only hope for time and eternity! Far more honorable were the infidels of the past generation than these ministers. They were wholly outside the Church. But now, behold the inconsistency! Men who are covered by the vesture of the Church, ministering its sacraments, and supported by its benevolence, are making an open attack upon that wisdom of God which made Christ Jesus the only ground for all righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The predictions for the last days are thus not only being fulfilled by false systems and doctrines, but they are found in the visible Church itself. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having

itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3, 4).

Great religious activities are possible without coming into complications with saving faith. It is possible to be more concerned over the untimely death of one hundred thousand drunkards than with the Christ-less death of twenty million human beings; or to be wholly concerned with the educational and physical needs of the heathen, and to neglect their greatest need in regeneration. Thus Satan may gain his own ends, even through some so-called missionary undertakings, for in this manner he can beguile untaught saints to limit their work to the lines of his highest ideals. It is possible to fight against sin and not present the Saviour; or to urge the highest Scriptural ideals and yet offer no reasonable way of attainment.

There is a strange fascination about these undertakings which are humanitarian, and are religious only in form and title. And there is a strange attraction in the leader who announces that he is not concerned with the doctrines of Scripture, because the helping of humanity is his one passion and care: yet all his passion is lost and his care is to no real end unless coupled with a very positive message of a particular way of Salvation, the true understanding of which demands a series of most careful distinctions.

Recently the word "pragmatism" has been brought into popular use to denote the test by which the pragmatists measure all systems, theories and doctrines. The pragmatic inquiry when applied to any system, theory, or doctrine may be understood to mean, "does it meet its claims in practice?" Although much is being made of this phase of pragmatism, the test is as old as the race, and verified by Scripture, for Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." However, the burden of testing claims has never before been so great, for the world was never so filled with new and strange theories as now. And these modern systems that deny true salvation in Christ are growing mightily under this test. They offer comparatively little and are usually able to meet their claims. "Christian Science" does, to some extent, change the condition of mind and body. "Spiritism" offers a demonstration from the invisible, and the demonstrations appear. "New Thought" proposes a development of the whole natural man, and thrives by the practical test of "pragmatism." The same is true of all other similar systems and doctrines, and will be true of those that may yet appear, since it is the very program of Satan as it is revealed in his last blasphemous counterfeit of the Son of God; for it is written in Rev. 13:3, 4 that they first wondered at the miracles of the Man of Sin, and then worshipped. Woe to the untaught soul who stands wondering to-day at the marvels of this evil age, if he be without a sense of the importance and value of the priceless blood of the Cross! The step is not far, for such an one, to the place where he falls in worship: worship of a being who is supposed to have forgotten abhorrence of sin and abandoned all eternal covenants of mercy by blood alone; a being who is supposed to be glad that the world has outgrown the old unbearable estimates of sin and redemption, and into whose presence the worshipper is supposed to be free to come on the ground of his fallen human nature, or the "universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

Who can be the god of these systems? the energizing power in these people? and the answerer of their prayers? Surely not the God of the Scriptures, who cannot deny himself, and whose word cannot be made to pass away! Revelation sets forth but one other being who is capable of these undertakings; and it not; only assigns to this being a great and sufficient motive for all such activity, but clearly predicts that he will thus "oppose" and "exalt himself" in this very day and age.

Much of the secondary truth is the present inheritance of the child of God: yet, if there is a choice to be made, the deepest wisdom will perceive that all the combined secondary values that Satan can offer are but for a fleeting time; and are not worthy to be compared with the eternal riches of grace in Christ Jesus.

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