
DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

Volume 16, Number 6

November/December 2005

Dedication of the Opal L. Reddin Research Library – October 22, 2005



Those who attended the recent Discerning the Times conference in Naugatuck, Connecticut enjoyed the fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ and the inspiring topics that were discussed. (These are available on audio tape and/or CD.) It was a joy to witness the dedication of the Opal L. Reddin Research Library. Although Dr. Reddin was not physically able to be with us, she made a DVD presentation (with the help of Central Bible College).

Regarding the library, Dr. Reddin said, “Lord, you are so gracious to me. This is extending my ministry into the future. . . .” Then she declared, “All of you know that the Gospel is the main subject of my life. . . because the whole Bible is the Gospel. . . Jesus came preaching the Gospel. Those of you who were at the General Council know that my last speech on the General Council floor was about the Gospel and it will be the Gospel until the day I die, because Jesus said, ‘Go and preach the good news’ – the Gospel. Paul said, ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel.’ He was going to the most powerful state, the most powerful government on earth – that of Rome. But he said, ‘I’m not ashamed of the Gospel, for it’s the power of God.’ What actually happened was the Gospel hit Rome and Rome was never the same. It will be the same with you dear friends, as you go with the Gospel. You will change communities, you will change lives. It changed my life.”

The library is located on the lower level of the Pinebrook Assembly of God in Naugatuck, Connecticut. In the last few months there has been remarkable progress in the cataloging and organizing of the many books, magazines, audios and

video tapes by volunteers who have caught the vision of the far-reaching effects of this library when it is ready for use. Dr. Reddin has contributed her many books, Bible School teaching notes and other research which will greatly enhance the outreach of the library and offer the opportunity for her work to continue. The library has two great needs:

1. A high-speed scanner that will instantly transfer documents into pdf files. In this way information can be sent around the world. We will also be able to make CDs on related topics. This scanner cost is approximately \$3,000.
2. Funds in order to have a “full-time” staff person to work in the library.

Any donations to the library are tax deductible. A check can be made out to Discernment Ministries, Inc. with a notation “for the library.”

We especially appreciate what Pastor John Marston says on the back of his church bulletin:

As pastor of this church, I feel strongly that it is my calling to prepare the next generation to be end time Christians. God is looking for a people of the caliber of Esther, Daniel and Ezekiel. God has called me to present the truth of the Scripture in such a way that the people of this church will be able to stand against the rising of unrighteousness; resist the pressure to “adapt” to a gospel of accommodation; and defend the faith against the message of the critics, skeptics and evangelists of unrighteousness. The end times will be a season of unprecedented lawlessness and spiritual apostasy. True Christianity is already under constant assault from every sector of society.

I believe that Pinebrook will be a church filled with people who will not be intimidated, persuaded or moved from the Truth. Instead they will “lift high the torch, they will carry the flame” of the Gospel.

Audio tapes and CDs of the talks at this conference are available from Discernment Ministries. We were challenged by the speakers to hold firm to God’s Word and be faithful.

NEW !

Discernment Ministries Website

If you haven’t looked at the website lately, we suggest you take time and see what is happening! There are many new changes, updates, research materials, and interesting articles posted. A special thanks to Steve Muse, our webmaster.

www.discernment-ministries.org

NEW !**Check your daily "HERESCOPE"**

Discernment Ministries now has its own daily blog site on the Internet at <http://herescope.blogspot.com/>

Here you will find much helpful information on a variety of current topics in church transformation. This is a non-interactive blog that contains information revealing heresies and false teachings affecting the Church today. Not only are there outside influences that try to influence change, such as the New Age movement, but there are many heresies rising up from within evangelicalism.

The Discernment Research Group is a new education project of Discernment Ministries. The Discernment Research Group locates and prepares information to be posted each day. Suggestions, comments, research material and ideas are always welcome at herescope@earthlink.net.

The term "Herescope" was first coined by Lynn Leslie in 1995, and was the name of a column that ran monthly in *The Christian Conscience* magazine. Lynn reports that "herescope" literally means "scoping out a heresy." The play on words "check your daily herescope" aptly fits a daily blog concept.

