

(The Last Days and the Lord's Coming) Great Deception

by Zac Poonen

The main characteristic of the last days is deception, and we must be discerning and recognize false prophets and false teachers to avoid being misled.

Duration: 57:31

Scripture: Matthew 7:22

Topics: "End Times", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being ready to meet the Lord at any moment. He highlights the humility of acknowledging that our lives are in God's hands and that we should always seek His will. The speaker also discusses the distinction between true believers and those who may perform miracles or prophesy but do not give up sin. He warns about the possibility of deception in the last days and emphasizes the need to know the Lord and forsake sin. The sermon references passages from James 4, Matthew 7, and Matthew 24 to support these teachings.

Transcript

In our last study, we were looking at what the book of Revelation speaks about the bride and the harlot, about the true church that keeps itself as a virgin for Christ, and the false church, which has the right doctrine, but which is not devoted to Christ. When Jesus spoke about wolves in lamb's clothing, wolves in lamb's clothing are the harlot, and the lamb is the bride. So, we want to also think about things related to the last days, because we are approaching the second coming of Christ, and we need to be ready for it, we need to see what the Bible teaches about it.

There is only one book in the whole world that can tell us exactly what is going to happen in the future. It doesn't tell us everything about the future, because a lot of it, I think, people would like to know just to satisfy their curiosity. The Bible is written in such a way that you can either go there to find out how to live a godly life, or you can go there to find out a whole lot of unnecessary information which doesn't help you to live a godly life.

And if we ask why has God written it like that, it is in order to bring a division among believers, so that God can find out who is interested in a godly life, and who is only interested in intellectual curiosity. You know, when I get a lot of emails and questions from people, I can see that, that division taking place, that some

people read the Bible because they really want to know how to overcome sin, how to live a godly life, and there are people who ask me questions concerning that. And then there are other people who read the same Bible, and from their questions, the type of questions they ask are absolutely unrelated to living a godly life.

Things in the Bible, what about this and what about that, of course I don't waste my time answering those questions. I don't even reply to them, because these folks are not interested in godliness. And we have to be very careful when we come in to think of a subject like the last days and the second coming of Christ.

We can be taken up with trying to find out so many details of what is going to happen, and so many details about how will it be when Christ reigns on earth for a thousand years, and we are going to have glorified bodies, and we are going to be able to move around, and there are other people here who are not converted, who have still got the old bodies. But quite frankly, I don't want to know. I think these are all questions that people ask, who are not passionately devoted to Jesus Christ.

To me, when Christ returns, I'll tell you honestly, I really won't be interested in anything or anybody else except Christ himself. Have you seen young people who are in love with each other, how they like to wander off by themselves somewhere, and they don't want anyone around. They are not interested in what's happening in the whole world around them, because they just love one another.

Well, I'll tell you honestly, that's my relationship with Christ. So I couldn't care less what's going to happen in the world around me. But when you are interested in all those little, little details, that's a clear proof, perhaps you are not in the bride at all, because you are more interested in all types of unnecessary details, which shows that you are not passionately in love with the bridegroom.

So I want to encourage you. What Paul said, I have a godly jealousy, I desire to present you as a pure virgin to Christ, who is deeply in love with the bridegroom. And when you are in love with the bridegroom himself, you are really not interested in all those little details.

Like I said, two lovers are by themselves, they are not interested in what's happening in the whole world around them. There could be bomb explosions taking place one mile away from them, it wouldn't even bother them. That's how we must be devoted to Christ.

So when we study the details of the last days, the most important thing which Jesus said in relation to the last days was, you must be ready. He always said that. He never said, understand all the details.

He said, be ready. Then there is another group of people who have been there throughout the centuries, who want to try and predict the exact date of Christ's return. And through the years, people have quoted different dates.

They said he'd come in 1080, I think that was one of the first, and then 2080. And then in 1800, there were a couple of dates, somebody said 1841, 1844, the seven-day Adventist leaders said things like that. And then through the years, there are people who predicted that Christ would come at different times in the 20th century.

But Jesus said, no one knows the exact day or the hour. But he did say, you will know when he is near. So we will know when his coming is near, but we will not know the exact day or the hour.

And then people try to frighten people into a holy life by saying, don't sin because Christ might come tonight and you won't be ready. I'll tell you another thing. If you are engaged to somebody, and you are keeping yourself as a pure virgin for him, and you are keeping yourself pure only because he may suddenly land up tonight, oh, then I don't want him to catch me fooling around with another man.

