

# The Great Deceptions

John 17:3; 1 Timothy 2:4

## *Introduction*

1. If you could use only one word to describe Satan, what would it be? My choice: deceptive!
2. If God wants all to come to the knowledge of the truth, then what does Satan want? The very opposite – for all to believe a lie!

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

3. Therefore, Satan is the great deceiver so he can prevent the world from coming to the knowledge of the truth!

## If I Were the Devil

By Paul Harvey

I would gain control of the most powerful nation in the world.

I would delude their minds into thinking that they had come from man's effort, instead of God's blessing.

I would promote an attitude of loving things and using people.

I would dupe entire states into relying on gambling for their state revenue.

I would convince people that character is not an issue when it comes to leadership.

I would make it legal to take the life of unborn babies.

I would make it socially acceptable to take one's own life, and invent machines to make it convenient.

I would cheapen human life as much as possible so that the life of animals are valued more than human beings.

I would take God out of the schools, where even the mention of His Name was grounds for a lawsuit.

I would come up with drugs that sedate the mind and target the young, and I would get sports heroes to advertise them.

I would get control of the media, so that every night I could pollute the mind of every family member for my agenda.

I would attack the family, the backbone of any nation.

I would make divorce acceptable and easy, even fashionable. If the family crumbles, so does the nation.

I would compel people to express their most depraved fantasies on canvas and movie screens, and call it art.

I would convince the world that people are born homosexuals, and that their lifestyles should be accepted and marveled at.

I would convince the people that right and wrong are determined by a few who call themselves authorities and refer to their agenda as politically correct.

I would persuade people that the church is irrelevant and out of date, and the Bible is for the naïve.

I would dull the minds of Christians, and make them believe that prayer is not important, and that faithfulness and obedience are optional.

I guess I would leave things pretty much the way they are.

4. Human History started with Satan being a deceiver: He deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:11-15)

- Never give Satan a ride – he will always want to drive.
- Give Satan an inch and he will become a ruler.

5. Human History will end with Satan still in the deceiving business. (Revelation 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10)

6. Jesus warns about deception in the last days (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24)

## **I. The Great Deception in the World**

### **DECEPTION: Isms**

1. Universalism - refers to the belief that all humans will be saved from eternal damnation or annihilation in Hell.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

2. Pluralism – a worldview that one religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth and recognizes that some level of truth and value exists in all religions. A religious thought that tolerates all schools of ideology and embraces all as valid ways to come to God. Pluralism stems from the belief that there are many gods and thus, rejects monotheistic religions.

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour... Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God... Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.” (Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6, 8)

3. Relativism – claims that some element or aspect of human experience and culture dictates truth. Therefore, relativism proports a doctrine that there are no absolute truths; that truth is always subject to some point of reference within historical, cultural, or personal experience.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth , and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

4. Atheism – rejects the existence of God. In its broadest definition, atheism is the absence of belief in deities. Most atheists adhere to humanism, relativism, and/or naturalism.

“The fool hath said in his heart , There is no God.” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1)

5. Naturalism – is a philosophical paradigm whereby everything can be explained in terms of natural causes. Physical matter is the only reality -- everything can be explained in terms of matter and physical phenomena. Naturalism, by definition, excludes any Supernatural Agent or activity. Thus, naturalism is atheism. Naturalism's exclusion of God necessitates moral relativism. Philosophers agree, without God there is no universal moral standard of conduct.

“In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

6. Materialism – is not a theological philosophy as much as it is a way of life. It is the pursuit of money and materialistic possessions. Although these possessions are not worshiped in a formal way, they have nonetheless become the god of many who shun value and virtue to pursue them. Thus, materialism becomes the “unspoken, unacknowledged” god of many.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

**TRUTH: Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.**

## **II. The Great Deception in Religion**

**DECEPTION: Good Works can get you to Heaven**

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (Galatians 6:3)

### *Religious Works are Powerfully Deceptive*

1. Why are religious works deceptive?
  - “Good” works are good!
  - We are supposed to have good works once we are saved.
2. Man may think he is good, and therefore, God must accept him. But man is deceived.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8, 10)

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:10-18, 23)

3. The best lie is the one that most closely resembles the truth!
4. Man’s way leads to a hopeless end; God’s way leads to an endless hope.

