

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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MANY SHALL COME IN MY NAME

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray.
(Matthew 24.5 ASV)

Recently, I was having coffee with a friend and brother in Christ whom I had not seen for some time, and he asked me a question. His question went something like this: How would you describe what you see going on in the church today? Without hesitation, I answered that the visible church of our day is in a state of Babel (confusion) and disunity. He responded that he thought that there was a great wave of false prophets and teachers going forth. We both quickly realized that our responses were one and the same, only he described the process and I described the result of the process. In other words, the many false prophets are leading the Lord's people into confusion and disunity.

As one observes or listens to the myriad of things being done, said, and taught in the name of Jesus, it does not take very long to conclude that there is much confusion and a great lack of oneness amongst those who say they belong to the Lord. However, this should not surprise us, for Jesus and His apostles warned of this happening. When His disciples asked Him about the sign of His presence and the conclusion of the eon, Jesus began by warning them that in regard to His second coming, there would be deception. Right from the start, Jesus warned that they not be deceived regarding His return. In other words, there will be much deception on this matter of His return. Consequently, when men speak on this subject, there is a need to beware lest the one hearing be deceived by their words.

Jesus then proceeded to describe the general condition of the time that will lead up to His return. He called it the beginning of pangs, as the pangs of childbirth. During the time of pangs, there will be rumors of battles, nation will rise against nation, kingdom will be against kingdom, famines and earthquakes will occur in various places. However, this will not be the consummation, that is, these things are not the end of the eon; therefore, people should not be declaring it to be. These things are merely the beginning of pangs, similar to a mother giving birth. See Matthew 24.6-8.

However, in the midst of these signs on the earth, there will be something else occurring that will mislead many. There will be many coming in the name of Jesus declaring that Jesus is the Christ. It is generally interpreted that when these ones come and declare "I am the Christ," they are declaring that they are Christ Himself, meaning that they are a false Christ. To be sure, according to Jesus, false Christs and false prophets have come and will come, but this is not what the Lord declared at the start. He was offering a particular warning that was more insidious than these false ones proclaiming to be Christ. Think about this; it makes little sense for one to come in the name of Jesus and at the same time declare that he (the one declaring Jesus' name) is also Jesus. How could one come in His name and say that he is the Christ? It is not logical given the way the sentence is structured. Besides, who would fall for such a deception? Can you imagine someone coming to you and saying: "I greet you in the name of Christ, and by the way, I am the Christ."

What these ones will be doing is coming (going forth) in the name of the Lord as if they belong to Him, even declaring that Jesus is the Messiah, but they will mislead many from the truth, especially regarding His presence and the conclusion of the eons. How will they mislead others? It will be through their teaching and preaching. They will mislead many through misleading teaching and preaching! As the consummation of the eon approaches, many people will be misled by ones coming

in the name of Christ. They will go forth teaching a false message that will lead many away from the truth of the word of God. As Paul warned Timothy, they will not be accurately handling the word of God; they will not be correctly cutting the word of truth (2 Timothy 2.15 CV). This should be a sober warning to all who teach the Lord's people, lest we too be counted among the deceivers at the bema of Christ and our works are left in a heap of smoldering ashes from the fire of His judgment (1 Corinthians 3.12-15; 2 Corinthians 5.10).

The Lord was not alone in His warning about the ones who will mislead the many. The apostles of the Lord Jesus warned of obvious dangers in the last times (see Jude 17-19; 2 Peter 2.1-3). However, Paul, the apostle of the nations, warned of much subtler dangers that he perceived occurring in the last days.

But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away. (2 Timothy 3.1-5 ASV)

For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. (2 Timothy 4.3-4 ASV)

And the same One gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these as prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers, toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception. (Ephesians 4.11-14 CV)

Take note that Paul warned that these deceptive ones will have a form of godliness and that their message will have some appeal to the listener. This can only mean that they will come in the name of the Lord, even declaring that Jesus is the Christ, and it will appear that they are devoted to Christ; but their message will have no power. What they speak will be a myth, not the truth. Even worse, it will not be a single message but a series of messages that builds a whole system of teaching that is deceptive. Paul called it the systematizing of the deception (rendering of the Concordant Version).

Dearly beloved in Christ, do we not see the deception brewing in our day? Do we not hear the doctrines of demons being declared from the pulpits and through the airwaves (1 Timothy 4.1)? Do we not hear the myths of men being declared as if it is the truth of God? Do we not hear the teaching of men that itches the ear? Do we not see the systematizing of the deception that is leading many astray? There are two proofs. The first proof is the disunity of the visible church. The Lord's people are more divided than they have ever been in the years since Calvary. Second, what is being taught runs the gamut from A to Z. Trying to make sense of it all will leave one's head spinning. What are we to do in these last days? Our only safeguard is to take everything we hear or read from men, even from ones that seem gifted and come in the name of Jesus, and this includes me, and under the leading of the Holy Spirit, discern if it is the truth of God. Remember, the truth sets you free; and this freedom is one that brings you into love, peace, joy, and righteousness. If it does not lead you in this way, then beware, **for many will come in My name to lead many astray.**