I mean, if that's the only reason why you want to be devoted to your absent bridegroom, I'd say you are already a harlot. Don't you think so? I mean, if it's a human bridegroom you are engaged to, and the only reason you don't want to be found with another man tonight is because you are afraid your bridegroom may turn up tonight and he might catch you with another man. You are a harlot through and through.

So when your desire for purity is because, oh, Christ may come tonight, I don't want him to catch me watching internet pornography while he comes. I don't want him to catch me yelling at my wife when he comes, and that's the reason to be holy. Brothers, sisters, you are a harlot, spiritual harlot.

Your only interest is that the bridegroom should not catch you fooling around with sin. What if you knew that, let's assume that in an earthly engagement, you know for definite that your bridegroom is away and he's not going to come back for ten years. What are you going to do? Definitely he's not coming back for ten years.

Are you going to fool around with somebody else? That's the test. Supposing I say to you, Christ is not going to come back for another ten years, brother, sister, relax. So what? You are going to sin? Many people think it's the immediacy of Christ's coming that's going to make us holy.

No, that type of holiness is the fear of being caught, not the fear of God. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 7, we must perfect holiness in the fear of God, not in the fear of being caught. The fear of being caught, even a thief has, an adulterer has.

Don't you think all adulterers in the world have a fear of being caught? Don't you think all thieves have a fear of being caught? Don't you think all murderers have a fear of being caught? Every sinner has a fear of being caught. That's not holiness. I say to any of you, if you are trying to be holy because you're afraid you'll be caught, I want to say to you that holiness is counterfeit.

You're not part of the bride because you want to be holy because Christ may come any moment. So that is not the motivation for holiness, certainly not for me. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

And it'll be sad, of course, if you're not ready when Christ comes. But if you're fooled around a lot with sin and just at that particular moment when Christ comes, you don't happen to be sinning, you're sitting in church singing in the choir or something, you think that's going to make you holy? It's like, to use the picture of earthly engagement again, supposing you've been constantly fooling around with other men and then at the time when the bridegroom lands up, you happen to be not fooling around with anybody. Does that make you pure? Just think of that.

Think of your relationship with Christ exactly like being engaged to an absent bridegroom who may come. And if you're, that's what I'm saying, if you're engaged to an absent bridegroom, that's why I say the second coming of Christ is not the reason why you should live a holy life. No.

He didn't say, I may come suddenly, so keep my commandments. No. He said in John 14, 15, if you love me, keep my commandments.

If you don't love me, don't keep my commandments. And I want to tell you in Jesus' name that if you keep God's commandments in your private life, you love Jesus. In your private life, in the areas of the life that nobody can see.

If you don't keep God's commandments in those areas, you're a first-rate hypocrite. I want to tell you right now, you're part of Babylon the harlot, even if you sit in this church. That's very important to know that.

So I'm not going to preach about the second coming of Christ to frighten you all into living a holy life. Because that's not the reason I live a holy life. It doesn't matter to me if Christ is going to come 500 years from now.

Absolutely not. My devotion to Christ is because I love him because he first loved me. Not because he might come any moment.

So that's very important to clear that ground because a lot of preaching in Christendom is Christ may come any moment, you better be ready. What if Christ is not going to come for 15 years? You don't want to be ready? You don't want to live a holy life? So keep that in mind. The important thing is not to understand all the details, but the important thing is to be ready whether Christ comes in five years or ten years or a hundred years.

I want to always be ready. Because you know, even if Christ doesn't come, death can come any moment, right? I can be ushered into the presence of the Lord in a moment. You can leave this building and never reach home tonight.

You may meet the Lord. The Lord doesn't have to come. You'd still meet him.

So it's good to be ready all the time. The Bible says in James 4 that, don't say tomorrow I will do this, but say if the Lord wills, I will live tomorrow and then I will do this. You see that's the mark of a humble man who knows that his life is not in his hands.

His life is in the hands of an almighty God who is his creator, but who is also his father. And so he says, if God wills, I will live, and if I live, tomorrow I plan to do these things. But the arrogant man doesn't think like that.

So much for a little introduction. And now let's turn to Matthew 24 and look at some of the things that Jesus spoke in relation to his coming when the disciples asked him. The disciples came in verse 1 and pointed out some of the beautiful stones in the building and Jesus said to them, you see all these things, I tell you, not one stone in this temple will be left, one upon the other, it will all be torn down.

There was a physical temple there in Jerusalem and Jesus was saying, this temple is going to be torn down. And Jesus said that around 30 AD or so, just before he went to the cross. And 40 years later, around 70 AD, a Roman general came and destroyed that temple completely.

And that was the time when all the Jews, people in that area, that whole of Israel were scattered throughout the world. They were living all over Israel at that time. But that time, the Roman army came and plundered and they chased them.

