

From Without and Within

Introduction

In the last lesson we looked at the way we become open to deception by seeking after experiences and fleshly benefits. The Enemy is more than happy to provide supernatural experiences for us but these fall into the category of useless miracles—works of power done for show. This lesson will look at the way that false prophets and teachers arise and how they operate. There are two ways that deception comes against us. Each of these ways uses different techniques, methods, and people in order to accomplish the work of the Enemy.

Two Categories

We normally think of the false ones as those who only come from outside the fold. This is certainly one category for the wolf does come from outside the flock. However, there is a second category of deceiver that comes from within and this group is actually more dangerous because they are more subtle with less obvious intentions. Paul gave us both categories when he was talking with the elders of Ephesus, which is recorded in Acts.

Acts 20:29-30 NASB

(29) "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

(30) and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Paul went on to say in the verse following, “Therefore be on the alert ...”. Mostly we have taken this to heart concerning the “savage wolves” part; but, we have neglected the second category.

Savage wolves come from without. They attack the flock and kill and devour the sheep unless they are driven away by a shepherd. These wolves are the false Christs, false Messiahs, who do not follow The Way and don't even attempt to pretend to follow Jesus.

Jesus, Himself, said that there would be many false ones coming in His name claiming to be Christ, the Messiah. Jesus told us not to be misled.

Matthew 24:4-5 NASB

(4) And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.

(5) "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

People look for a Messiah when they don't know or have a relationship with the real Messiah. Since

there is only one Messiah and He has already been revealed, looking for another would automatically lead you to the false. Desperate times or crises cause false Christs to proliferate. They multiply because people are seeking help but do not turn to the Living God to receive it but instead search for another Messiah.

I think that anyone who is continuing in the Word and is filled with the Holy Spirit can recognize wolves without too much difficulty. If they abide with the flock, the Shepherd protects them. Wolves in sheep's clothing are more difficult to discern but the nature of the world will eventually show forth. Again, these become clearly revealed when one abides in the Word and is led by the Holy Spirit. The real problem comes from the second category—those from within.

From Among Ourselves

When Paul said, “from among your own selves men will arise...”, he was speaking to the Elders of Ephesus. This means that from among the leadership of the people of God would arise false ones. How could this happen? These deceivers would be believers, leaders, that had been true but would become false. What could cause this to happen? The answers are in what Paul says is the reason, “to draw away the disciples after them.”

The desire for followers, disciples of your own, is the result of ambition in your heart. When our heart still has hidden desires that have not been dealt with from a renewed mind, then the hidden desires will find expression in our lives. This is the result of not dying to self.

The world system plays on ambition and the desire for power. When believers are still attached to the world, they are open to these carnal forces also. The Scriptures tell us that “He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,” ([Colossians 1:13 NASB](#)); however, they also tell us, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,...” ([Romans 12:2 NASB](#))

Those who are satisfied with being “rescued and transferred” are open to deception that is driven by our old self, our carnal nature, unless we are also “transformed” by the renewing of the mind. Even though we have been “rescued and transferred” our thinking processes still follow the worldly ways. The renewing of the mind “transforms” us by changing our thinking processes—not just 'what we think' but the very process of 'how we think'.¹

Leaders are in particular danger to succumbing to ambition. Paul told Timothy that an overseer or elder was not to be a new convert because he could become conceited or puffed up with pride and fall into condemnation.² A new convert has not had enough time for the process of transformation by the renewing of the mind to occur. A new convert still operates in a mixture of flesh and spirit as well as the desires of the mind and ambitions of the heart. Any leader that becomes conceited or puffed up

1 For more on renewing the mind you might want to listen to the audio series “Renewing the Mind” available on the website. The series consists of nine lessons that detail the various aspects of the transforming process of moving from a heathen mindset to a carnal mindset to a spiritual mindset to the mind of Christ.

2 1 Timothy 3:6

with pride is wide open to deception that plays on his desire for position and power.

The Diotrophes Style of Authority

The Scriptures give us a clear example of the false type of leadership that arises from among ourselves. It is being presented to us every day in the modern church. You have probably never heard a sermon about the “spirit of Diotrophes” but John speaks plainly about it.

3 John 1:9-10 NASB

(9) I wrote something to the church; but Diotrophes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

(10) For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church.

