

Deception - Satan's Chief Weapon

Let's begin by opening your Bibles to Ephesians 6. Beginning in verse 10 and continuing through verse 18, we have the equipping of the saints for spiritual warfare. I would like for you to notice verses 11 and 12, which is a warning to all believers about this spiritual war.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Ephesians 6:10-18 describes the great struggle of the believer against evil and how we can have victory in this spiritual conflict. It begins with a challenge to be strong in the Lord and power of His might...to "stand against the wiles of the devil." The NASB and NIV translate this "schemes" of the devil, while the Catholic NAB translates it "tactics" of the devil. The word in the Greek is *methodeia* (*meth-od-i'-ah*) and it means cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery. I prefer "deceit" or "trickery" as a definition. Satan's "tactics" involve deception rather than the use of force. This fight is not physical but mental, a battle for your mind. Verse 12 continues this deception theme in an odd way.

This word "wrestle" is the Greek *pale* (*pal'-ay*) and is an interesting word. It was derived from another root word, which means (now get this) "to throw a man down by deceit and craft." Deceit? Greek wrestling as practiced in the various "games" of the time such as the Olympics was more a mental test of skills and tactics rather than brute force and strength. It relied more upon tricking your opponent into a weakened position where force could be applied to your advantage. Get your opponent off balance or deliver force in a way and from a direction he is not expecting. And that is how Satan works.

If there is a key word in the understanding of Satan's methods it is "deception". Always be looking for the lie.

This theme of Satan as a deceiver is all over the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We see him in the Garden deceiving the woman who would be later called Eve. In 1 Chronicles 21:1 Satan provoked David to number Israel. The Hebrew word translated "provoked" carries with it the implication of seduction.

Job was deceived. Look at Job 1:16 where we see his servants delivering devastating news about his wealth and family.

Job 1:16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee...

This calamity was not from God; it was from Satan (Job 1:6-12). It was Satan who led Job's wife to suggest to him that he curse God and die. It was Satan not God who brought calamity upon Job, but Job was led to believe that it was indeed God who brought this upon him. Satan's deception was to get Job to curse God and reject God, thus destroying his witness against Satan. God said of Job to Satan in Job 1:8, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" According to God, Job had a powerful testimony!

Israel was deceived time and time again, mostly deceived into idolatry. Israel's history was a constant cycle of idolatry with discipline then periods of "blamelessness" (when they met the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant) with attendant blessing. Christ also chastised Israel for its adoption of false teachings he called "traditions of men" that distorted God's Word (Mat. 15:13; Mr. 7:6-8, 13; Col. 2:8; Tit. 1:14). Many modern religions are doing this today. Nowhere in Scripture can what they teach be found, because it is not from God, rather it is merely "traditions of men" and false doctrines. Substituting "traditions" for sound Biblical doctrine is creating your own god, defining God by human viewpoint. That is idolatry!

In the New Testament there is a passage in 2 Corinthians where Paul warns the Corinthian church about the possibility of deception.

2 Cor 11:1 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Paul is very clear that we can be led astray (v 3) as Eve was beguiled. The word means to seduce or deceive. "Corrupted" is *phtheiro fthi'-ro*; *phthio* (to pine or waste); to shrivel or wither, i.e. to spoil as in the way fruit withers as it spoils. Paul warns of those who might preach a doctrine or a gospel other than what he has taught. That doctrine or gospel is like withered fruit, not suitable for consumption. The Word of God is often likened to spiritual food, but the food in view here is corrupt.

Now go down to verses 12-15. Here Paul tells us this corruption with its false doctrines comes from "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the

apostles of Christ." The word translated "transform" is *metaschematizo met-askh-ay-mat-id'-zo* and means to change, transfigure, or disguise with the idea of deception, and the change being only superficial. The underlying characteristics remain the same, but we see a beautiful false facade. It is translated "disguise" in the NASB and "masquerades" in the NIV. I believe "disguise" or "masquerades" are both better translations than "transforms" because the English word "transforms" suggests a real change. But the change Paul is speaking of is not real; it is only a deception that appears to be real. These false teachers will look and act like godly men and women when in fact they themselves will be deceived and are teaching false doctrines, as we shall see later in this study.