The Herescope blog has been covering some interesting historical material in the past two months that explains how evangelical leaders came to be seduced by global futurists and their ideas. A sample Herescope blog post is below:

What does the word "MENTOR" really mean?

In the past ten years the word "mentor" has replaced the biblical word "disciple."

The word "mentor" first became popular in the New Age business world. It was brought in via business gurus and the many leadership training workshops over the past 25 years. During the Promise Keeper era, "mentor" caught on like wildfire, leaving biblical vocabulary far behind. The biblical meaning of "disciple" has to do with teaching and instructing the Word of God. The word "mentor" means someone who is role modeling, or serving as a guide to proper behavior, attitudes, character, etc. Obviously "mentoring" de-emphasizes the Word of God.

What is a "mentor"? It is more accurate to ask, "Who is Mentor?" for it is a channeled demonic spirit and/or man named Mentor whose name now replaces "disciple" in the neo-evangelical lexicon:

"MENTOR, control of Stainton Moses, said to be Algazzali of Ghazali, Professor of Theology at Baghdad in the XI century, the greatest representative of the Arabian Philosophical School. His main duty was to manage the phenomena at the seances. He was very successful with lights and scents and brought many apports. In Book XVI there is a story of his carving heads on two shells in the dining room while dinner was going on; the sound of the process was heard." (Nandor Fodor, *An Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science* [The Citadel Press: 1966], p. 239)

A séance requires the use of a medium. Stainton Moses, referenced above, was "the charge [channeler, ed.] of an organized band of 49 spirits" who "asserted that a missionary effort to uplift the human race was being made in the spirit realms" and that "Moses was

selected as the channel of these communications." (Ibid., p. 249). Ghazali (Mentor) is listed as one of his 49 channeled spirits.

A "control" means "state of possession of the medium by an invisible operator," also called a "guide." The term "implies enduring attendance by a distinct and continuous personality to use the entranced medium's body, to deliver direct or relayed messages. . . ." and is an entity that "steps in . . . to explain confusion. . ." (Ibid, p. 57).

Those who naively (or obstinately) believe that "mentor" is an innocent term that Christians can freely use as a substitute for "disciple" should think twice. Clearly the word "mentor" carries the occultic meaning of a spirit guide.

The Truth:

Séances, or attempting to communicate with the dead, are expressly forbidden in the Bible:

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord:" (Deuteronomy 18:10-12a)

And, as believers, we should not seek an alternate "spirit" imparted by some man, even if he claims to possess great supernatural abilities –

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Corinthians 2:12)

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which he have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." (2 Corinthians 11:4)

For the reader's edification, here is an excerpt from John Gill's 18th century *Commentary*, on Matthew 28:19, specifically pertaining to what "disciple" means:

". . . 'disciple all nations': make them disciples by teaching them; or, as the Persic version, by way of explanation, adds, 'bring them to my religion and faith': not that they were able to do this of themselves, but they were to teach men externally, or outwardly minister the word, whilst the Spirit of God internally applied it, and taught, and made men true disciples of Christ: and they are such, who have learned to know themselves, their sin, and lost estate by nature; to deny themselves, both sinful and righteous self; who have learnt to know Christ, and the way of righteousness, peace, pardon, life, and salvation by him; and who are taught and enabled to part with all for Christ, and to bear all for his sake, and to believe in him, and give up themselves to him, and follow him whithersoever he goes:" <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/GillsExpositionoftheBible/gil.cgi?book=mt&chapter=028&verse=19>

[NOTE: The Herescope blog is updated daily so be sure to bookmark it among your favorites!]

Theology and Objectives of the Deceived Church

The deceived church of the end-time is not merely the product of human errors of judgment caused by poor spiritual insight, but it clearly also shows signs of a satanic spirit of error. It is becoming more evident by the day that the kingdom of darkness has a calculated plan to deceive and misdirect the Christian church to the extent that members will become unfaithful to the true Christ and give their cooperation to prepare the human-centered, earthly kingdom of the cosmic Christ of all faiths (the Antichrist). The image of Christ is gradually, as unnoticeable as possible, changed to become conformable to the multi-religious image of the Antichrist.