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 16:25)

5. You don’t reach God on your tiptoes; you reach Him on your knees.

“Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said, 2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. 3 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, 4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. 5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. 6 Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? 9 Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?” (Job 40:1-9)

6. Satan’s ministers are transformed as “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” (1 Corinthians 11:13-15)

### Religious Beliefs about Jesus

**Historic Christianity** - eternally one with the Father and incarnated supernaturally through the Virgin Mary. Jesus was born, lived and died in a given time and place, as a unique historical event. He lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and arose from the dead. He is the Messiah, Lord, and Savior, who forgives sin and will come again in glory and power.

**Roman Catholicism** - eternally one with God and incarnated supernaturally through the perpetual virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

**Jehovah Witness** - is a created being with stages of existence: 1) Archangel Michael or the Word. 2) Jesus, perfect man, became Messiah at His baptism; 3) After His spiritual resurrection, became Michael again, but retains the name of Jesus. Christ’s ransom sacrifice on a “stake” made salvation possible.

**Mormonism** - is the spiritual and physical offspring of God by procreation. Had a preexistence as God’s spirit child and brother of Lucifer. His death guarantees immortality to all regardless of their faith, but one’s exaltation must be completed by works. Suffered in Gethsemane for Adam’s original sin.

**Islam** - was a major prophet, spirit of Allah, without sin, but not divine; His miracles are signs that He came from God. He was sent to the children of Israel and faithfully showed

the signs of Allah, taught prayer, and brought the gospel (Injil). He did not die on a cross, but Allah took Him to heaven.

**Hinduism** - was an Avatar or incarnation of God, one among many Avatars, a great spiritual teacher, whose teachings can be valuable today.

**Buddhism** - was a teacher who may possess Buddhahood or Enlightenment, one among many, not unique.

**Secular Humanism** - is just another human teacher and not divine. The death of Jesus Christ has no impact on anyone living today.

**New Age Movement** - was one of many appearances of God throughout the ages, one of many people who were fully aware of their true divinity. Christ is separate from Jesus, the way-shower and is the perfect God idea, the awareness of divinity within each person.

- The BIG Obvious: Except for Historic Christianity, each religion has an unbiblical concept of Jesus!

### *Religious Beliefs about Salvation*

**Historic Christianity** - is God's gift of grace through Christ's atonement, received through personal faith in Christ. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

**Roman Catholicism** - is an infused process of grace gained over one's lifetime through faith plus observance of Church sacraments and rituals.

**Jehovah Witness** - allegiance to Jehovah plus works (baptism, faithfulness in Kingdom Hall work; those ignorant of Jehovah given a chance to believe during millennium)

**Mormonism** - exaltation or godhood through obedience to Mormon teachings: repentance, faith, baptism, endowments, celestial marriage, tithing. Baptism for the dead saves some non-Mormons posthumously.

**Islam** - Allah (The Merciful One) acts in mercy. A person's salvation depends largely upon personal observance of the Pillars of the Faith and submission to Allah.

**Hinduism** - goal of life is to gain release (liberation) from the cycle of reincarnation and to pass beyond illusion to become one with the divine (Ultimate Reality) by following the proper yoga (path or discipline).

**Buddhism** - goal of life is nirvana to eliminate all desire of attachment, particularly by following the Eight-fold Path.

**Secular Humanism** - the human problem is caused by ignorance, lack of education, and outdated beliefs in the supernatural. This can be solved by using science and its methods of criticism to understand the universe.