How does Paul say we can be led astray? By false doctrines—"preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached." By a "different spirit"—an unclean spirit instead of the Holy Spirit who should be our only source of divine illumination.

Now go back and look at this phrase at the end of verse 4, "...ye might well bear with him." (KJV) "...you bear *this* beautifully" (NASB). Expositors are all over the place on the meaning of this, but looking at the context of Paul expressing concern for possible deception, I think Paul is saying they (the Corinthians) might find this "other (false) doctrine" acceptable—that is "bear it" or receive it. This looks to me like Paul is expressing real doubt about the Corinthians ability to resist these false teachers, and in the case of the Corinthian church this was prophetic. They were often involved in apostasy that Paul had to correct.

It is also prophetic of the whole Church during the rest of the dispensation. The Church today is full of deceived denominations and cults who have bought into these false teachings and traditions of men just like Israel did under the Law.

You had better believe we can be deceived, many of us are deceived! And Scripture supports this.

According to Scripture the unregenerate are deceived. In Paul's letter to Titus he reminds him of their condition prior to salvation. In chapter 3 and verse 3 Paul says, "we ourselves were...deceived." Every unregenerate person is deceived by Satan. This is re-enforced in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 3 and 4, where Paul states that "those who are perishing" are blinded, and he tells us by whom: "the god of this world." That would be Satan. The blindness that Satan produces prevents the unregenerate from seeing "the light of the Gospel."

Just because you are born again does not exempt you from satanic deception. This blinding is removed at regeneration only in as much as the deceptive lies of Satan are revealed by the light of truth. Even though the heart is renewed by the new birth and the will has turned to God, man's self-deception is so ingrained that it remains an issue. You are not born again with the full knowledge of the truth. That must be learned, and the believer can still be deceived in that learning process! Consider the following verses:

- James 1:22 tells us we are **deceived** if we are hearers and not doers of the Word
- 1 John 1:8 tells us we are **deceived** if we say we have no sin
- Galatians 6:3 tells us we are **deceived** if we think ourselves to be something when we are nothing.
- 1 Cor. 3:18 says we are **deceived** if we think ourselves to be wise with the wisdom of the world.
- James 1:26 says we are **deceived** if we seem to be religious but an unbridled tongue reveals our true condition.
- Gal. 6:7 says we are **deceived** if we think we will not reap what we sow.
- 1 Cor 6:9 says we are **deceived** if the unrighteous will inherit the Kingdom
- 1 Cor 15:33 says we are **deceived** if we think contact with sin will not have an effect on us.

DECEIVED! Satan will deceive you as an unbeliever. He will deceive you as a believer. He will deceive you as a spiritually mature believer. And if you don't think so, then I submit you may be deceived already.

Take a look at Matthew 24:4-5 for what Jesus had to say on this subject.

Matt 24:4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."

In this passage Jesus is speaking about a specific period of time, the tribulation, as He warns about those who will come and say they are the Christ, but it has application to all dispensations.

The word translated "deceive" is *planao plan-ah'-o*; to roam (from safety, truth, or virtue) —go astray, deceive, err, seduce, wander, be out of the way. The word comes from *plane plan'-ay*; which means a straying from orthodoxy or piety: to deceive, delusion, error. Now remember, in this passage, Jesus is warning against deception during the Tribulation, and what are the circumstances prevailing during the tribulation? Believers will be awaiting the return of the Lord and looking for all kinds of signs and wonders. There will be a heightened sense of awareness of the supernatural. Jesus is saying that under these circumstances, especially when we are in a heightened awareness of the supernatural, we are very vulnerable to deception. This is a particular issue in some churches and charismatic circles. They are looking for supernatural signs and wonders, and Satan has delivered in the form of tongues and fake healings. They are deceived from the truth and into apostasy.

Now look down at verse 24 "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." We are warned that even the elect can be deceived. These deceptions will be so cleverly done and authentic appearing that even the regenerate will be deceived.