The proclaiming of theological errors is always done in a very subtle way and has in some cases been continuing for many centuries, so ordinary members are conditioned to wrong exegesis of the Scriptures and will not readily acknowledge that their church has departed from the truth. Paul dealt with the early origins of this very serious problem: *"I am frightened, fearing that in some way you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to our Lord, just as Eve was deceived by Satan in the Garden of Eden. You seem so gullible: you believe whatever anyone tells you even if he is preaching about another Jesus than the one we preach, or a different spirit than the Holy Spirit you received, or shows you a different way to be saved. You swallow it all"* (2 Cor. 11:3-4; *Living Bible*).

Because of different degrees of exposure to deception, some churches have fallen away further from the truth than others. When referring to deceived churches we include those that may be only partially deceived by a false doctrine such as preterism, but otherwise hold to the sound doctrine of Christ. They need to be exhorted to thoroughly re-examine their theology in order to avoid being led astray any further. In an advanced stage of deception there are those who are at risk of falling from grace, while some may already find themselves in the category of nominal believers. Those at risk of departing from the faith must be earnestly warned, in accordance with Paul's statement to the backslidden Galatians: *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace"* (Gal. 5:4). Earlier, this congregation adhered to the sound evangelical doctrine but later they have fallen prey to Judaizers (Gal. 3:1-3). Because of wrong teachings the Ephesians had also left their first love, Jesus Christ (Rev. 2:4-5). Church members should fully realize what the consequences of their doctrinal convictions are – not only when they perpetuate long-standing theological traditions but also when new teachings are accepted. It may well be that they are teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, which are not in the least acceptable to the Lord (Matt. 15:8-9).

By their very nature, the various forms of theological deception are increasing in intensity and extent, and are opening the way to other false teachings. They have a natural tendency to join forces and form a united front against the revealed truth of the Word. In the new ecumenical brotherhood of all believers, churches heartily accept one another. They have no problem to associate Protestant churches with the Roman Catholic Church; neither do they hesitate to forge interfaith ties with the non-Christian religions, but jointly they strongly condemn evangelical Christians who refuse to join the interfaith brotherhood.

Theological decline

The following seven fallacies are employed to distort the church with a view to putting it into the service of the kingdom of darkness. Many members of previously respected churches are shocked when they discover that some of these false teachings have also been embraced by their own denominations.

The Bible is a human book: According to most of the modern theologians, the Bible is not divinely inspired and inerrant. Many churches are echoing these ideas. Depending on the level of decline that has been reached, deceived churches are all waging a campaign against the Bible as the Word of God that was in minute detail inspired by the Holy Spirit. They prefer new translations that deviate from the original text in that certain verses have been omitted while the meaning of many others have become distorted due to questionable methods of translation that were used. According to these people, the Bible did not originate with God but with its human authors. They don't regard it as "the Word of God" but as "words about God." That is the reason why they only respect the authority of Scripture when it suits them; in other cases it is ignored and rejected. When the Bible decrees that people must be born again to go to heaven (John 3:3), that homosexuals, adulterers and drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10), they completely disregard and effectively overrule it.

Denial of the deity of Christ: The more churches are deceived the less they are prepared to recognize the deity, eternal self-existence, and virgin birth of Christ, as well as the significance of His death on the cross and His unique position as Mediator between God and man. Eventually, He only becomes a general symbol or banner under which people gather, but they don't serve Him in spirit and truth and take the liberty to do as they please. During the process of backsliding, their knowledge of Christ deteriorates to the point of denying His deity and regarding Him only as a prophet who is on an equal level with the messianic figures of other religions. By then, they are following another Jesus than the Jesus taught by the Scriptures. Satan is the author of all the counterfeit images of Jesus and establishes them in the hearts of people who are theologically deluded by not abiding in the doctrine of Christ (2 John v.9).

Preterism: This is the historical interpretation of end-time biblical prophecies on the Antichrist and the tribulation period. Deceived churches subscribe to the idea that all the prophecies on a dark time in the world were fulfilled during the Roman emperor Nero's reign of terror, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70 AD, as well as the international dispersion of the Jewish people. Consequently, we do not need to expect difficult times of divine judgments and antichristian deception that will occur in the end-time. Instead of this scenario, the false teachers proclaim peace, prosperity, great revivals, and the visible manifestation of God's kingdom in the whole world here and now.