And that's the time when Jesus said, be careful that those who are in Judea don't return to pick anything, just run. And pray that you won't have to run on the Sabbath day because that will be terrible. And pray

that you are not pregnant at that time when you have to run.

That happened in 70 AD. History tells us that. That's the time when the temple was destroyed.

So, he was saying, this is going to happen. Jesus was predicting something that was going to happen 40 years later. And I personally believe that is a punishment for that nation rejecting Christ and crucifying the Son of God.

He gave them 40 years. You know, 40 years in the Bible is a period of testing. After 40 years, he punished them.

And they never came back to that land till 1900 years later. In 1948, on the 15th of May, we just recently celebrated the 60th anniversary as a nation. They became a nation again.

So, that's just my way of introduction in relation to the temple being destroyed. So, as he was sitting there on the Mount of Olives, I mean, they went away from the temple. The temple was in Jerusalem.

They moved out to the Mount of Olives. And he was sitting there. The disciples came to him and said, when is this going to happen? What is the question? In relation to the temple being destroyed, when is the temple going to be destroyed? And they thought, you see, remember, they didn't know anything about the second coming of Christ.

They knew that there would be a coming. But they thought that the temple is destroyed means Christ will come. They thought it was all one event.

As soon as the temple is destroyed, that's the end of the Jewish nation and Christ will come and set up his kingdom. No, they didn't know that. So, they thought it was all one and that will be the end of the age.

And they didn't of course know when it would happen. So, they asked him three questions. What will be, when will this happen? That is, when will the temple be destroyed? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? So, they thought it was all together.

But we know now it was not all together. It's 2,000 years, 1,900 years since the temple was destroyed, more than that. And the first thing that Jesus said in relation to the last days is very, very important to remember this.

Not earthquakes, famines, wars, all those things. See to it that no one misleads you, deceives you. So, what is the number one characteristic of the last days? Deception, spiritual deception.

He often spoke about that. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he said, beware of false prophets. He said, you got to distinguish between the true prophets and the false prophets.

And he said, by their fruit you will know them. By their fruit, not by their gifts. Look at the character of their lives.

And so the first thing he says in relation to the last days is, see to it that no one deceives you. Okay? Keep that in mind. Because many, not one or two, verse 5, will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will mislead many.

Now, there are two ways you can read verse 5. One is, somebody will come up and say, I am Jesus Christ. How many of you will be deceived if a man stands up here and says, I am Jesus Christ? I think even the little Sunday school children will not be deceived. So, I wonder if that is what he meant.

Read the sentence like this. Many will say, many will come and say, I am the Christ means that Jesus is the Christ. Not referring to the people, but to Jesus.

You follow? Many will come saying that Jesus is the Christ, and then they will mislead you. That sounds more possible, but because they put an inverted comma there, which is not in the original Greek, we think that it is a statement they are making. But I think what Jesus was saying is, many will come saying that I am the Christ.

But yeah, Jesus is the Messiah. You see, because of the great conflict, Christ is a word which means Messiah, anointed one. And the great, all Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come.

Everybody. The only thing is when Jesus came, they didn't believe he was the Messiah. That's what brought the division between all the Jews, most of them, and the few, like Peter and the disciples and 500 believers who believed that he was the Messiah.

When Jesus asked Peter, who do you say that I am, what Peter replied, thou art the Christ. You are the Messiah, which we have been waiting for, for so many hundreds of years. Oh, Jesus said, flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you.

So what he is saying is, in the midst of this vast nation, where most people say he is not the Messiah, then of course you know, if somebody comes, Jesus is not the Messiah, you know that guy is a false teacher, you won't be deceived by him. But there are some people who will come and say, Jesus is the Messiah. Uh-huh.

Oh, then he is a Christian, he is one of us. That's the guy who is going to mislead you. You got it? Okay.

So many will come in my name, saying that he is the Messiah, and then they will mislead many. So the point is that when God wants, when somebody wants to deceive you, he is not going to come with a Quran or a Gita or something, he is going to come with a Bible. And he is going to say Jesus is the Messiah.

And then all your defenses are down, say, ah, let me listen. This guy is one of us. That's the guy who is going to mislead you in the last days.

Please remember that, not one or two, but many. So we don't have to be afraid of leaders of other religions trying to lead us astray. It's the fellow who is going to come like a wolf in a lamb's clothing.

A wolf, you know, is only interested in getting something from the lamb. What do you think, if a wolf wears a lamb's clothing and comes into the fold, what do you think he is interested in? You think he has come to bless the sheep? What's a wolf interested in? Biting something off from the lambs. And any preacher who uses the right doctrine, but his aim is to bite off something, usually money, from the people who are there, that to me, that's a wolf.

