

# Lying Signs and Wonders

## Introduction

In our previous lesson we looked at the background of deception and the Enemy's purpose. In this lesson we will look at the manner in which the Enemy presents deception to us. This is particularly important to us as the close of the age approaches.

## The Lawless One

### 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 NASB

- (8) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;
- (9) *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,
- (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.
- (11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,
- (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

When the Lawless One comes, he will come “in accord with the activity of Satan” and that will be “with all power and signs and false wonders”. The Lawless One is in agreement (accord) with the purposes of our Enemy. In the last days all things are rushing toward fulfillment, a completion of the plans and purposes of God. The Enemy also has his plans and purposes which are at odds with those of God and the Lawless One (whom we refer to as the Antichrist) is a false messiah (in place of Christ) who does false works of power, demonstrating lying signs and wonders.

We have had a tendency to think of this as a sudden, future thing when the Antichrist appears and false miracles occur. However, that is simple naivety on our part. The Enemy is preparing the world systems to contain the kingdom of darkness and provide him a structure in which he can operate when he is cast into the earth as described in Rev. 12:9. People are also being prepared to receive the Lawless One as a savior, which means that false miracles and lying signs are going on now to prepare the way for their full expression under the Antichrist.

Jesus said the same thing. However, He wasn't just speaking of one but many that would come before the end. All of the false ones will exhibit *misleading* signs and wonders.

### Matthew 24:24 NASB

- (24) "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and

wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

The purpose of false signs and wonders is to mislead, to cause us to go astray, to step off of the narrow path in our pursuit of God. The question is, do we recognize them for what they are?

## The Pursuit of Experiences

When we first meet the Lord and begin to move in the things of the Spirit, we burn with the zeal of our first love. As we continue with the Lord, we enter into seasons of wilderness, trials, tribulations, which the Lord uses to purify us and our motives and to cause us to mature or grow up into Him. While going through dry periods, we thirst for the presence of the Lord; we hunger for more of God; we desire the moving of the Holy Spirit.

However, as the Lord seemingly delays His presence and power, we, somehow, begin to exchange the hunger for God for a hunger for experiences. We reach a point where we can't tell the difference. We run from place to place where people say that the “anointing” is in order to see “signs and wonders”. We are told that “the Lord is in this place (or that place)”. Jesus told us not to believe it and He put it in the context of the false Christs and false prophets.

Matthew 24:26 NASB

(26) "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them*."

We pursue experiences because we have an inadequate view of God. We interpret the power or the “blessing” as being evidence that God is as we know Him. However, the true knowledge of God has no room for that kind of understanding. An inadequate view of God that projects our image onto Him instead of us being transformed into His image is preparation for last days' deceptions.

As we come to the end of this age, we will see many signs, wonders, and miracles. Some of these will be real. Some will be false or lying wonders and miracles. If our lives are spiritually empty, if there is a void of life in our relationships with the saints, if we are not receiving the kind of things that makes for our maturity, engaging our spirits and minds, the totality of our being, then we will try to fill the void or make up what is lacking by running here or there for impressive presentations of power. We will be drawn to individuals or ministries that are displaying demonstrations of power and become open vessels for deception.

## The Pursuit of Benefits

We seem to have come to the idea that if anything, any manifestation, produces “good things” then it must be from God. There are two problems with that idea: 1) we don't define “good things” scripturally; and 2) we forget that last days' deceptions of signs and wonders will produce seemingly “good things”. So the question is, can we tell the difference between the true and the false when we want so much to be blessed and relieved of our depression, hang-ups and other problems?

As long as we get the results that we want, how discriminating are we about the source of the “blessing”? How do we tell if it is *of God* or a contrary spirit? We can only discern truth based on our authentic knowledge of God as He truly is, not as we thought Him to be.

A minister I know once said, “*Deception is a deception when it contains elements that are dubious and suspicious, and at the same time there seems to be apparent blessing.*” That is a very good definition of deception: the results seem to be good while the methods or the source appears suspect.

If our goal is to be “blessed” without any discernment concerning the source of blessing, we are already deceived. Jesus, Himself, clearly condemned the attitude of seeking benefits only.

#### John 6:26 NASB

(26) Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."

There was largely the same crowd that were fed with the loaves and fishes previously. They had taken boats to Capernaum searching for Jesus, but when they found Him, He gave them this rebuke for their attitudes. They weren't seeking Him because He was the source of the miracles but because of the benefits (full bellies) of seeking Him. This is particularly important today when so many are preaching a prosperity message that is only based on receiving financial blessing, even to the point of questionable methods or sources for these blessings.

Seeking “blessings”, benefits, or just the results of spiritual power is to advertise to the spiritual world that you are open to being deceived. The results, spiritually, never justify the means. The Lord is the source and the means, which produces the results. This is clearly illustrated for us by Jesus during His temptation in the wilderness as told in Matthew four.

