

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The Olivet Prophecy started when the disciples asked for signs of two events: 1) the return of Jesus Christ and, 2) the end of the Age:

MATTHEW 24:3 Now as He [*Jesus Christ*] sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And **what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**”

While this prophecy details several End-Time prophetic events, the prophecy began with a message of warning against being deceived. In fact, it is the primary message because it is woven throughout the prophecy:

MATTHEW 24:4-5, 11, 23-26 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no **one deceives<sup>1</sup>** you. 5 “For **many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive<sup>1</sup> many.** ... 11 “Then **many false prophets<sup>2</sup> will rise up and deceive<sup>1</sup> many.** ... 23 “Then **if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it.** 24 “For **false christs<sup>3</sup> and false prophets<sup>2</sup> will rise and show great signs<sup>4</sup> and [lying] wonders<sup>5</sup> to deceive<sup>1</sup>**, if possible, even the elect. 25 “See, I have told you beforehand. 26 “Therefore **if they say to you, ‘Look, He [*the Christ*] is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the [secret] rooms!’ do not believe it.**

This warning was the first thing Jesus said and He repeated it four more times. Deception will come from those who are false prophets or false christs. *Christ* simply means *anointed* and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *mashiyach*, which is transliterated *messiah* and there is only “one Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> THIS IS A WARNING OF BEING DECEIVED BY FALSE PROPHETS PROCLAIMING THE RETURN OF A FALSE CHRIST. To deceive those of the *ekklesia*, the false prophets and false christs will use miraculous signs and wonders.

What *miraculous signs* might they perform? One need only use their imagination. It could be miraculous healings, plagues or droughts, turning water to blood, calling fire down from heaven, drying up the Euphrates<sup>7</sup>, etc. There could be any number of miraculous signs that imitate those recorded in the Bible or even ones new and never before seen.

What about *wonders*? The Greek word is interesting because it not only refers to a supernatural occurrence but can also refer to a prodigy; that is, “a person, especially one who is young, endowed with exceptional abilities.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is a false prophet

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<sup>1</sup> G4105 *planao*.

<sup>2</sup> G5578 *pseudophrophetes*.

<sup>3</sup> G5580 *pseudochristos*.

<sup>4</sup> G4592 *semeion* = miraculous sign or token.

<sup>5</sup> G5059 *teras* = prodigy or omen.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 8:6. Also Matt. 23:8, 10; Rom. 5:11, 17; 1 Tim. 2:5.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. 16:12.

<sup>8</sup> Oxford dictionary.

who uses miraculous signs to identify a false christ who has amazing mental abilities and also is able to perform miracles.

The purpose of the false prophets and false christs is to DECEIVE the world but especially the *ekklesia*. They will clearly demonstrate that they have spiritual power that does NOT come from flesh and blood. How can the elect avoid being deceived? In the case of false christs, it is by knowing how the True Christ returns<sup>9</sup>:

MATTHEW 24:30 “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.

ACTS 1:9-11 Now when He [*Jesus Christ*] had spoken these things, while they [*the disciples*] watched, **He was taken up, and a cloud received Him** out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same Jesus*, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.**”

False christs will perform miraculous signs and wonders but they will never be allowed to replicate a false christ coming from heaven on a cloud. This is reserved only for the True Christ. A false christ will appear on earth, as it says, “here ... or there” such as in the “desert” or a “secret room.”

<p><b>IMPORTANT:</b> Every false christ will appear from someplace on EARTH whereas the True Christ will come from the HEAVENS on heavenly CLOUDS.</p>
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When God appeared to men, it was often in clouds<sup>10</sup>, as happened when leading the Israelites out of Egypt, upon Mount Sinai, entering and leaving the temple, in the Transfiguration, and His return. Here are a couple of examples:

PSALMS 18:7-13 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, because He [*the LORD*] was angry. 8 Smoke went up from His nostrils, and **devouring fire from His mouth**; coals were kindled by it. 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. 10 And **He rode upon a cherub**, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind. 11 He made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him *was* dark waters *and* **thick clouds** of the skies. 12 From **the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire.**

PSALMS 97:2-5 **Clouds and darkness [are all around] Him [the LORD];** righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne. 3 **A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies** round about. 4 **His lightnings light the world;** the earth sees and trembles. 5 **The mountains melt** like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

<sup>9</sup> Also 26:64; 13:26; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 21:27-28; Rev. 1:7; 14:14-16.