So be careful. And there will be many in the last days like that. And then, it's after he spoke about deception that he spoke about the other things.

And I want you to see further down, again he said, verse 10, many will fall away. Now there are two ways you can fall away. One is because they'll hate one another and they'll deliver you up to persecution.

During times of persecution, many Christians fall away. But there's another reason people will fall away. Verse 11, he repeats the same thing.

Many false prophets will arise and mislead many. See, he didn't speak about wars and famines and earthquakes two or three times. He spoke that only once.

But when he spoke about deception, you find him speaking it a second time again. Almost as if that is the preeminent thing of the last days. Many false prophets will arise.

Again, the false prophets are wolves in sheep's clothing. There are people who say that Jesus is the Christ, they use the Bible, they speak the right words, but they're not interested in blessing you. They're interested in what they can get out of you.

And then, he goes on to say further down in that same chapter, verse 24, a third time in verse 23, if anyone says to you, again deception. Notice how many times he comes back to deception, deception, deception. If someone says to you, oh, the Messiah is here.

There he is. He's come here. You know, he came secretly.

Don't believe. Don't believe someone who tells you that, oh, you know, Jesus came secretly and went off. False Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders.

What can false prophets do? They can show great signs and wonders, miracles. The word sign means miracle. They can do miracles.

Do you know the devil has got power to do miracles? Yeah, he's got tremendous power. He got it from God when he was an angel. And God didn't take it away when he fell.

He took away his grace and his anointing. The devil is no longer anointed. He doesn't have grace, but he's got gifts.

Do you know it's possible for a person to have gifts without grace? Do you know that the existence of gifts does not mean the man is anointed? The Bible says in Ezekiel 28, the devil was the anointed cherub. He's not now, but he's got the gifts. We need to recognize that even among Satan's servants, there may have been a time in the past where they were good believers, just like Satan was a good angel.

And they were anointed when they were good believers and they got gifts from God. And then they backslid, went after money, went after honor and fell away. And now they've lost their salvation, they've lost grace, they've lost the anointing, but they haven't lost the gifts.

Because God doesn't take back gifts that he gives to people. Sometimes people may lose some gifts, but sometimes God allows them to keep them. And God could have taken away all the gifts from the devil, but he hasn't taken it away.

He's allowed the devil to be one of the most intelligent among all created beings. There's a verse in Ezekiel 28, where God says to Satan, you are wiser than Daniel. That means he had an ability, tremendous ability to know things.

And just by the way, for your information, in the world they say wiser than Solomon, but in Ezekiel 28, God says wiser than Daniel. Because in God's eyes, Solomon was not the wisest person. When God wants to compare the devil, he doesn't compare him with Solomon, he doesn't say wiser than Solomon.

He says wiser than Daniel. And Daniel was a young man living at that time when Ezekiel said it. Can you imagine the tremendous confidence God had in Daniel, this young 25-year-old man, and this old 50-year-old prophet says Daniel is one of the wisest men that ever lived.

And that 25-year-old young man is just not puffed up about it. Imagine if we had 25-year-old young men like that today, who don't get puffed up when they are honored by God. Just by the way.

Anyway, the devil is very clever, he's very intelligent, he's got tremendous gifts, he's got supernatural abilities. And it says here that these false prophets can do so many miracles to deceive, verse 24, if possible, even the elect. Now how can the elect be deceived if this false prophet comes in the name of some strange non-Christian God? Would the elect be deceived? Other people may be deceived.

But those who are born again? Would you be deceived if someone did a miracle in the name of some other God? No. Definitely not. And it says here to mislead, if possible, even the elect, means that these false prophets are coming in the name of Jesus and doing these miracles.

So, then we must remember, in case all of you are not familiar with that verse, remember the warning Jesus gave at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, verse 22 and 23. Matthew 7, verse 22 and 23, when he spoke about the false prophets in verse 15, beware of false prophets. He described false prophets as bad trees which bring forth bad fruit, verse 17, the last part.

And then he described them as many who will come to him in the final day, verse 22, and say, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? In your name cast out demons, in your name perform many miracles, and I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness or sin, you who live in sin. The point is, the Lord is saying, I'm sending you to hell, not because you, I mean, you may have blessed many people. I mean, imagine these people who did miracles.

The people who got the miracles were blessed. They cast out demons. The people from whom demons were cast out were blessed.

They prophesied, and the people who heard the prophecy were blessed. God's word. But the preachers go to hell.

