

## The Most Devastating Doctrine

Commentary for February 13, 2019 — ... to Scriptural Truth

**Editor's note:** This article by Dr. Ernest Martin is composed from one article, "The Most Devastating Doctrine to Scriptural Truth" with a shorter article titled "Evaluation and Reflections (Points for Consideration)." Both are from 1986. David Sielaff, Editor

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**There is one central belief among multitudes of Christians that represents the most unbiblical belief in existence, yet many believers are persuaded it is the supreme witness (to them and the world) that Christianity is true. The fact is the present emphasis is one of the greatest tools of deception to direct people away from the simple truths of the Holy Scripture. This article explains how thoroughly dangerous this erroneous doctrine has become in this modern world of Christendom.**

Not long ago on a major religious television network the host of a program concerning the Bible was confronted by a man who claimed that many Christians were wrong in teaching that believers would be raptured away to heaven about seven years before the Second Advent of Christ. The master of ceremonies admitted that the man seemed to have some powerful scriptures on his side to substantiate his belief but the director of the TV show wanted time to consider the question before he made up his mind.

A short time later, he was able to arrive at a definite opinion. His conclusion? The man relying solely on the Bible had to be wrong. Why? Because most of the top men and women within Christendom that he knew personally had accepted the doctrine that the Church would be raptured to heaven seven years before Christ's return, and these were people who had "spoken in tongues, had healed the sick, had cast out demons, had prophecies revealed to them and had seen visions." He felt that God would not grace people with such miracles if their main doctrines and beliefs were not expressing the will of Christ Jesus.

To the TV host, it was the evidence of signs and miracles in peoples' lives that vindicated the doctrinal teachings that they believed and taught. But how wrong the man was in his evaluation! His method of judgment was to substitute the plain teachings of the Holy Scripture with the emotional and spiritual experiences of modern day preachers who claim to be teaching under the power and authority of Christ himself. It puts human beings (and the experiences of human beings) above the Word of God in importance.

### ***The Most Dangerous Belief***

There is no belief more dangerous than this, yet it is widely approved of today, and it is with a complete disregard to some of the cardinal teachings of Christ himself! In no way are miracles (even real ones) proof that the individuals who are used to perform them are the representatives of God. Christ said:

**“Not everyone that said to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.**

**Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord,**

**have we not prophesied in your name? and  
in your name have cast out devils [demons]? and  
in your name done many wonderful works?’**

**And then will I profess unto them, ‘I **NEVER** knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity [lawlessness].’”**

**• Matthew 7:21–23**

What is interesting about this clear teaching of Christ is not that these people once knew Him and had departed from Him to do the signs and miracles, but these people **had never known Christ in the first place!** It is very precarious to believe that the witnessing of signs and miracles in peoples’ lives is the central proof that they are men and women representing Christ Jesus — even if they come in the name of Christ doing their mighty works.

It should be remembered that Satan the Devil is the great deceiver (Revelation 12:9) and that he and his ministers are very adept at using miraculous signs (supposedly from God) to deceive the world.

At the end of the age there will be a false prophet who will back up the reign of the Antichrist with a splendid display of miracles that most people will believe emanate from God himself.

**“And I beheld another beast coming out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb [he looks so innocent and holy on the surface], and he spoke as a dragon. ... And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.”**

**• Revelation 13:11–14**

What most people seem to overlook is the fact that Satan the Devil, most of his angels, and even the men who perform these evil acts of deception on earth can appear on the surface to represent holy, honest and spiritual individuals. Paul warned the Corinthians about false apostles who appeared to have the outward credentials of real apostles:

**“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.”**

**• 2 Corinthians 11:13–15**

It is a major mistake to assume that Satan and his demons only involve themselves in overt acts of wickedness that everyone recognizes to be evil.

The truth is, Satan and his ministers (as Paul related) can cosmetically look holy and righteous — their appearance might make one think they are the “true” representatives of God Himself. This is why one should be careful around “spiritual men and women” (even those who claim Christ as Lord). The apostle John said:

**“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.”**

• **1 John 4:1–2**

John then went on to say, **“every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God and this is the spirit of the antichrist”** (verse 3). And true to this evaluation, most in Christendom today are adamant that Christ Jesus was not in the flesh when He lay in the tomb for the three days He was buried. They think He was “out of the flesh” while His body lay in the tomb and He was preaching to the spirits in prison.

