

# Deception Through False Signs and Wonders

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon warns against deception through false signs and wonders, and encourages listeners to focus on following Jesus and His teachings.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Matthew 1:21, Matthew 5:6, Matthew 23:15, Matthew 24:24, Acts 8:18-23, 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, Philippians 2:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, James 5:14-15

**Topics:** "Deception in the Church", "True Gospel vs. False Teachings"

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## Description

Zac Poonen warns about the prevalent deception in Christendom through false signs and wonders, echoing the warnings of Jesus and Paul regarding 'another Jesus,' 'another spirit,' and 'another gospel' that cater to earthly desires rather than leading to true repentance and holiness. He emphasizes the need for believers to discern the true nature of ministry by comparing preachers to Jesus, focusing on their objectives, attitudes, and approaches to healing. Poonen highlights that many modern preachers prioritize miracles and entertainment over the essential message of freedom from sin, which is the core of Jesus' mission. He explains that God allows deceivers to test the faith of His people, revealing the idols of money and entertainment that have infiltrated the church. Ultimately, Poonen calls for a return to the true gospel that leads to genuine holiness and a relationship with Christ.

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## Transcript

There is a lot of deception in Christendom these days through false signs and wonders - just as Jesus warned us in Matthew 24:24, and as Paul did in 2 Thessalonians 2:9.

Paul also warned us in 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 about the nature of this deception: It is being deceived by another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel.

"Another Jesus" - who does not ask anyone to take up his cross and to die to his self-life daily.

"Another spirit" - who gives people thrills and exciting feelings but does not give them power to be holy.

"Another gospel" - that requires no repentance and that caters to people's earthly needs but does not deliver them from sin (which is the root-cause of ALL their problems).

Thus people are being made "twofold the children of hell" (Matt.23:15).

To escape deception, we must look at Jesus and see how today's preachers compare with Him.

### 1. Do they have the same primary objective?

The very FIRST promise in the New Testament is "Jesus - He will save His people from their sins" (Matt.1:21). This is the main purpose with which Jesus came to earth. So a truly Spirit-led ministry will seek to free people from sinning. Everything else - including healing and miracles and prophecy will be secondary.

### 2. Do they have the same attitude?

We are commanded in Scripture: "Let this attitude be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil.2:5). We should therefore compare the attitude of every preacher with that of Jesus. We should ask ourselves these questions about every preacher we hear:

- (i) Is he a humble man - as Jesus was?
- (ii) Does he lead people to freedom from sin and genuine holiness - as Jesus did?
- (iii) Does he ask people to give money to him or to his ministry? Jesus never did.
- (iv) Can ordinary, poor people contact him easily - as they could contact Jesus?

For further confirmation, we could ask these questions as well:

- (a) Does he lead people to Christ - and not to himself?
- (b) Are his children God-fearing?
- (c) Has he built at least one godly church?
- (d) Are his main co-workers godly men?

### 3. Do they have the same approach to healing?

In the Gospels, we do not read of Jesus preaching even one sermon on how to receive miracles or healing. But He actually healed thousands of people.

In Acts of the Apostles, we do not read of the apostles preaching even one sermon on how to receive miracles or healing. But they actually healed many people. (The 21 epistles in the New Testament also make no mention of physical healing at all - except for one passage in James 5:14,15, where it is the elder who is urged to have faith and not the sick person!)

But what we find today (especially over Christian TV) is the exact opposite of this: We hear hundreds of sermons on miracles and healings - but we hardly ever see any genuine, miraculous healings. Most of the so-called "healings" shown over TV have proven to be fakes or unsubstantiated by independent sources.

Jesus and the apostles did however speak a lot about being free from sin. But we hardly ever hear a sermon today (over TV or from church pulpits) on how to be free from sins like anger, lust after women and the love of money (as Jesus preached in Matthew chapters 5 and 6).

In Scripture, there is a name for anything that is the opposite of what Christ did: "anti-Christ". Today, this spirit of antichrist has spread widely in evangelical Christendom. This is one proof that Satan has

penetrated Christendom deeply with deception.

Why does God allow deceivers among His people?

In Deuteronomy 13:1-3, we are told why God allows such deceivers to move freely among His people:

"If a prophet arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul".

God allows false prophets to do real signs and wonders and to prophesy things that come true, in order to test His children - to see whether they love Him or the gods that the false prophets invite them to follow. Two of the main gods that false prophets invite Christians to follow these days are the gods of "money" and "entertainment".

Money. People are urged to seek for wealth and health by giving money to the preacher's ministry. Peter however rebuked the magician Simon when he tried to give Peter money in order to purchase God's gifts (Acts 8:18-23).

Entertainment. Churches have become places of entertainment where worldly music styles and other worldly programs are promoted to attract people. Thus Satan (the ruler of this world system) has succeeded in making Christians worldly-minded and ineffective for God.

Millions of Christians follow the teachings of these false prophets today because such teachings satisfy their fleshly lusts. Thus these false gods have become the idols that Christians worship in most churches today.

He who has ears to hear let him hear.

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