Now, we got to see this verse very clearly, because in Matthew 24, Jesus related it especially to the last days. That's why I want you to see. Many, what do we see in Matthew 24? Many will come, false prophets, and they will show miracles and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect.

Then we come back to Matthew 7, verse 22, and we see people are going to prophesy in Jesus' name. That means they're going to say that Jesus is the Messiah. In Jesus' name, they're going to cast out demons in Jesus' name.

They're going to perform many miracles, not one or two real miracles in Jesus' name, and I will declare to them, I never knew you. You never had a personal relationship with me. What does that teach us? That it's possible for people to do miracles in Jesus' name, without having a personal relationship with Christ.

You ask me, how can that be? I can answer that in three words. I don't know. But I believe it, because Jesus said it.

That it's possible for a person not to have a personal relationship with Christ. Not to have a personal relationship with Christ. Jesus is going to say to them, I never knew you.

He doesn't say, well, you know, once upon a time I knew you fellas, but then you backslid. That I can understand. I never knew you.

In other words, they had some type of conversion, but it never came to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I think there are lots of believers like that. They don't know how to have a personal relationship with Christ.

They want to go to heaven when they die. Now, don't you think it's possible for a person who wants to go to heaven when he dies, to believe that Christ died for sins, to give up certain bad habits because he wants to go to heaven when he dies, but he's not interested in a personal relationship with Christ. He doesn't want to be a pure virgin for Christ.

There are lots of believers like that. I mean, we could have some sitting right here. And that's why you can fool around with sin, fool around with pornography, and fool around with, take sin lightly.

You don't worry about your anger and your lust and all that. It's not serious for you. Because a personal relationship and devotion to Christ is not important.

You just want to go to heaven when you die. And you want to avoid sin because you want to go to heaven when you die. Are you interested in knowing Jesus? See, that's what he tells them.

You guys never knew me. You are not interested in that. Anyone can know the Lord who wants to know the Lord.

So when the Lord says, you never knew me, it's because they didn't want to know him. But you ask them, did you want to go to heaven when you die? Oh yeah, of course we want to go to heaven when we die. But they didn't.

You know, a lot of people who want to go to heaven when they die will not get to heaven. It's your attitude to sin. Oh, please remember this.

That's why we preach against sin, we preach against sin in this church right from day one. You'll go to heaven if you never do a miracle in your life. You can go to heaven without casting out a single demon.

You can go to heaven with twenty-five sicknesses in your body. Sure. And you never get healed.

But you'll never go to heaven with sin in your life. That's for sure. So what should we be preaching here? You can go to heaven as a poor man.

You live in a hut and you can go to heaven. You can go to heaven if you never even owned a bicycle in your life. Leave alone a scooter.

But you won't go to heaven with sin in your life. That's for sure. Even secret sin, private sin.

You'll never get into God's kingdom. It's so important to understand that. But in the last days, the false prophets are going to say, oh no, no, no.

God's a good God. That's exactly what the devil told Eve. Sin is not serious.

What's there if you disobey God a little? He's a good God. You're his child. He won't turn you out of Eden.

He did. If you want to know how serious sin is, there are only two places you've got to look at. Eden and Calvary.

That's all. Just look at Eden and see how serious sin is. For one sin, they got thrown out of paradise.

You know that paradise can't tolerate even one sin. And then look at Calvary and see the tremendous price of being forsaken by God that Jesus had to pay for sin. I need to see only two places in the Bible to understand the seriousness of sin.

Eden and Calvary. That's all. And that's enough to bring the seriousness of sin into my life.

But these people, they were more interested in what? Miracles, casting out demons, prophesying. Are these things important? Of course. Jesus cast out demons.

Jesus did miracles. More than all of them. Jesus prophesied.

More than all of them. And we want all those things in our life. I want to see miracles in my life.

I want to cast out demons whenever they come and interrupt God's work. I want to prophesy till the end of my life. But I say, more than all of that, I want to give up sin in my life.

And that's how I distinguish myself from these people. That's how you must distinguish yourself from these people. So in the last days, how is the elect? What did we read in Matthew 24? You got to compare this Matthew 7 passage with the Matthew 24 passage.

The number of times we speak about deception there. And then you see, if possible, the elect could also be deceived. How can the elect be deceived? Shall I tell you? Because they say, they use logic.

How can a man do miracles in Jesus' name and not be a believer? I can answer that in three words. I don't know. But I believe it's possible.

Because Jesus said so. I'm not here to explain all that theology. You can waste your time trying to answer that.

I just simply believe Jesus' words, that there will be people who will do all these fantastic things. And the Lord will say to them in the final day, I never knew you. What was your attitude to sin? Tell me.