<sup>10</sup> Deut. 31:15; Chr. 5:13-14; Neh. 9:12, 19; Job 22:14; 26:9; Ps. 78:14; 97:2-5; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Jer. 4:13; Lam 2:1; Ezek. 1:4-5; 10:3-4; 38:9; Dan. 7:13; Nahum 1:3; Matt. 17:1-5; Matt. 26:64; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34-35; Rev. 1:7; 14:14-16.

Heavenly clouds are a visual identifier of God and Jesus Christ. When Satan sinned, desiring to be like God, Scripture says he wanted to ascend above the clouds that surround the mountain where the throne of God is located:

ISAIAH 14:13-14 For you [*Satan*] have said in your heart: ‘**I will ascend** into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars [*angels*<sup>11</sup>] of God; **I will also sit on the mount** of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; 14 **I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.**’

**NOTE:** Satan wanted to “be **like** the Most High” meaning he wanted to establish himself as a third member of the Elohim along with God the Father and Jesus Christ. It is possible that the concept for the Trinity is rooted in Satan’s desire to establish himself as one of the *Elohim*.

In the warnings of the Olivet Prophecy against being deceived by false prophets and false christs, coming from heaven on heavenly clouds are the singular proof of the returning True Christ.

**IMPORTANT:** The only biblical SIGN given for the returning True Christ is that He will come from HEAVEN on heavenly CLOUDS.

While the physical sign of the returning Jesus Christ is proof that He is the True Christ, how does one avoid being deceived in other matters? As shocking as it may sound, it involves agape love:

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-4, 6-13 Let no one **deceive**<sup>12</sup> **you** by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away [*G0646* *apostasia* = *defection from truth; apostasy*] comes first, and **the man of sin is revealed**<sup>13</sup>, **the son of perdition** [*G0684* **apoleia** = **total destruction**], 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ... 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed<sup>13</sup> in his own time. 7 For the mystery [*G3466* *musterion* = *secret*] of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then **the lawless one will be revealed**<sup>13</sup>, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of **the lawless one** is according to the working of Satan, with **all power, signs**<sup>4</sup>, **and lying wonders**<sup>5</sup>, 10 and with all unrighteous **deception**<sup>14</sup> among those who perish, because **they did not receive the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason **God will send them strong delusion**<sup>15</sup>, **that they should believe the lie**<sup>16</sup>, 12 that they all may be condemned **who did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning **chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth**,

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 1:20; Job 38:7.

<sup>12</sup> G1818 *exapatao* = fully deceive or beguile.

<sup>13</sup> G0601 *apokalupto*.

<sup>14</sup> G0539 *apate* = deceit.

<sup>15</sup> G4106 *plane* = fraudulence.

<sup>16</sup> G5579 *pseudos*.

The Greek in verse 9 for *signs* and *lying wonders* is the same as in Matthew 24:24, which are what the “Man of Sin” will use to deceive people. Note that he does *not* come from heaven on clouds but is revealed from somewhere on the earth. Also called the “Son of Perdition” or “Lawless One,” he is obviously a flesh and blood man. Paul gives the same warning about deception as the Olivet Prophecy but in verses 10-13 he points out WHY people are deceived—“because **they did not receive the [agape] love of the truth.**”

2 PETER 2:1-2 But there were also **false prophets<sup>2</sup> among the people, even as there will be false teachers<sup>17</sup> among you**, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even **denying the Lord** who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And **many will follow their destructive ways**, because of whom **the way of truth will be blasphemed<sup>18</sup>**.