Replacement theology: Deceived churches all practice the replacement theology. They replace one concept with another in an effort to reinterpret the Bible in terms of their own theological preferences. They replace Israel with the church by describing the church as the "spiritual Israel" and applying to the church all the Old Testament promises of an earthly kingdom that were made to Israel. They don't believe in the literal fulfillment of the promises of Israel's restoration to their own land during the last days, and maintain that these promises allude to the church's final appropriation of its earthly inheritance. Such churches see

themselves as “the chosen people of God” and allege that their members have been predestined to eternal life. In the “new Israel” the covenant sign of circumcision has been replaced by infant baptism, which resulted in replacing the demand of faith for salvation by a church ritual (baptismal regeneration). That is the major reason why they don’t seriously consider the command to be born again.

Contextual theology: Deceived churches generally have a poor expectation on heaven as they are mainly focused on their earthly interests. Consequently, humanistic reforms and user-friendliness (the social gospel) become the ultimate objectives of religion. They always adapt to contemporary human thought and popular opinion in an effort to gain support for their cause. In a communist country, the deceived church would embrace the socialistic ideology in order to enjoy greater public support. In the event of future ideological changes in society they will also follow suit, as was clearly evidenced in the case of South Africa’s political and social transformation towards a new constitution. These churches support the earthly kingdoms in which they find themselves, rather than promoting God’s kingdom which functions in opposition to these perverted kingdoms. The social context of the church, therefore, becomes normative for the truth. When society condones certain sins such as homosexuality and gay marriages, the popular, user-friendly church adapts to these evil fads and expresses its full agreement with them. When the state becomes outrageous by abolishing Christian education, associating with non-Christian religions, and legalizing abortion, the deceived church would still not offer active resistance to these wicked policies and rather try to adapt as harmonious and peaceful as possible to their new context.

Kingdom theology: The major objective of the deceived church is to establish a visible kingdom on earth before Christ comes. Promises on a future kingdom after the Second Coming are wrongly applied to the present dispensation. The implications are that all believers should live in abundance as little kings while practicing dominion over their inheritance. All opposition should be overcome and vanish from the scene as God’s kingdom becomes manifest. There are different ways in which this kingdom is explained theologically in such a way that it coincides with the church dispensation. Most of the deceived churches hold the view that the kingdom dispensation elapses between the first and second comings of Christ, and is therefore equated with the church age. According to them, the devil is bound and we are presently living in the thousand year reign of peace. St. Augustine proclaimed this wrong interpretation of the Bible at the beginning of the Dark Ages, Calvin accepted it and thus it became the theological legacy of most of the Protestant churches. They still maintain that the church is the “new Israel” through which God intends to rule the world, that the church is destined to become better and better during the present dispensation, that there will be no need for the rapture as an escape from the impending judgments of God, and that there will also not be an Antichrist who will rule the world. According to them, the church must unite and rule the world.

Everything is one: Deceived churches do not have distinct opposites in their theology. Consequently, they are not able to make a clear distinction between light and darkness, God and Satan, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and the Antichrist, true religion and the false religions, and heaven and hell. Their religion is decidedly positivistic as they don’t readily refer to “negative subjects” such as sin, judgments, the Antichrist and spiritual deception. While this distorted theology is becoming more

established, its positive pole is increasing while its negative pole gradually fades away. Christian denominations are first united in an ecumenical movement, after which they accept the challenge of forging multi-religious ecumenical ties. Ultimately, everything becomes one – then, there is no longer a negative pole as represented by the devil, hell, and the false religions. The final objective of the deceived church is the positive acceptance of all the non-Christian religions, and the denial of the existence of a devil and a hell.

Methods to establish the kingdom

Various methods are applied by the deceived church to achieve its objective of a visibly revealed kingdom of God on earth. The following are some of their methods:

Ecumenical relations. Efforts are made to promote religious unity and harmony among all people on earth by way of Christian and interfaith ecumenical ties. On the first level, Christian unity is established among Protestant churches through bodies such as the World Council of Churches with its credo of “one church for one world.” After this, ecumenical ties are pursued among Protestants, Roman Catholics, and all the independent Christian Churches. On the highest level, unity is sought among all religions on earth, based upon the erroneous assumption that we all worship the same God. When this lie has been accepted, the whole world (except true followers of the Lord Jesus) will follow and worship the same false messiah (Rev. 13:3,8).