What was your attitude to sin? Did you know me? Two important questions. I want to have a right answer for those two things. Because those are the two things he mentioned here.

Your knowledge of me and your attitude to sin. I want to be in a church which encourages me to have a knowledge, a personal knowledge of God the Father and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. I want to be in a church that teaches me to flee from sin, to overcome sin.

It doesn't matter to me, I'll tell you. It doesn't matter to me anyway, whether that church casts out demons or does miracles or prophecies. It doesn't matter if there's not great preaching in a church, provided the church is against sin.

Provided the church encourages to know God personally. But there are some believers who say, no, I want to be in a church which does miracles. I want to be in a church that has healings and demons cast out and prophesying and all that type of stuff.

But you ask them, does your church preach about freedom from sin? Oh, that's not so important. When did you hear in your church a message against anger or the lust of the eyes? Oh, they say, well, our pastor doesn't preach all that. But he does miracles.

He casts out demons. And he prophesies. What about, does he encourage you to know Jesus personally and to get to know him personally and walk with him and walk in purity and holiness, humility? Does he teach you about humility? No, no, it's not all that.

Brother, you can sit in that church. I don't want to be in that church. Because I know from Matthew 7, 22, 23, what is going to be important in the last days.

Two things. Do you know the Lord? Did you give up sin? So now you can understand how we can see around us here in Bangalore and other places, how so many of the elect are deceived. And when they are deceived, it's the devil's aim to lead them completely astray from God.

There is no such thing as once you're saved, you're always saved forever. You can be lost. I mean, the Bible says, the Lord himself said, Jesus himself said in Revelation 3, 5, that I will not erase your name from the book of life if you overcome.

What if you don't? I suppose he will erase your name from the book of life. I can't imagine Jesus giving us empty threats, like the old grandmothers used to say, if you don't eat up your food, I'll get the police to come and take you. Jesus is not threatening us like those old grandmothers.

No. When he says, I'll erase your name from the book of life, he's really going to do it. When he says, I'll spit you out of my mouth, he's really going to do it.

Why? Because you didn't do miracles? No. Because you had no interest in knowing him, and you had no interest in being free from sin. So I would urge you, be in a church that teaches you to be free from sin, that preaches so much till you get hurt, till you get offended if need be.

Be in a church that stirs you to have a knowledge of God as your father, a knowledge of Jesus as your forerunner and your example, a knowledge of the Holy Spirit filling your heart. So let's come back to Matthew 24. So Jesus said that in relation to deception in the last days, and he also says this, another form of deception in the last days.

See there's so much of deception. Before I come back to that, let me show you a couple of other passages. One is 1 Timothy and chapter 4. In 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 1, it says the spirit explicitly says that in the last days or in later times, some will fall away from the faith.

Now who are the ones who are falling away from the faith? What is the faith? The faith is not nominal Christianity. You can't fall away from being a nominal Christian. If you're born a nominal Christian, you're

always a nominal Christian.

The faith is where this nominal Christian accepts Christ as his saviour and becomes born again. He's going to fall away from that, and from the faith in Christ, and from the true doctrine, where sin and knowledge of God is more important than miracles and prophecy and casting out demons. He's going to fall away from the faith because, remember this is the last days verse 1, because they're going to pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

Now who are these people listening? People who fall away from the faith. That means believers are going to be deceived by deceitful spirits who are going to fool them. I hope you all know that the devil is smarter than the smartest person sitting here.

Some of you may think you're pretty smart. Let me tell you, you're not a match for the devil. You're not even 1% as smart as the devil.

And the one who thinks he's smart, the devil will fool him left, right and center. That's why you find a lot of clever people in the world who never become believers and a lot of clever people never become spiritual. Because they think they're pretty smart.

And the devil fools them. They think their knowledge makes them spiritual. No, it doesn't.

It's humility that makes you spiritual. So, deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. And who are these people who are being deceived? Those who are hypocrites.

The hypocrisy of lying. It's hypocrites who are deceived. That's why we preach so much against hypocrisy.

Don't live a double life. Don't pretend that you're something when you're not really that in your private life. You will be deceived thoroughly by the devil.

Anyone sitting here right this evening who is seeking to pretend to the others in this church that you're a holy person and you're not that in your private life, I'm telling you, you're a target for deception. You'll think you're spiritual when you're not. You'll think you're born again when you're not.

Freedom from hypocrisy is the easiest thing in the world. If you're a prostitute sitting here, can a prostitute be free from hypocrisy? Sure. She says, I'm a prostitute.

She's not a hypocrite. Hypocrisy means just being honest. I was hearing the other day at a conference something which a brother shared, which is so good to hear.

