Church of God Ministries
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Who's Speaking the Truth?

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

While visiting in Sedona, Arizona several years ago, my uncle, who enjoyed politics, and enjoyed sharing his opinions about candidates, was glued to the television and the current debates going on with the new hopeful presidential candidates. The little bit I watched with him struck me profoundly. Who of these people was really speaking the truth?

I'm sure, like me, you too ask the same question today as I did back then. Nothing has changed folks, it really hasn't.

I'm watching on social media both the polarization and separation of the populace, inclusive sadly of those who claim to be part of the "Body of Christ".

Someone made the assertion "that if you tell a big lie often enough and with enough intensity, many people will believe it." We lean on others to adhere to our perspective or place them in a proverbial time out box, quickly pointing out there error. Scriptures give many warnings about deception, especially concerning events at the end of the age.

Let's look at the apostle Paul's startling warning in one of his epistles. He counters the false rumor spread by some deceptive teachers that claimed "*that Christ had already come and gathered some of the saints*". Evidently someone had sent out a letter claiming that it came from Paul. He sets the record straight.

"*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 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." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

What a monstrous lie! A man will sit in a structure termed the temple of God and will claim to be God, not just a god. How is he able to pull this off and deceive many humans? Paul goes on to describe his tactics.

"*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved*." (Vv.9-10)

We see here that Satan will be allowed to work through human instruments and manifest signs and wonders. He will be effective in deceiving those who are not connected to the truth and do not value the instructions found in God's word.

I am amazed at the current trend of “better understanding of God’s Word” with application to what humans deem is important. Sometimes that squeaky wheel sure does squeak! My question is has God changed?

Let’s continue. Paul then mentions "the lie." "*And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie*" (v.11). The lie is that a man will sit in the temple claim to be God. God will allow Satan and another spirit to continue to influence humans by blinding them (2 Corinthians 4:4) and will allow Satan to work through imposters to arise on the scene.

Christ warned of miracles and deceptions that would be manifest at the end of the age. "*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect*." (Matthew 24:24) Those are concerning words.

Just ahead of us are amazing and miraculous events that will make headlines, and an accompanying message that will deceive many.

The book of Revelation focuses on one particular false prophet and his deceptions. "*Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon*." (Revelation 13:11) This beast appears

to be a lamb (Christ-like) but has a message which is like that of the dragon, or Satan. This individual appears to work miracles. "*He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast* . . ." (vv.13-14)

Like God's prophets of old such as Elijah (2 Kings 1:10), he appears to make fire descend from heaven. He directs the earth's inhabitants to worship the beast of Revelation 13. "*And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast* . . ." (v.12) It is the beast who will be worshipped and will claim to be God. These two are referred to as two specific individuals who will be dispatched when Christ returns from heaven. "*Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image*. . ." (Revelation 19:20)

Returning to chapter 13 and the mention of this image, "*And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. 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 beast to be killed*." (Vv.14-15)

This appears to me to be a miraculous event where some physical image appears to come to life (or have life). With our present technology in developing robots with almost human like intelligence may cast some insight into how this image be may be constructed. AI continues to gain momentum at an alarming speed. This reminds me similarly of the great golden image that Nebuchadnezzar set up and demanded to be worshipped. (Daniel 3)

Just like Nebuchadnezzar, this coming one world system will use intimidation and force to bring about submission to its dictates. "*And all the world marveled and followed the beast*. (Revelation 13:3) "*It was granted to him to make war with the*

saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation." (v.7)

The intimidation of many (including the saints) will induce others to go along with the beast and knuckle under his authority. The mark of the beast (vv.16-17) will be used to force humans to do obeisance to this dictator if they want to be able to buy or sell or engage in business transactions. There will be a mass indoctrination that will take place and it will be fueled by these signs and wonders to convince humans that this must be "of god!"

We must be committed to the worship of the true God and *His truth*, and patiently yet firmly persevere in resisting the coming deceptions. "*Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*." (Revelation 14:12)

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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