This is not the truth because Peter, if one reads him carefully, said that Christ’s preaching to the spirits took place **after** His resurrection from the dead.

**“For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit [at His resurrection].**

**By which also he [then] went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”**

• **1 Peter 3:19–21**

To say He was not in the flesh during any part of His earthly ministry (including the time He was buried) is to teach the doctrines of the antichrist! And this is what the apostle John was trying to warn people to avoid at all costs (1 John 4: 1–3).

The role of Satan and his ministers, according to the Scripture, is to deceive the world into believing that they are the true representatives of God and Christ (Revelation 12:9), and they are prone to back up their so-called authority with displays of signs and miracles.

- Recall that the magicians of Egypt were able to duplicate several of the miraculous signs that Moses and Aaron were doing on behalf of YHWH, the true God of heaven and earth (Exodus 7: 11, 22, 8:7).
- Satan even has power to cause sicknesses (Job 2: 7–10), and though he will not diminish the authority of his demons if it tarnishes the overall thrust of his purposes (Matthew 12: 25–26), he can reverse afflictions that he has caused if such “miracles” will further the development of his kingdom.
- Satan was even willing to present Christ with full leadership over all the kingdoms of this earth back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (before the appointed time of the Father) if Christ Jesus would bow down and worship him (Matthew 4: 7–10).

Though Satan’s power is limited and under the governance of God (and God restrains him from time to time — 2 Thessalonians 2: 6–7), Christians should never underestimate the power of Satan to deceive this world with signs and miracles that look good on the surface. Paul said, **“... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders”** (2 Thessalonians 2: 9).

It is dangerous business indeed to believe that signs, wonders, miracles, visions, tongues and other spiritual manifestations from people who call themselves the representatives of Christ are always emanating from Christ Jesus, when Christ explicitly tells us that they are not (Matthew 7:21–23).

Many people today, however, are prone to accept indiscriminately the signs and wonders performed in Christian churches, at religious crusades or at geographical locations such as grottos, etc., as being manifested under the auspices of Christ Jesus. Individuals flock to such meetings or places by the thousands looking for a special miracle to occur in their lives.

When people do so they are violating the teaching of Christ and are rebellious. He said, **“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas [Jonah]”** (Matthew 12:39).

Nothing could be clearer than this teaching of Christ. Other than the one miracle of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Jonah’s sign), followers of Christ are ordered by Him to expect no other specific signs or miracles to be afforded to them. This does not mean we cannot ask for healings or miracles to be afforded to them. This does not mean we cannot in prayer ask for healings or miracles (and these may be granted if they are within His will), but Christ specifically prohibits the seeking out of such signs.

So, when a preacher puts up an advertisement asking people to attend his meetings like “Come expecting a Miracle” (or something similar) people would be seeking out such a miracle and this is contrary to Christ’s instructions. In addition, when one travels half way around the world to go to a geographical location where miracles have supposedly occurred, this is also seeking out a sign, and it is not in accordance with Christ’s teaching.

The truth is, Christians need to realize how potentially dangerous these deceptive practices are, and how a reliance upon them can lead people away from the teachings of the Scripture. Nothing is more devastating to truth!

### **Points to Consider**

**Point One:** There are definite warnings from God the Father (Yahweh himself) to be extremely cautious of individuals claiming to be prophets. They must be thoroughly tested with criteria devised by God before they are to be accepted as representing Yahweh. They may even show an outward and accurate demonstration of visions they have witnessed; they may have real miracles associated with their ministries; and they may even have uttered prophecies that were fulfilled precisely, and still they would not be true prophets! This is a fact. God said to the people of Israel:

**“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder [miracle], and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them’; you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams:**

**for YHWH your God proves [is testing] you, to know whether you love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul.**

**You shall walk after YHWH your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death ..."**

**• Deuteronomy 13:1–5**

The central rule for testing the credibility of a true representative of God is this: **"To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word [the Word of God], it is because there is no light in them"** (Isaiah 8:20). The standard must always be the Holy Scriptures (and the truths that it contains including the latest teaching of the New Testament). Miracles are no sure proof of God. Christ made it clear that people would come in His name and deceive many (Matthew 24: 4–5), but you should study the Book of Jeremiah and find where the false prophets in his time also used Yahweh's name to back up their erroneous teachings and Jeremiah denounced them vociferously.