When Jesus told a woman in Samaria, go and call your husband. You know what he was testing? Her honesty. She was living with a man, right? Do you remember that? He was not her husband.

She'd already had five husbands, divorced five times. Now she was living with a man. Don't you think she could have gone and called that man and said, yeah, here's my husband.

You think she could have fooled Jesus? Look at her total honesty in saying, I don't have a husband. When she could have easily preserved her reputation by bringing that man who she was staying with. And because she was honest, Jesus said to her, you have spoken truly.

Therefore, I'll teach you something about worship, which I could not teach Bishop Nicodemus a few days ago. He needed to be born again. But because you're honest, so utterly honest with no pretense, I'll teach you about worship.

Do you know the only place in the Bible where it says God must be worshipped in spirit and truth is in John 4? And do you know who Jesus said it to? A woman who was divorced five times and who was sleeping with some man who was not her husband. Imagine giving revelations of worship to such a woman. Would you do that? You'd be talking to her about divorce and remarriage.

Not Jesus. And not only that, after explaining worship to her, he uses her to bring a revival in Samaria, which he could not use any of his 12 disciples for. They were going eating food while she was preaching the gospel and bringing a revival.

How do you like that? This is typical of Jesus. Hypocrisy is what leads to deception. If you don't have a husband, say, I don't have a husband.

Don't pretend. God can use anybody. He can use sinners if they are free from hypocrisy.

The other thing is lying. The two are connected. Lying means giving a wrong impression.

It can be with words, Ananias and Sapphira. I mean, Ananias told a lie without even opening his mouth. He just stood in the queue of the wholehearted.

That was a lie. That was a lie. He pretended that he was giving everything.

He didn't open his mouth. Sapphira said, why have you told a lie? So hypocrisy of liars. Be careful of hypocrisy, my brothers and sisters.

Be careful of lying. Be careful of giving people an impression that you are something when you are not. That is the surest way to be deceived in the last days.

And seared in their own conscience. See, here is another thing I want to say. Be very careful in your conscience.

I am talking about escaping deception in the last days. Remember verse 1, talking about the last days. Just like Jesus said deception, when it says in verse 1, the spirit explicitly says.

Now tell me, which verse in this book is not written by the Holy Spirit? Why does he have to say, the spirit says? You know, it's like a letter you get from your dad with three or four lines underlined. You got it? That's the meaning of this. The spirit explicitly says means, the whole thing is from the Holy Spirit, the whole Bible.

But here are some things underlined. In the last days, many believers will fall away listening to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. And what are these doctrines of demons? You think some horrible thing like worship of Satan or practicing occult things.

No, no, no. I told you the devil is smart. He is not going to get you to deceive you by telling you to worship him or play with occult and things like that.

He will say some holy things like, you can be holier if you don't get married. You know there is a doctrine like that in Christianity? There is a particular group in Christianity that teaches that if you want to serve God, you shouldn't be married. I mean the Roman Catholic Church teaches that.

The Salon Pentecostals teach that. I'm not here to say anything. I'm just saying, to me that's a doctrine of a demon that says you can't serve God if you are married.

Like Peter was married. He was the leader of the Apostles. And 1 Corinthians 9 says all the Apostles are married except Paul and Barnabas.

So the doctrines of demons are not horrible things. They are things which make you feel that you can be holy by some external thing. Like avoid marriage or verse 3 avoid certain types of foods.

You can be holy if you are a vegetarian. Have you heard that type of stuff? Or if you don't eat pork, you can be holy. Now, I don't eat pork because I don't want to increase my cholesterol level, but it's not because of wanting to be holy.

No, there are all types of things which the devil, there are all types of doctrines floating around the world today. I'll tell you, if you want to be holy, because holiness is not an external thing. Holiness is inward.

And you can't get it by getting married or by avoiding marriage. You can't get it by eating vegetables or eating meat. No, it's got nothing to do with these things.

It's an inward thing, but doctrines of demons tell you to do certain external things or fast. You can be holy by fasting. Have you heard that? No.

Some of you who have never fasted in your life would be delighted to hear this. But, I'll tell you this, if you have never fasted in your life, then you probably can't follow Jesus, because he did fast sometimes, not to be holy. All I'm saying is, fasting is not a means of holiness.

There is a place for fasting in the Christian life, but it's not the way to be holy. That's all I'm saying. So, there are so many external things by which the devil deceives people.

Then I want to turn you to another passage in 2 Thessalonians. Now, again, we are talking about the last days, and our subject is deception in the last days. That's what we saw in Matthew 24, that's what we saw in Matthew 7, and that's what we saw in 1 Timothy 4. Now we go to 2 Thessalonians 2. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.