Paul warns of this deception again in 1 Timothy 4:1-2

1 Tim 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

He says in verse 1 that the “spirit speaks expressly.” The warning comes directly from the Holy Spirit. “Expressly” is rhetos *hray-toce*⁴; and is used as an adverb, meaning outspokenly, i.e. distinctly. This Greek word is where we get our modern word “rhetoric,” which means speaking with eloquence or expressively. The Holy Spirit was very clear on this, “that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith...” Some make “latter times” to be the tribulation, but I believe it is the Church Paul is referring to and the closing days of this dispensation. During that time there will be a falling away from the faith because of “seducing spirits and doctrines of devils”

Note that in verse 2 Paul says these of these seducing spirits “through the insincerity of liars,” these doctrines appear to be one thing but are really something else. They will appear to be the truth but are in effect a lie. It has a beautiful façade, but its core is still a lie.

The result will be (V2) “whose consciences are seared,” or in the KJV “having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” The word “seared” is *kauteriazō* *kow-tay-ree-ad'-zo*; and it means to brand (“cauterize”), (by implication) to render insensitive. This is the formation of “scar tissue” or calluses, a tough leathery skin that becomes insensitive to stimuli like pain. This scar tissue acts as a barrier to the truth. Once you buy into the lie, the scar tissue builds, and it creates insensitivity to the truth. One of my teachers called this “scar tissue of the soul.”

The conscience is the first line of defense for the soul. Your conscience is built around a set of norms and standards that establish acceptable grounds for conducting one’s life. These norms and standards are not just for the saved, but are for society as a whole. Ideally, all of us are supposed to learn them in the sanctity of a stable home, where we have both parents present teaching good moral values and a community that reinforces them. This is a solid culture at work in the development of a person. Yes, a single parent can instill high moral values in a child, but the God-designed ideal is a two-parent family.

For the regenerate, these learned moral values are augmented with spiritual norms and standards. The conscience becomes the first line of defense, when it applies these standards to anything it encounters. Your conscience often warns you that something is wrong long before you rationalize exactly why it is wrong. You may still use your free will to do wrong instead of right, but if there are good norms and standards established in the conscience, at least you will understand that it is wrong and choose not to go along. The problem arises when there are NO moral standards, or corrupt moral standards are present as with a broken culture. In such cases the person is likely to make bad or immoral decisions. This is one of the chief reasons why the crime rate is so high in this country, especially in certain communities. Moral values are not being taught in the home, schools, or society to the extent they were years ago. To make matters worse, our culture, through the media like movies and TV, has helped establish values that are

often morally flawed. We live in a decadent broken society. Under these conditions the conscience can be “seared” and dulled where it can no longer act as an early warning and discern the truth from the lie.

There is just no denying the fact that any of us can be deceived. There are ample warnings in Scripture of that potential danger. What you probably don’t yet realize is how easy this can happen, and how often it does happen. Every single one of you is either deceived by Satan about something right now, have recently been deceived, or soon will be deceived. Did I miss anyone? Because my intention was to get you to appreciate that the potential for deception is very real! In future lessons we will see how this works.

I am sure it is obvious to all of you that if you are ignorant of a subject, then you are susceptible to being deceived in matters concerning that subject. If you know nothing about automobiles and you take your car in to a mechanic because of some problem, and if the mechanic is unscrupulous and detects your ignorance, you are vulnerable to paying for repairs that are not needed. Well, the same applies to Satan. If he thinks you are ignorant on a subject, he will attempt to deceive you and likely be successful. **The principle to learn here is that protection from deception is found in knowledge.**

New Believers are particularly susceptible to deception. In their newly found faith and excitement, they are often recklessly ready to follow the Lord at any cost. That mindset is not necessarily bad. We should indeed be ready and willing to follow the Lord at any cost—but never recklessly.

This is compounded by the fact that very often when we come to faith in Christ, we bring along a set of preconceived notions about the Christian life and spirituality. These are often wrong and unscriptural and can lead the new believer into a false sense of security. One such notion is that God will protect you from deception.

Now pay attention here - You do not enjoy automatic protection from deception just because you are born again.