In these verses it is obvious that Diotrophes is an absolute dictatorial leader operating from the worldly hierarchical system. What is in his heart is that he loves to be “first among them”. He likes to be the head, the “spiritual authority” over the others. He enforces his decisions by putting out of the church those who disobey him. When John wrote a letter to the church, which Diotrophes controlled, he would not receive what John said. The result was that Diotrophes unjustly accused John and those associated with him with wicked accusations. Then, he went on and refused to receive any of the brethren and even forbade others from receiving the brethren also.

I am sure that most everyone reading this has had in their past (or, maybe even in the present) a “pastor”, or an “apostle”, or a “prophet” that is operating in the spirit of Diotrophes as described above. This is the inevitable result of the worldly hierarchical system and leaders who have not continued in His Word with the process of renewing their minds. The deception appeals to and reinforces the flesh nature in us that wants power and position. John said it clearly, even though Diotrophes refused to hear it.

1 John 2:16 NASB For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Our modern church, especially in America, is consumed by the spirit of Diotrophes and not just among the denominations but also among the independent and house churches. There is a reason that when Jesus ascended He gave us a five-fold ministry to continue to establish and equip us for the work of the Lord.

Not only does the five-fold ministry provide a well rounded equipping of the saints, it also serves to provide a “check and balance” between those who function in an equipping capacity so that one person is not lifted up above another in such a manner as to draw away disciples after themselves. When anyone, whether pastor, apostle or prophet, tries to limit what you receive to themselves or those whom they approve they are limiting the equipping that the Lord had given for you and hindering you from coming into full maturity and they are revealing themselves to be a false one that is arising from among

ourselves

The spirit of Diotrophes appeals to the flesh and the ambitions of our heart. It is the operating force behind the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Here is what Jesus said to the Church at Pergamon, which tolerated the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

Revelation 2:14-16 NKJV

- (14) But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.
- (15) Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.
- (16) Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Nicolaitan comes from two Greek words, which together mean “*to conquer the people*”. This implies that they put themselves into positions of authority over the people like a conquerer or king. This is something that Jesus hates. It is not a good thing to tolerate that which Jesus hates. He said “repent or else ...”. We should pay attention.

From the days of Diotrophes forward the people of God have been “conquered” by those seeking to have positions and preeminence. The entire functioning structures of the Catholic and Protestant denominations are the result of the works and doctrine of the Nicolaitans empowered by the fleshly lust and pride of Diotrophes.

We simply do not appreciate how contrary this hierarchical system is to the purpose and plan of God and how it plays upon our ambitions and desires for power and position. Mystery Babylon operates by a hierarchical system. The coming Lawless One, who operates in the spirit of Antichrist, functions as the head of a one world hierarchical system. It is the epitome, the fullness of the spirit of Diotrophes coming forth in these end days.

How They Do It

Paul said that those that would arise from among ourselves would do so by “speaking perverse things”. The Greek word translated as “perverse” in this scripture means “to distort, corrupt, misinterpret”. These are those who distort and misinterpret the plain teaching of scripture to benefit themselves by drawing away disciples. These are the ones who continually cause confusion, distraction and divisions. This was one of the primary problems of the church of Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:12-13 NASB

- (12) Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."
- (13) Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in

the name of Paul?

People were drawing away disciples to themselves by emphasizing who had discipled them—Paul, Peter, Apollos, or even Christ. They were dividing on this basis. Paul clearly condemns the divisions as fleshly, carnal, natural thinking and not spiritual.

1 Corinthians 3:1-6 NASB

- (1) And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.
- (2) I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,
- (3) for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?
- (4) For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men?
- (5) What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one.
- (6) I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

Dividing by teacher-disciple relationships is as wrong as one who arises and draws away disciples after himself. The result of ambition that seeks for power, position or preeminence is always division and it is always based in the flesh. We should stop and consider what we are saying when we say that we are of Luther, or Wesley, or the Baptist.

We need to stay alert, be on guard, against those who rise from within seeking to make their own disciples; who twist the scriptures to support positions of authority, promoting “seed giving” to themselves for lavish lifestyles while promising a many fold harvest of money for their followers. They divide the people of God and siphon off resources, confusing the teaching and doctrine of the Lord with the thinking processes of man. These are the deceptive, false leaders that are even now being revealed in our midst.