The first temptation, verses 2-4, was to turn stone into bread (Jesus had been fasting for 40 days). This test was for Jesus to use His power to do something *for Himself*. The second temptation, verses 5-7, was to throw Himself off of the pinnacle. This test was for Jesus to use His power to do something *through Himself* and prove that He was the Son of God and approved and protected by the Father. However, it is the third temptation that is important to this study because it shows that the end does not justify the means.

#### Matthew 4:8-10 NASB

- (8) Again, the devil \*took Him to a very high mountain and \*showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;
- (9) and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."
- (10) Then Jesus \*said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

Jesus did not contest the Devil's ability to do what he said. In God's purposes, all of the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of the Son (Rev. 11:15). The end result or the benefit would be the

same whether it was done the Devil's way or God's way—Jesus would rule the kingdoms of the world. However, the Devil was offering a different *means* or way of getting the result. It was a way that avoided the cross and crucifixion. In God's plan the means was as important, possibly ever more so, than the end result.

The test in this temptation was for Jesus to do something *in Himself* that related to His own desires. However, Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19) and He did not see the Father turning stones into bread, jumping off of the pinnacle, nor bowing down to the Devil. As a result, Jesus did not do anything *for Himself, through Himself, or in Himself*.

The Enemy's deception is offering us what we want without the cross. He focuses on the benefits without the cost. A results oriented benefit package is not the Father's plan. His plan is that we become conformed, transformed into the image of His dear Son not that we live in a mansion and drive a Rolls, nor that we have a resume of “spiritual” experiences.

## The Heart Issue

God's works always have meaning and purpose. He does not do “useless” miracles to provide us with a titillating “spiritual” experience. Miracles are a by-product of God doing His work in us. He is after our hearts so that we will learn His ways.

Hebrews 3:9-10 NASB [Note: the NASB uses all caps when an Old Testament verse is quoted]

- (9) WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED *Me* BY TESTING *Me*, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.
- (10) "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS';

Seeing miracles, even participating in them, did not do the children of Israel a lot of good. They still did not enter into the fulfillment of God's purpose for them. His intention was for them to learn His ways.

We need to remember that the first name of the Spirit is Holy. He is a Spirit of holiness. All manifestations of the Holy Spirit have that same characteristic of holiness. Anything that is manifested that is out of character with holiness is not the Holy Spirit.

We need to also remember that the first definition of the Helper, the Comforter, that Jesus gave was “Spirit of Truth” (John 14:16-17). We receive Him first as the Spirit of Truth, righteousness, and holiness and then, after being received on that basis, He becomes to us the Spirit of power.

It is those who did not receive a love of the truth that are open to deception (2 Thes.2:10). The moment that we sacrifice the truth about source and means and look only at the power and the benefits, we are already deceived.

## Useless Miracles

Lying wonders can be very spectacular but in actuality produce little that is of any real use. In the discussion above about the temptations of Jesus, the Enemy wanted Jesus to jump off of the pinnacle to prove He was the Son of God. This was a useless miracle that would have been spectacular but not produce any real benefit.

There are many spectacular manifestations of spiritual “gifts” that are actually useless in the final analysis. A few years ago I saw Benny Hinn on television as he was “ministering” in one of his crusades. On one occasion, he was waving his suit coat at the crowd and entire sections of people would fall down “slain in the spirit”. On another occasion, he would look at a section of people and blow into the microphone and that section of people would all fall down. While spectacular, this was all useless demonstrations of power that produced nothing for the Lord. It was Benny that received glory and honor and not Jesus. This certainly fits the description of false, lying wonders.

The manifestations associated with the so called “Toronto Blessing” that included “drunkenness in the spirit”--incoherent, non-functioning for long periods of time, uncontrolled laughter, and people locked or frozen in position—stasis or trance for extended periods of time, are all in the category of useless miracles and lying wonders. Many similar things were associated with the Pensacola “revival”. Many were deceived and many are still being deceived by these types of manifestations. Sure, they are exciting but are they of God?

Many have received “impartations” of these spirits and have carried the deceptions to other places. People who have a desire to minister that comes from the flesh, from un-renewed minds, have a tendency to receive an “impartation” so that they can do the same things. They want to see the miraculous and want to be involved in it so they are not discriminating about the source or means if it produces works of power.

Lying wonders are preparing the way for the Man of Lawlessness to appear and show forth powerful miracles. We must be discerning. We need to operate in a “gift of discernment of spirits” so that we can determine which spirit is being manifested. I want all of the real that the Lord desires for me but I want none of the false that my natural mind and old nature craves.

Receiving a love of the truth is our primary defense. Jesus is Truth and He sent us the Spirit of Truth so that we might know the things freely given to us by God. As we abide in Him, we will receive the real power of the Holy Spirit and not bogus miracles of deception.

I can't say it any better than another minister once said:

*“To maintain and guard our spirits, to grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord cannot be performed in an environment of a Sunday service and a mid-week Bible study. True church is not a Sunday supplement. We are coming to the end of the age! God has great purposes to consummate through the Church, but only that remnant of the Church that knows Him and will do great exploits out of that knowledge, and that knowledge only.”*