This would be a violation of your God-given free will. God expects you to make intelligent decisions (a subject we will look at in a great deal more detail in later lessons). You are a free moral agent with an intellect and you are expected to exercise that brain. The only ones who get a “free ride” are those totally incapable of making intelligent and moral choices because of mental limitations. The rest of us must use our brains and think with Bible doctrine. That implies a learning process.

Can “honest seekers of God” be deceived? One notion among believers is that “honest seekers after God” will not be allowed by God to be deceived. If you are “sincere” in your faith, God will protect you from deception. Where did that come from? If that were true Jesus would not have warned us against deception. The truth is even Christians who are “true and honest” can be deceived by Satan and embrace a false doctrine.

I have heard it said of some deceived believers, “but he has a good heart.” Their point is they know the person’s theology is all screwed up and largely unscriptural, but since his heart is in the right place, he must simply be confused on some matters. That may be true, but he is still deceived, and in that condition, he is a casualty in the angelic conflict, and his witness for God is ineffective or even damaging.

Pay attention - Goodness is no guarantee against deception. And it is no guarantee against having your witness for Christ destroyed by Satan.

At the moment of salvation the believer receives newness of life in regeneration, but he does not at the same time receive fullness of knowledge of God or Satan. Just like a baby doesn’t pop out of its mother’s womb with an understanding of algebra or world history, neither is the Christian regenerated with an understanding of all things they need to know as children of God. These things must be learned, and that takes time. Furthermore, it is these learned doctrines that are our source of protection from deception. During the period until a base of true knowledge is established as faith, we are very vulnerable to the lies of Satan.

Deception is based on ignorance and not moral character.

The ONLY solution for ignorance is knowledge of the truth. And this, my beloved, is the reason you are doing this study. The more you know from God’s inspired Word, the less susceptible you are to deception.

Ephesians 4:18 tells us that as unbelievers our minds were darkened, and we were blind in our hearts. Second Corinthians 4:4 tells us this blindness is a veil created by Satan. That veil is not destroyed at regeneration, rather the light of the truth is then able to penetrate the darkness. There is still a decision to make: will we follow the light or continue to follow the lie? And there are many out there, who are born again and following the lie.

With little or no doctrinal foundation and unbridled enthusiasm, the believer is susceptible to deception. This is why discipling new believers, to get them on solid doctrinal ground, is so terribly important.

This is why a serious commitment to the Word is so essential to spiritual growth. Most believers today are lazy and resist God’s urgings to show up for Bible study.

This is why there are so many cults and denominations. Do you think for a moment that God is in agreement with everything that is taught by all these “Christian” (in name only) denominations, not to mention all the other religions and belief systems of the world? If they all can’t be right, that means that some have the truth and a whole bunch are trapped in a lie. I for one will put my faith in the Bible and not in man. Unfortunately many have their faith in man and give no credit to Scripture. They have been deceived.

Pay attention because this statement is very important. We are compelled to conclude that if God expects something of us, He is obliged to reveal the truth of that to us. The challenge for us is to cut through all of Satan's deceiving lies to God's truth. Yes, the Spirit of God will make known to the believer what is truth when it is presented to us, but we can and often do reject the truth for a lie instead. We will see more on how this works in future lessons.

Be Not Deceived

In Matthew 24:4 and Mark 13:5 Jesus warned, "Take heed...be not deceived." Would He have warned us if it were impossible for us to be deceived? Of course not. Obviously, this warning implies there is a chance we can be deceived.

As a believer, we are expected to advance to spiritual maturity and grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18; Col. 1:10; Eph. 3:17). That implies there is a learning process, and a learning process requires us to submit ourselves to teachers who are qualified to teach us what we need to learn.

There is an argument from Scripture that we have no need of teachers, and this comes from a misinterpretation of 1 John 2:27.

1 John 2:27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Go look at the context of this passage. John is warning these believers about false teachers, in this case, a group called the "Gnostics" who claimed all knowledge of all things. The Gnostics were teaching a gospel different from that which they had previously been taught, and John is warning it is false. John is saying, "You have no need of **this** teaching," referring to the false teachings of the Gnostics.