Worldly oriented religion. Preaching in this movement is so positive that it does not offend anybody but makes it easy for all to become believers. Not only the message and style of preaching are based upon worldly standards but also the music and songs. Subjects such as sin, judgments, the Antichrist, the false religions, and also the crucifixion of Jesus, are avoided because they are regarded as negative. They teach that God forgives sins because He is a forgiving God, and not because Jesus died on the cross for our sins. They also allege that a loving God will not condemn anybody to hell. Because of its non-offensive message the modern, deceived church is very popular and user-friendly in a morally and spiritually perverted society. They draw large crowds because it is made very easy to become a Christian without repentance.

Mystical spirituality. Various mystical but unbiblical techniques are applied to experience the presence and power of God – or rather a pantheistic god who is hidden within human beings and within all of creation. Among these techniques are Christian meditation, yoga, visualization, hypnotic regression, inner healing, as well as alternative healing therapies for disease and illness. Ultimately, prayer is altogether replaced by meditation and people learn the technique of achieving a state of alternative consciousness within a few minutes, thereby opening up their “creative right brain” to unidentified influences from mystical spheres. Scripture-reading is replaced by mystical revelations of God through dreams, visions and inner voices, thereby marginalizing the Bible to a larger extent.

Manifestations of God’s power. Signs and wonders (particularly during healing services) are used as proof that we are not strangers and sojourners in a world which lies in the sway of the Wicked One, and that we can easily rid ourselves of Satan’s influences. But these special powers of God are only given to certain anointed prophets and apostles, and He also entrusts them

with special messages to the world. These people are the leaders of the emerging kingdom of God in the world, they are followed by millions of people and they become very rich and famous through the contributions and unwavering support of their deceived followers.

Demolition of Satan's power-base. In spite of all the positive affirmations that we are now living in the thousand-year reign of peace during which the devil is supposed to be bound, there is still abundant evidence of his deception and destructive works among people. But the deceived church refuses to accept this fact and try to dispose of Satan and his demons by way of strategic spiritual warfare. Through a process of spiritual mapping, evil strongholds are identified above towns, cities and countries, after which prayer marches are organized to break down these strongholds and drive out the devil from a particular region or territory. They believe that after this act of deliverance, crime and sin will cease and a mighty revival will occur while the kingdom of God is established in the liberated area. Gatekeepers are also assigned to duties on major roads leading to the area, and also at airports, to keep Satan and his demons from returning to their former area of influence. The problems of individual Christians are solved in a similar way through exorcism, without proclaiming the biblical message of victory through crucifying the flesh or old, sinful nature.

Transformation. An active process of transformation (reconstructionism) is followed to bring about typical kingdom features such as dominion, prosperity, happiness and harmony. Mass rallies are organized to demonstrate unity in the church, and to draw into the movement as many as possible of the societal leaders. Major theological differences among the participating churches are ignored, as long as they are prepared to join hands and assist in building the modern tower of Babel. After all, the common objective is not purity of doctrine and improved relations with God, but improved human relations in a uniting world. They are committed to establishing a new world order *now*.

The final outcomes of spiritual deception

The deceived church is being prepared and used to realise the following six outcomes:

- An alliance of world religions must be formed.
- The holy books of all religions must be equally recognized.
- All religions must accept the coming universal messiah.
- The body of world religions must pursue unity and rule the world together with the coming universal messiah.
- All people must be prepared to worship the universal messiah as God whenever he demands it.
- The followers of the universal messiah must be fully prepared to assist him in opposing and fighting the exclusive Messiah of the Christians and Jews when He appears on the Mount of Olives to destroy the false messiah and his new world order.

Refuting the deception

A strong stand must be taken against all aspects of the deceived church's theology by maintaining and defending the following biblical teachings:

The Bible is God's Word. Defend the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible as God's Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Insist on a literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of the Bible because many aspects of its contents would be omitted or changed if it is spiritualised and interpreted allegorically (cf. Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19).