Those who are not growing in and becoming agape love will follow false prophets and false teachers into destruction because they will blaspheme the Truth of God. Agape love is required to have a relationship with God and Jesus Christ. Jesus is “**the Way, the Truth, and the Life**” (John 14:6) and the Spirit from God is one “of power and **of love and of a sound mind**” (2 Tim. 1:7). Those with the Holy Spirit have agape love and “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) by which they KNOW the Truth.

**IMPORTANT:** Becoming AGAPE LOVE is the only way to know the TRUTH of God. Only agape love can prevent strong delusion and deception (lies).

The Truth of God is the only way to avoid being deceived! What Truths counter deception? Knowing what deceivers, false teachers, false prophets, false christs, or antichrists can or cannot do:

1 CORINTHIANS 12:3 Therefore I [*Paul*] make known to you that **no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed [G0331 anathema = cursed by God for destruction ], ...**

1 CORINTHIANS 12:3 ... and **no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**

1 JOHN 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and **every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist<sup>20</sup>**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

1 JOHN 1:7 For **many deceivers** have gone out into the world who **do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver<sup>19</sup> and an antichrist<sup>20</sup>**.

1 JOHN 4:15 Whoever **confesses that Jesus is the Son of God**, God abides in him, and he in God.

<sup>17</sup> G5572 *pseudodidaskalos*.

<sup>18</sup> G0987 *blasphemeo* = revile, malign, vilify, evil-speaking.

<sup>19</sup> G4108 *planos* = imposter.

1 JOHN 5:5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

1 JOHN 2:22 **Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist<sup>20</sup> who denies the Father and the Son.**

ROMANS 10:9 that **if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

There are Truths that deceivers cannot refute or confess. They can use Scripture out of context as Satan did when tempting Jesus<sup>21</sup>, but they cannot confess to certain Truths about God and Jesus Christ.

**IMPORTANT:** Deceivers, false teachers, false prophets, false christs, and antichrists:

- 1) will call Jesus *anathema* (cursed by God for destruction);
- 2) will not confess that Jesus is Lord;
- 3) will not confess that Jesus is the Son of God<sup>22</sup>;
- 4) will not confess that Jesus is the True Christ; or
- 5) will not confess that Jesus is resurrected from death to eternal life.

One way to identify deceivers, false teachers, false prophets, false christs, or antichrists is by their own words when they call Jesus *anathema* (cursed). Also, they can be challenged to confess that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God, the Christ, or resurrected to eternal life by God—these are things they CANNOT do. A true believer can use these to expose them. This also applies to the Beasts of Revelation. Notice the First Beast:

REVELATION 13:1-4, 6, 8 Then I [*John*] stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a **beast rising up out of the sea**, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a **blasphemous name**. 2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. **The dragon [*Satan*] gave him his power<sup>23</sup>, his throne, and great authority<sup>24</sup>.** 3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all **the world** marveled and **followed the beast**. 4 So they **worshiped the dragon** who gave authority to the beast; and they **worshiped the beast**, saying, “Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” ... 6 Then **he [*the First Beast*] opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme<sup>18</sup> His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.** ... 8 **All who dwell on the earth will worship him**, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The First Beast, the Beast Rising Up Out of the Sea, is given authority and power by Satan. At his appearance, there will be those who worship Satan and follow the First Beast (the Dragon—v. 4) as a result of seeing that he is invincible. It appears they will

<sup>20</sup> G0500 *antichristos* = against Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 4:1-11.

<sup>22</sup> Also Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5.

<sup>23</sup> G1411 *dunamis*.

<sup>24</sup> G1849 *exousia*.

do so voluntarily because Scripture does not say that the First Beast will use deception to cause people to worship him. He is easily identified because he has a blasphemous name. He also blasphemes the name of God, the tabernacle of God, and all those who dwell in heaven. (Only angels of God remain in heaven at this point because Satan and the demons are expelled after their defeat by Michael and the angels—Rev. 12:7-8.) Now notice the Second Beast:

REVELATION 13:11-15 Then I saw another **beast coming up out of the earth**, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority<sup>24</sup> of the first beast in his presence, and **causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast**, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 **He performs great signs**, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And **he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs** which he was granted to do in the sight of the *[first]* beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to **make an image to the [first] beast** who was wounded by the sword and lived. 15 He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not **worship the image of the [first] beast** to be killed.