Consider also, if there is no need for a teacher then why is the spiritual gift of teacher firmly established in Scripture (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:29; Eph. 4:11; James 3:1)? The believer receives Spirit enlightenment of material presented. This material can be presented by reading the Bible, but the preferred and most efficient method is presentation by a Spirit gifted teacher. The responsibility for accuracy on the teacher is so great that James warns in James 3:1 "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." The teacher is held to a higher standard. But the choice to teach is not yours and it certainly wasn't mine. The gift is sovereignly bestowed by God.

Unfortunately, many teachers we will encounter in our spiritual advance are not all as "learned in the Scriptures" as they ought to be. In other words many of them are deceived themselves and teaching false doctrines. Second Peter 2:1 warns of this group. This is where denominations come from; false doctrines or traditions take on the

authority of the truth and fragment the Church. The question arises, how do we protect ourselves from false teaching?

The Scriptures warn us as believers that we must maintain an open mind and examine all teachings. We are not to trust any and all things presented to us. Look at 1 John 5:1 where John warns us, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” John is explicitly telling us there are many false teachers in the world, and not all of them are led by the Holy Spirit. We should test them, and the way to test them is to test what they teach.

We find a similar warning in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 where Paul warns us, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

The “natural man” is *psuchikos anthropos*, which is the “soulish man” and refers to the unsaved, is unable to discern spiritual things. They are foolishness to him -*moria mo-ree'-ah*; silliness, absurdity. The unsaved are in a position without Holy Spirit enlightenment and spiritual issues are foolishness to them. We have seen that the unsaved are blind to the truth and that blindness comes from Satan. By comparison the “spiritual person” judges all things. This word translated “judge” is *anakrino an-ak-ree'-no*; and means to scrutinize, i.e. (by implication) investigate, interrogate: ask, question, discern, examine, judge, search. It is implied that he is capable of judging all things. That capability that only the believer has comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit enlightening the believer concerning truth. It is assumed the believer is in right relationship with God – filled with the Spirit or “walking in the Spirit,” if you prefer, as opposed to being out in the “weeds” in carnality. As believers we have a responsibility to examine or spiritually judge all things presented to us by teaching spirits. Does it come from an anointed teacher filled with the Holy Spirit, or does it come from a teacher that is led by an evil spirit? Consequently, we should reject all things, which our spiritual judgment is unable to accept, at least until such time as we can determine with clarity what is truth.

This warning is all over the NT. The believer is told to “mind” (be of a full age or spiritually mature) and “bring to proof” prove, examine (2 Tim 4:2). We are told to “prove all things” in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. We are to “abound in knowledge” and “all discernment,” so as to “prove all things that differ,” that you may be “sincere and void of offense” until the day of Christ (Philippians 1:10).

We are not ever told to blindly accept everything, because it may NOT all be from God. Believers are to exercise discernment and test everything and be certain. Unfortunately, many believers do not test what is presented to them. They accept everything and assume it is the truth. The worst are those who are “born into a religion”. They go to church with mom and dad and never question what they are being taught. They accept the teachings and assume it is true. But do they square with the Word of God?

Another one that gets to me are those who use the lame excuse that no man is capable of knowing the truth and sink into a relativity doctrine that says the truth is what you believe and that is different for each of us. That implies there are no truths, and the truth is merely relative to your current environment, experience, or belief. If you accept that, then you are compelled to accept what the Muslims believe that killing Jews and Christians is okay. Today something is unacceptable but tomorrow because of changing values, it is now acceptable. The truth is — there is truth! There are things that are indeed “black & white” and DO NOT EVER change because society changes. Satan wants to deceive you into thinking otherwise. Satan wants to keep the truth from you any way he can. And many have bought into his lies.

Apprehending the Truth

We have seen how the believer can be deceived, and it isn't that difficult. Many believers are already deceived. So, what if you have already bought into a lie? You begin to doubt the theology you have learned and have come to believe. You suspect there is something wrong, that what you are practicing may not be Biblical. A trusted friend says something or questions something that triggers this feeling. The antennas go up. Something inside you nags at you. That "something" is probably the Holy Spirit. How do you get free of the lie? How do you know the truth?

The only antidote for a lie is the truth. The only antidote for deception is truth. You must seek the truth. Seek and it will be given to you.

There are three stages of apprehending truth.