### **Point Two:**

**(A)** Most people think that the true miracles of God (when used extensively and dramatically) will always produce righteousness among the people who witness them. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The Exodus period saw the greatest display of outward miracles ever observed on earth by any group of people, but both the Egyptians and the Israelites came to be utterly rebellious over the period the miracles were given. Israel even had to be forced to stay 40 years in a desolate wilderness for their refusal to obey God after the abundance of miracles were given.

**(B)** The next great outpouring of miracles was in the time of Elijah and Elisha, but there was such wickedness among the Israelites of the time that even Elijah himself thought he was the only true worshiper of Yahweh left in the whole nation. God told him that a minuscule amount of 7,000 in the northern Kingdom of Israel had not bowed the knee to Baal. Miracles did not succeed to make the people righteous at that time either.

**(C)** Outstanding miracles were conducted by Christ, and later by the apostles, but people failed to repent permanently because of them and the religious authorities had Christ crucified and stoned. Though the apostles performed many marvelous works among the people, most all the apostles were martyred. Those early miracles did not make the generality of the people righteous.

**Point Three:** The apostolic church which desired signs, wonders and spiritual gifts the most (of which we have record) was the early Corinthian Church. And while Paul said it was all right to want such things, he admonished them severely to use them wisely and with discretion. In fact, he placed stringent rules upon their use because the Corinthians had so abused them.

Indeed, while the Corinthians were keen on healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits and tongues (1 Corinthians 12: 9–10), they were also unruly in their conduct. Paul had to castigate them without mincing words in the first eleven chapters of First Corinthians. The fact is, their abundant spiritual gifts did not diminish their rebelliousness to Christ by their conduct. Thankfully, by the time Second Corinthians was written most of the Corinthians had

learned their lessons and their emphases on healings, miracles, prophecies and tongues had subsided dramatically.

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### ***Addendum and Additional ASK Material — by David Sielaff***

- Before the time of Christ and during the times of the apostles, people were expecting signs because the Bible mentioned such things. The expectations of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews in Israel are explained in Dr. Martin's article, "[Signs of the Times in the First Century](#)." About the rapture, read "[The Rapture Theory - Its Surprising Origin](#)." For the "super-natural" experience of one Jewish Temple group leader, study the "[February 2019 Newsletter](#)."

More fascinating information about the social environment as well as the prophetic and messianic expectations during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD is also presented in great depth in Dr. Martin's book [Restoring the Original Bible](#). This book (free online) also describes the canonization process from within Scripture itself.

- People tend to overlook the significance of what Paul is saying: people have actually viewed Satan as an angel of light without knowing it was him, not just through Satan's angels and human ministers. Satan is an active participant in the deception because he fears the power of the Gospel through God's *ekklesia*, the Body of Christ. God allows Satan to operate in this manner even today.
- Dr. Martin's article "[How to Identify False Prophets](#)" expands on this topic of false prophets, past and future.
- "[Miracles, Signs and Wonders](#)" focuses on God's miracles by Elijah and Elisha. Dr. Martin's article, "[The History and Prophecy of Miracles \(and their Failure\)](#)," focuses on the progression and doubling of God's miracles by Elisha following the miracles done by his teacher Elijah.
- The apostle John identified seven significant miracles by Jesus, each of which had a specific significance regarding His ministry. See Dr. Martin, "[The Seven Miracles of John](#)" with a link to Dr. Martin's original audio presentation so you can listen while you read along.
- A more complete discussion of the definitive sign of the legitimacy of Jesus' ministry and messiahship is in "[Jonah and the New Testament](#)." Similar information presented from a different perspective is found in "[Proof of the Resurrection](#)."
- You might also be interested in how Scripture can be authenticated (especially the Gospels) as the Word of God in the article "[A Major Proof of the Bible](#)."

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