Affirm the deity and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. The deity, virgin birth and uniqueness of the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of the world is a nonnegotiable fact that must be firmly believed and fearlessly proclaimed (Luke 19:10; John 1:29; Acts 17:30-31). There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12); therefore, no one can come to the Father except through Jesus (John 14:6). People who do not believe this will die in their sins (John 8:24; 1 John 5:12).

The kingdom is still future. We are not in the kingdom dispensation now, but soldiers for Christ in a depraved world which lies in the sway of the evil one (Eph. 6:11-12; 1 John 5:19). We are sojourners and pilgrims in a wicked kingdom (1 Pet. 2:11). The devil is not bound now but walks about like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8-9). In this dispensation, Christ's kingdom is a mystery as it is not of this world. His kingdom will only be visibly revealed when He comes again; then, His saints will rule with Him as kings (Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:4-5,8; Luke 19:12-19; Rev. 5:9-10; 20:6).

The church is not Israel. A clear distinction should be made between Israel and the church. Although saved Jews become part of the church during the present dispensation (Gal. 3:28), there are nevertheless distinct promises to this nation that cannot be transferred to the church. One of these is the occupation of the land of Israel, which God gave to their fathers (Gen. 13:14-15; Ezek. 36:22-28; 37:21-22). Jews are saved in their personal capacity now but as nation Israel will only be saved after the times of the Gentiles, during the coming of the Messiah (Rom. 11:25-26; Zech. 12:10). We are part of "the fullness of the Gentiles" who are presently being gathered for the kingdom of God – consequently, we do not form part of Israel (Rom. 11:25). Our relationship with the Lord is determined by faith and not by descent from one or other tribe, nation or racial group. Furthermore, we are not dependent on priests or ritualizers who minister sacraments to people in order to ensure their safe passage to heaven, since we have a High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us and bestow His grace upon us (Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25).

There are two great realities. The ideology of *all is one* is completely unbiblical. Every human being is spiritually confronted with two great realities, i.e. the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Because of our inherited, sinful nature all people are born unsaved (Rom. 3:10; 5:12) and must be born again to become members of God's kingdom (John 3:3). When that happens we pass from death into life (John 5:24), i.e. out of darkness into light (1 Pet. 2:9). We are committed to opposing the kingdom of darkness (Jas. 4:7; Heb. 12:4; Eph. 5:11). We can never accept the unitary ideology of the New Age Movement and the deceived church of the end-time as we are commanded to come out from among them (2 Cor. 6:14-18). The Ecumenical Movement with its kingdom-now program is no place for a true Christian.

Mystical spirituality is deceptive. In worshipping the true God through Jesus Christ we cannot compromise with mystical, right-brain techniques such as meditation. We must be sober and gird the loins of our mind while, in prayer, approaching the throne of grace on the new and living way which the Lord Jesus has opened

through His death on the cross (Heb. 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 1:13). It is completely unbiblical to switch off your thoughts by using a mantra and descend to the depths of your inner being to meet “the god within you” there. In the process, you lose the ability to discern because of entering a hypnotic or semi trance state in which you give demons the opportunity to instill thoughts and impressions in your mind and spirit. Millions of people are opening themselves up to influences of this nature and render this method very popular with Satan to do his work of deception in nominal Christian churches.

Spiritual warfare should be practiced on the individual level. The biblical command to engage in spiritual warfare is clearly aimed at the personal level, against the evil thoughts and sinful habits which the devil wishes to establish in people’s lives (Eph. 6:10-13; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). The Bible gives us no command or mandate to drive out demons or territorial spirits from their strongholds above cities or countries. The devil will only be removed and bound when Christ comes again (Rev. 20:1-3). Until then, all countries, cities and other residential areas will remain under Satan’s influence because most people have chosen to love darkness more than the light (John 3:19). In all large communities, the great majority of people are on the broad way leading to hell (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). They must be reached by the gospel in order that the power of Satan may be broken in their lives – not in the sky above their houses. Afterwards, they should resist the devil without assigning gatekeepers to the roads leading to their town or city. The devil doesn’t use roads or airplanes to reach certain territories and their inhabitants.