He's talking about the coming of Christ and we'll be gathered together to Him, means we'll be raptured up into the sky to meet Him. And he says, don't be quickly shaken from your composure, or be disturbed, either by somebody saying that they are speaking in the Holy Spirit, or by saying, I got a message from the Apostle Paul, or a letter that Paul has written to me, saying that the day of the Lord has come. No.

Let not anyone in any way, what? Deceive you. You see, again in relation to the coming of Christ, the Apostle says the same thing that Jesus said. Be careful that you don't get deceived.

So I'll tell you honestly, while all other Christians are looking for famines and earthquakes and wars and all that, I'm just looking around for deception. Because that's what I want to avoid, because I know that's the thing, there's going to be plenty of it in the last days. And the particular type of deceivers I'm looking for are those who do miracles.

And those who heal the sick. And I listen to them to see, are these guys helping me to be holy? And I see, not at all. Their message just decreases my bank account.

It doesn't decrease my sin. I say, that's deception, alright. And the elect, you know, when I see some believers falling for this type of stuff, I say, have you guys read the Bible? You know, the devil knows that in the last days, many Christians will not read the Bible.

You won't be deceived if you read the Bible, I tell you that. You don't have to belong to CFC, you don't have to listen to Zak Poonen, but if you read the Bible, that'll be enough. But the thing is, a lot of people don't read the Bible nowadays.

And they don't have teachers who explain the Bible to them. Very sad. And so the devil knows, these fellows are ripe for deception.

So, don't be deceived. Because that day, the Lord will not come until the great apostasy, the falling away comes first. That means, one of the things is gonna happen before Jesus comes.

Is a lot of believers are gonna fall away. Fall away to what? I told you, not to Satan worship and Ouija boards and occult stuff. Falling away from holiness to miracles and signs and wonders.

From knowing the Lord to prophesying and all types of supernatural things. Everything supernatural is not from God. I believe the first book that is written in the Bible, you've heard me say that before, is the book of Job.

Because Moses wrote Genesis. And Job lived before Moses. So, the book of Job was written before Genesis.

So, it's the first book of the Bible. And in the first chapter, the first book of the Bible, you see the devil's supernatural power. In the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, you see the devil's supernatural power.

To do what? He can bring fire from heaven. He can bring a storm. He can bring the enemies to come and attack God's children and their families.

That's what you see in the very first chapter of the first book of the Bible. That's what you see. So, why is God put right in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible that the devil's got all that supernatural power? We need to know that.

So, it says here that there will be a falling away and the man of sin, the Antichrist will be revealed, the son of destruction. So, you know, it's pretty clear if you read verse 3. That day will not come till you first see the Antichrist. Does that surprise you? The Christ is not going to return till we see the Antichrist.

It's amazing how Christendom, so many Christians don't know that. They don't even believe it because they don't read the Bible. And this Antichrist is going to exalt himself and take a seat in the temple.

And he says in verse 5, don't you remember when I was with you, I told you these things? So, who are the people who are going to be deceived? I'll just mention this and then we'll close. The Antichrist, verse 9, is one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan. What is the activity of Satan? Power, miracles, false wonders.

It's the same thing all over again. How is it that Christians haven't understood this? The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan with power and miracles and false wonders and with all the deception of wickedness. Again deception, which leads people to wickedness and sin.

And who are the people who are going to be deceived? Listen, verse 10. Those who don't receive the love of the truth so as to be saved from their sins. I'll tell you something, I want to love the truth.

I won't be deceived. I want to receive the love of the truth. Then I won't be deceived.

I want to receive the love of the truth so as to be saved from my sins. Then I won't be deceived. And I want to say to everyone of you who receives the love of the truth that leads you to be saved from sin in your life, you will not be deceived.

But those who don't receive it, God himself, verse 11, will send on them, God himself will send on them a deceiving influence so that they might believe what is false. That's pretty dangerous. I mean, if the devil is deceiving us and our heart is deceiving us and our lusts are deceiving us and money is deceiving us, on top of all that, if God also deceives us, I tell you, there's no hope for you.

I want to make sure that God is on my side. And I know God will be on my side if I receive the love of the truth so as to be saved from sin. That I face up to the truth about myself.

When I see something in scripture, I accept the truth of God's word. There's hope for all of us if we love the truth. Let's pray.

So while our heads are bowed in prayer, there could be some specific things that the Lord spoke to you this evening. And I want you to think about that. What is it? Deal with it.

Deal with it right now and say, Lord, help me. I want to take it seriously, what I heard today. Help us, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18245.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-last-days-and-the-lords-coming-great-deception/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net