**New Age Movement** - the human problem is a lack of perception, illusion, and ignorance. People overcome lack of perception by using techniques to change (transform) consciousness. They can attain enlightenment when they step outside ordinary modes of perception into altered states of consciousness that dispel illusory boundaries of individual existence.

- The BIG Obvious: Except for Historic Christianity, each religion has a works salvation or a salvation that does not depend on Jesus!

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:9)

### *Religions and their Source of Authority*

**Historic Christianity** - Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) unique, revealed, factual, accurate, inerrant, and inspired Word of God. Sole authority for faith and practice.

**Roman Catholicism** - the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) as the inspired revelation of God. They also accept church tradition and the magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) as sources of authority; The Popes and ecumenical councils also have authority.

**Jehovah Witness** - Bible (New World Translation of Holy Scriptures) as interpreted by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

**Mormonism** - Bible (except the “errors”) the Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price; revelations of the Mormon prophets.

**Islam** - Qur’an (Koran)

**Hinduism** - Vedas, Upanishads, Epics, Puranas, and a host of other sacred writings.

**Buddhism** - Sutras; Tripitaka (The Three Baskets)

**Secular Humanism** - there are no holy writings in Secular Humanism.

**New Age Movement** - there is no objective source of authority. Sacred writings and devotional material from many traditions have spiritual value.

- The BIG Obvious: Except for Historic Christianity, each religion has an authority in addition to the Bible or exclusive from the Bible!

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Revelation 22:18-19)

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” (Psalm 119:89)

**TRUTH: If you go to the wrong god you will die and go to Hell. But if you go to the right God in the wrong way, you will still die and go to Hell!**

- Don't Forget: To be almost saved is to be totally lost.

### **III. The Great Deception in the Church**

**DECEPTION: God is your personal genie to grant your every wish and make you happy**

1. You cannot truly give your allegiance to God while at the same time trusting in and lusting after material gain - you can't worship both God and "Mammon" at the same time (Matt.6:24; Lk.16:13).
2. We brought nothing into this world and will take nothing out of it (1Tim.6:7).
3. Lust for material gain makes us vulnerable to the devil's attacks (1Tim.6:9).
4. The love of money is a source of all sorts of evils, turning us from the faith and causing us much anguish (1Tim.6:10).
5. Greed is essentially idolatry (Col.3:5), and its practitioners idolaters (Eph.5:5).
6. Envy is the true root of acquisition lust (Eccl.4:4).

7. The lust for wealth can never be satisfied by any success (Eccl.5:10).
8. Wealth can be a severe disadvantage, keeping us from God (Lk.18:23-25).
9. Where your treasure is, there is your heart also (Matt.6:19-21; cf. Lk.12:32-34).
10. What does it profit a man to gain the world but lose his soul? (Mk.8:36; Lk.9:25)
11. Your life does not depend upon an abundance of possessions (Lk.12:15).
12. Storing up material things rather than striving to be rich towards God is folly (Lk. 12:21).
13. Discipleship requires the willingness to put God before possessions (Lk.14:33).
14. Wealth can distort one's perspective, choking spiritual growth (Mk.4:19).
15. Nothing is permanent, not even great wealth; great wealth merely subjects the possessor to greater temptation and a higher standard of judgment (Jas.5:1-6 and Lk. 12:48).
16. Covetousness is forbidden by the 10th commandment (Ex.20:17; Deut.5:21).

#### Minister & Money

1. Many so-called ministers are “prophets for profit!”

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; *not for filthy lucre*, but of a ready mind.” (1 Peter 5:1-2, *emphasis mine*; also see 1 Timothy 3:1-3 and Titus 1:5-10)

2. Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

3. Materialism chokes out the Word of God.

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” (Matthew 13:22)

**TRUTH: We are the servants of the Most High God, not vice versa.**

- Most people want to serve God as long as it is in an advisory position.

*Closure*

Deception will increase in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-8, 12-13)

How to overcome deception – Stay in the Word (2 Timothy 3:13-4:4; John 17:17)