End-time prophecies must be interpreted pre-millennially. Prophecies on the end-time are clearly linked to the time directly prior to, during and after Second Coming of Christ. Kingdom theologians can completely forget about subjecting and ruling the world before Jesus Christ comes back to make it a better place. The Bible teaches the exact opposite of this scenario by stating that “*in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power*” (2 Tim. 3:1-5). There will be widespread spiritual and moral falling away, leading to the revelation of the man of sin, the Antichrist, who will declare himself to be God in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (2 Thess. 2:3-4). The Antichrist couldn’t have been Nero as Paul says that the Lord will consume the lawless one with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). Nero died long ago! In Revelation 19:19-20, John also confirms that the Antichrist and false prophet will be end-time persons as they will be captured and cast alive into the lake of fire on the day of Christ’s Second Coming. Directly after that, the devil will be bound in the bottomless pit and only then will Christ’s thousand-year reign of peace (the millennium) be instituted (Rev. 20:1-6). It is evident that the coming of Jesus Christ is premillennial (before the millennium), which precludes the visible establishing of His kingdom on earth before His Second Coming. End-time prophecies should, therefore, be interpreted futuristically and not historically.

The futuristic perspective

It is a matter of the greatest importance to have a premillennial frame of reference for understanding end-time prophecies. Without it we will not be able to correctly interpret the secular and spiritual

signs of the time in which we live. We will also lack a proper, biblical future expectation.

The deluded theologians who proclaim a kingdom now, as well as great revivals that will allegedly precipitate it, are busy proclaiming fables to please their equally deluded audiences. Most of them have fully embraced kingdom teachings, even to the extent of not enduring sound doctrine because it does not support their kingdom vision (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Even though the idea of a kingdom here and now is a very popular one, it is very far removed from the truth. The Lord Jesus refers to the widespread falling away from the faith in the end-time by asking the following question: “*When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8). What will cause the drastic decrease of faith among people? The reason for this phenomenon is given: “*Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*” (1 Tim. 4:1). In the New Testament, faith always refers to the true faith in the Triune God. When people are falling away from the faith it only means one thing – that, under the influence of demons and false apostles, they are deceived to believe in a false Jesus (2 Cor. 11:2-4,13). In that way, they are conditioned to become followers of the Antichrist when he will be revealed as the cosmic Christ of all faiths (Rev. 13:3-4). That is the reason why the Lord Jesus mentioned the danger of spiritual deception first in His list of signs of the times (Matt. 24:4-5,11,24).

This is the Bible’s dark scenario for the end-time – not revivals, a kingdom, unity, peace and prosperity on earth, but a spiritual falling away and a great tribulation as there has never been (Matt. 24:21). God will also use natural disasters to judge the depraved humanity of the end-time, to punish them and make them to fully realise His displeasure with them. These great catastrophes did not occur in the first century as they are destined for the end-time, shortly before the Second Coming of Jesus: “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt. 24:29-30).

The sinners will run around anxiously to seek a hiding-place when apocalyptic earthquakes are shaking the whole world, causing all the walls to fall down. They will cry out to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of the Lamb, for the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:12-17; 16:18). Will the true children of God be in this time of judgment? Certainly not! The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “*Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*” (Luke 21:36). When they are gone, the world will be filled with unbelievers, which will allow the Antichrist to be revealed without any resistance (2 Thess. 2:6-8). Millions of people will be saved during the time of tribulation (Rev. 7:9,13-14), but they will have to die as martyrs for their faith (Rev. 6:9-11; 20:4). Because of the Antichrist’s persecution they will not be here to see Christ when He comes on the clouds of heaven.

It is indeed a very relevant question whether there will be any believers on earth during the Second Coming of Christ. Only after He has set His feet on the Mount of Olives, a remnant of Israel and the nations will be saved, so the millennium can start with a first

generation of believers (Matt. 24:29-30; Zech. 12:10). Among the upcoming generations, deception and unbelief will again set in, causing even Christ's millennial reign of peace, when He will be on earth physically, to end in great apostasy and rebellion against God (Rev. 20:7-10). Is humanity so stubborn to learn and accept the truth? Every dispensation ended in gross unbelief:

- The dispensation of innocence in the Garden of Eden ended in the unbelief of Adam and Eve and complete disregard for God's precepts.
- The dispensation of the conscience, when people were guided on right and wrong conduct by their inner convictions, ended in the time of Noah when widespread unbelief and rebellion against God was the order of the day.
- The dispensation of human government after the Flood gave rise to the apostate Babylonian kingdom, as well as other heathen kingdoms. Even Israel were victims of unbelief and became slaves of the heathen Egyptian nation.
- The dispensation of the law after Israel's exodus from Egypt ended in large-scale unbelief when they stoned some of their prophets and rejected the promised Messiah.
- The dispensation of grace will also end in a situation in which the large majority of churches will become so backslidden and materialistic that the Lord will spew them from His mouth. The relatively small group of true believers will be raptured, after which the millions of deceived unbelievers will be surrendered to the dictatorship of the Antichrist.
- The dispensation of the Antichrist's government will end in utter unbelief and rebellion when the nations, under the leadership of the Antichrist, will deploy their troops in the Middle East to fight against Israel's Messiah and try to kill Him (Rev. 19:19).
- The dispensation of the millennial kingdom will also have a dark end of unbelief and rebellion when Satan, after being released from the pit, will succeed in deceiving most of the people on earth to join him in fighting against the kingdom of God.

The day of reckoning

Do you realize the seriousness of the matter when Jesus said: *"Take heed that no one deceives you"* (Matt. 24:4). There comes a day of disillusionment and reckoning for all sinners, including the deceived, nominal believers who will be deluded to think that they have been doing the right thing and are on their way to heaven. By then, it will be too late to offer excuses such as the following: *"Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* (Matt. 7:22-23).

It is definitely possible, even in the Name of Jesus Christ, to perpetrate large-scale deception. That is exactly what is happening in deceived churches today. When they have been proved wrong on judgment day, it will be a typical kingdom theology plea to say:

"Lord, Lord, did we not preach in Your Name? Did we not use Your Name to cast out demons and to do many other great miracles?" But the Lord will call their seemingly Christian works "evil deeds." These people proclaim Jesus as Lord and King, but *not* as the crucified and resurrected Saviour of lost humanity. They also fail to count the cost of discipleship by acquainting His followers with all the conditions of their decision for Christ, i.e. that they should be prepared to deny themselves, take up their cross, follow Jesus, and expect to be rejected and hated by the world.

The casting out of demons by many of the kingdom theologians will also prove to have been an utterly misplaced activity. They wrongly presumed to have lived in the kingdom dispensation during which the devil is supposed to have been removed from earth and bound in the bottomless pit. Consequently, they embarked upon strategic spiritual warfare to rid humanity, including the millions of lost souls, of the devil's influence. By these grand schemes and dramatic actions they gave societies and nations the false hope of being territorially and even nationally delivered from evil influences.

There are also other, very serious ramifications of these wrong expectations, false hopes and unbiblical strategies. By financially supporting these spectacular but useless kingdom activities, large sums of money are channeled away from traditional evangelistic and missionary outreaches. It is even regarded as a waste of time and money to do one-to-one or small group witnessing without first pulling down the demonic strongholds in society, which are allegedly blinding and binding people – thus making it impossible for them to understand and accept the gospel message. Many missionaries and evangelists are consequently now losing their support-base because of the discrediting of their slow and unspectacular methods.

Furthermore, the casting out of demons on the personal level is a direct assault on the biblical doctrine of sanctification. It is based upon the unscriptural assumption that Christians can be demon-possessed, and it also undermines the biblical way of crucifying the flesh, which is the ally of Satan in our lives. We must die with Christ by closely identifying with His cross, by whom the world has been crucified to us and we to the world (Gal. 6:14). The easy, quick and dramatic solutions of kingdom theology simply do not work and are actually instruments in the hands of the devil to sow confusion and deceive millions of people.

We must learn to test everything in the light of God's Word: *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). The Bible is our only defense against false teachings: *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Tim. 2:15). Rightly dividing the word of truth implies the correct understanding and application of biblical truths. In this regard, dispensational distinctions are of the uttermost importance as confusion in this regard provides the breeding-ground for deception. The equation of the dispensation of grace (the church age) with the promised kingdom age is responsible for much of the deception, wrong expectations and futile activities of our time.

Prof. Johan Malan, University of Limpopo, South Africa (posted Nov. 2005)