The first is perception of truth by understanding. Anyone can learn something by rote, simply memorizing and parroting back information. We all did this at one time or another in school. This level of understanding is of little value beyond passing the test.

The second is perception of truth for personal application. This is when you comprehend something on a level that allows you to internalize the concept and make application. You **trust** the knowledge enough to use it. We call this epignosis or faith. I believe faith is built on knowledge. Here we have taken understanding past the rote stage to a point where we can actually apply what we have learned beyond the exam. We believe it and make value judgments based on it.

But there is one more level of perception, and that is perception of truth for teaching and passing on to others. Some believers have a teaching gift, but this principle applies not only to those so gifted but to all believers. All of us need to be able to articulate doctrines and support them with scripture. This is teaching on the witnessing level, where good accurate information conveyed in a clear and understandable manner helps with leading some person to Christ or is teaching on the discipling level where you help a new believer get off on the right foot. Every believer should have the ability to convey the information necessary to lead someone to salvation, and then help them understand the mechanics of having a fully functioning spiritual life. That is the absolute minimum every believer ought to be able to teach a new believer. Unfortunately many believers barely understand the salvation part and have a totally works-based notion of the spiritual life part.

Obviously, the lie can be apprehended, internalized and taken to a point where we are qualified to teach it just as well as the truth. That means that any knowledge, any communication, must be examined and tested against a standard that we know is accurate. There are three possible attitudes the believer can take towards knowledge presented by another.

We can make an assumption that what is presented is true and not a lie.

- Some said of Christ that He was a false prophet. This was an assumption. There is an old saw that applies well here, and it goes like this, “Never assume, because it makes an ASS out of U and ME.” We should **never assume** anything relating to spiritual issues.
- Since we must never “assume” then we must “know.” But what if we don’t know? What if we are presented with a doctrine and we do not have the frame of reference to make a reliable decision as to its veracity? The answer is we can take the neutral position, i.e., “I don’t know.” Some said of Christ “We don’t know ...,” indicating they were not sure He was the Messiah. They thought He might be, but were not certain. “We don’t know...” This is taking a position of neutrality in view of insufficient knowledge. It is safer to take a neutral position when in doubt than to act wrongly. If you are in doubt, take a neutral position concerning it and TEST IT! Use the spiritual discernment you have been given from the Word of God and determine first if it is true. Do not act in haste. When you don’t know for certain the best course is the neutral one until you do know.
- Then there is certainty of real knowledge. We have the frame of reference, some foundation, a high level of trust in the source, it jibes with what we do know, we know it is true. Peter said of Christ “we know....” Peter was certain that Jesus was the Christ (Mat. 16:16). Furthermore, as Jesus indicated in verse 17, Peter came by this knowledge not from man but from God. Peter had true knowledge. Only when you know, only when you have real knowledge, should you act. And if you have real knowledge, it is expected that you will not hesitate but will step out in faith.

So, we should never assume. When we are not sure, we should take a neutral position until we are sure. Once we are certain we should step out in faith. This simple rule can save you from a lot of deception. If you are seeking the truth and have a desire to separate it from spiritual deception, God will make the truth known to you, maybe not “right this minute,” but He will eventually. In the face of uncertainty, wait for certainty. We should indeed be ready and willing to follow the Lord at any cost—but never recklessly based on a lie.

Can we find some measure of safety from deception? Yes I believe we can, but it requires spiritual discernment. It is important and significant learning just for you to comprehend that there is the possibility for deception. Satan can and will attack you, and there is at least the potential he will be successful. The next thing we need to have is an understanding of the conditions under which you can be deceived.

The defense?—Caution and discernment and a fully functional spiritual relationship with God. We must develop a teaching level knowledge of God, His plan, His purpose, His essence and character, and His Word. Knowledge on this level places the believer in a position where deception becomes more difficult, though never impossible.

Understand what God requires of us and how we are to cooperate with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are never called by God to be mindless robots. God requires, for His working, cooperation with His Spirit and the complete use of every faculty of the whole man. This includes your free will and your intellect using internalized spiritual truth.

Ro 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The best defense is the truth, and the truth must be learned.