REVELATION 19:20 Then the *[first]* beast was captured, and with him **the false prophet [second beast] who worked signs in his presence**, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. ...

The Second Beast, the Beast Coming Up Out of the Earth, performs miraculous signs and wonders to deceive people. He is also called the False Prophet and he will perform signs “in the sight of the *[first]* beast,” as noted in verse 14 and Rev. 19:20<sup>25</sup> where he is referred to as the False Prophet. Unlike the First Beast, he deceives people (v. 14). At his appearance, there were some who will not be worshipping Satan or the First Beast. As a result, the Second Beast uses signs and wonders to deceive more people to worship the First Beast. The Second Beast then commands all those who worship the First Beast to make an Image of the First Beast whom he miraculously causes to speak. Those who refuse to worship the Image of the Beast are murdered, presumably by the Second Beast.

**NOTE:** The First Beast—the Beast Rising Up Out of the Sea—likely emerges from among the population of the earth (sea = peoples<sup>26</sup>) when revealed by Satan. The Second Beast—the Beast Coming up Out of the Earth—is described as a lamb (a false christ) speaking like a dragon and also called the False Prophet. Could it be that the First Beast will fake a resurrection out of the earth [*G1093* ge = soil, region] of the Second Beast to deceive the world into believing he is the Christ so that they worship the First Beast?

Interestingly, the Second Beast speaks like “**a** dragon,” which might suggest that *dragon* is the highest rank among the demons similar to that of cherub or seraph. Satan, also called that Old Serpent<sup>27</sup>, obviously wanted to be like God—of the same

<sup>25</sup> Also Rev. 16:13; 20:10.

<sup>26</sup> Rev. 17:15.

<sup>27</sup> Rev. 12:9, 14-15; 20:2; Gen. 3.

rank of *Elohim* as God the Father and Jesus Christ. When he lost the rank of cherub, he become the Great Dragon<sup>28</sup>, which implies there are 'lesser' dragons. It could be that the Second Beast speaks with the authority and power commiserate with the rank of a *dragon*.

SUMMARY: Avoiding deception requires WATCHING a few key things:

- 1) Knowing that the True Christ will return from the heavens on heavenly clouds;
- 2) Recognizing that a false christ will only appear from somewhere on earth;
- 3) Noting those who blaspheme God or curse Jesus Christ;
- 4) Challenging suspected deceivers, false teachers, false prophets, false christs, or antichrists to confess that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God, the Christ, or resurrected to eternal life by God.
- 5) Growing in agape love to avoid the strong deception of deceit and lies by knowing the Truth of God;

Jesus concluded the Olivet Prophecy by comparing a "faithful and wise servant" with an "evil servant" who were rulers of households tasked with WATCHING for the return of their master. The exact same warning to WATCH is given in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13). Jesus also said to WATCH for thieves:

MATTHEW 24:42-43 "**Watch** therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour **the thief** would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

The thief represents deceivers who want to steal salvation from the *ekklesia*. How? By deceiving the elect of God. The *ekklesia* must "**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: 34-36).

Escape what? Being deceived! The goal of being WATCHFUL is not to see prophecy fulfilled but rather to avoid deception.

IMPORTANT: There are two primary deceptions to guard against:

- 1) POINTS 1-2: WATCHING for the sign of the return of the True Christ. The main sources of deception are false prophets and false christs.
- 2) POINTS 3-5: WATCHING for deceivers (thieves of salvation). The main sources of deception are false teachers, antichrists, and the Beasts of Revelation.

Part 2 will discuss deceivers that are among the *ekklesia*.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>28</sup> Rev. 12:3, 9.