
DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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His Mercies Are New Every Morning

By Anton Bosch

Jeremiah wrote his Lamentations at the darkest time in the history of Israel and Judah. Israel had already been taken captive 150 years before and would not return to the land for another 2500 years¹. Judah had just been taken captive to Babylon after the most devastating siege of Jerusalem in which the city had burned to the ground, the wall broken down, the Temple destroyed, and the holy things taken as spoil. The last king of Judah had his eyes gouged out and was led away in disgrace.

For 40 years Jeremiah had warned that this day would come, but Judah would not listen. Judah was already a Babylonian colony. Jeremiah had even advised the king not to resist the attack from Babylon but to surrender. Instead King Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and ensconced himself in Jerusalem under the foolish notion that he could resist the mighty Babylonian army with only a few hundred men. The Babylonians besieged the city for 18 months until the famine in Jerusalem had become so severe that women were eating their own babies. In the end the enemies built a ramp against the city wall and overran Jerusalem. The king fled but was caught, and the last thing he saw before his eyes were put out was how each of his sons was killed. With this memory he was shackled, blinded and imprisoned for the rest of his life. No man would ever sit on the throne of David again – until that day when Jesus comes to reign from Jerusalem in the Millennium.

The glory of a once mighty city and proud nation was broken, brought down to the dust. It is against this background that Jeremiah wrote Lamentations as a funeral dirge for his beloved city. He wept and mourned for what could have been, but was lost forever. The city that housed

David, the most feared king in the world, and Solomon, the richest king in the world, was sacked. The glory, power and blessing were gone forever, leaving behind ashes, the stench of the dead and the shame of captivity.

Yet in the midst of Jeremiah's weeping and lament he wrote a few words that seem to be totally out of place: *"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, Therefore I hope in Him!"* (Lamentations 3:22-24). How can God be merciful, compassionate, and of great faithfulness when He stood by doing nothing while His people were being devastated, humiliated and destroyed? Even worse, how could the Lord be merciful, compassionate and faithful when He was the cause of all this heartache and defeat (Lamentations 2:17)?

Jeremiah recognized that while the inevitable had happened, the Lord had revealed His mercy by holding back His judgment of the nation for almost 800 years. Yes, 800 years before, when Israel came out of Egypt, God had been tempted several times to destroy the whole lot, even just three months into the wilderness, He declared that they would be carried to Babylon and beyond (Acts 7:43). For 800 years He sent prophet after prophet, warning upon warning, yet Israel persisted in her idolatry and wickedness. The fact that the Lord waited 800 years before pouring out His wrath on the nation is proof of His tremendous patience, grace and mercy. Thus Jeremiah wrote, *"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed"* (Lamentations 3:22). He recognized that not only had the Lord waited a long time for Israel and Judah to repent but, because of His mercies, some had survived and the whole nation had not been annihilated. There were still a few great men like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Ezekiel and Jeremiah left. The Lord could have consumed the whole lot, but because of His great mercy He did not.

¹ 600BC to 1948AD = 2548 years

In the same way we need to recognize that it is because of the Lord's mercies that we have not been consumed. Remember Lot's wife, who for one look at the world was turned into a pillar of salt, and Ananias and Sapphira, who for one lie were struck dead. How many times have we looked back at the world with longing? And how many times have we told the Lord that we will give Him our all, but this turned out to be a lie? It is His mercy that has kept us alive and given us a desire for spiritual things.

The Lord's mercies are new every morning, says Jeremiah. I think what he meant is that every morning when we wake up and are alive the Lord has once again extended His mercy to us. Each morning He gives us another day just because He is merciful. We become so presumptuous to think that we will go to sleep and rise the next day and do this and that (James 4:13-16). James says that every time we assume that we will be alive tomorrow it is arrogant boasting and it is evil. I long that everyone who reads these words will rise each day with the deep awareness that the Lord has given us a new day with new opportunities to do His will – just because of His mercy. Paul warns that *"if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either"* (Romans 11:21).

Some have become so arrogant in their disobedience and sin they think that the Lord will never cast them away. Some ministers even make this the center of their teaching. Many have put this lie at the foundation of their lives and attitudes. No, it is not true. The Lord is merciful and every day He shows us new mercies and compassions. But the time will come when He will declare, "Enough!"

Judah had 800 years filled with example after example of God's judgment and severity. Israel had been destroyed before their very eyes. Zedekiah (who lost his eyes) had become King of Judah because Nebuchadnezzar had invaded Judah and took Zedekiah's brother and predecessor, Jehoiakim, to Babylon as a prisoner. In spite of the warnings of Jeremiah, and the evidence of the Lord's wrath, Zedekiah *"did evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord... but he stiffened his neck and hardened*

his heart against turning to the Lord God of Israel" (2Chornicles 36:12,13).

How many days have you been alive? This is how many days the Lord has shown you His mercy and has spared you. We are no better than Israel and Judah, yet we presume that He will continue to be merciful because of the Cross. But,

"Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:29-31).

Thank God, He is once again extending His mercy and compassion toward us. So let us *"exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion'"* (Hebrews 3:13-15).

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1Corinthians 10:11).

Note to reader: What you have just read is an excerpt from Anton Bosch's soon to be released book ***Building Blocks of Encouragement – A Devotional***. The book is a selection of 60 of his most popular articles written over the past 11 years. As the title suggests, the articles are encouraging and edifying. Each chapter is free standing and is designed to be easily read in one sitting. In addition to being encouraging, the articles are doctrinally orthodox and the book is therefore a safe gift for friends and family that will bless strengthen and encourage. See advertisement in this newsletter for details on how to order.

Zimbabwe Trip Report

By Pastor Anton Bosch

After 2 ½ days of travelling I arrived in Bulawayo on Friday April 17. The next day would be the first of seven days of teaching in addition to two Sundays of ministering in local churches. The purpose of the visit was to encourage the staff and students of the Theological College of Southern Africa (TCSA) in their work and to teach two seminars – one on “Fundamentals of the Faith” and the other on Homiletics (the art of preaching).



One of the classes – seated on the ground is Karl, the Dean of Students.

Every day was jam-packed with lectures from 9am till 8:30 pm as students, pastors and visitors crowded into the small lecture room of the College. In order to accommodate everyone we ran two sessions of 50 attendees each day, resulting in a total of over 100 receiving thorough and extensive teaching over the course of the visit. Visitors came from every conceivable denomination, including several Anglican (Episcopalian) priests, and everyone was unanimous in their appreciation for the depth and clarity of the teaching. I was struck by their hunger for the Word as they would sit with rapt attention for two-hour periods at a time. The depth of the questions was also an indication that they had not only grasped the material but also understood the broader ramifications of the teaching.

While the focus was on the Fundamentals and on Homiletics, a couple of sessions became excursions

into the Prosperity Gospel. I was shocked at the inroads that this damnable heresy had made into Zimbabwe since my last visit. I had miscalculated and thought that Zimbabwe, because of its deep poverty, would not be profitable for these charlatans, but one pastor explained to me that 30,000 people in a stadium only need to give \$1 each to make it well worth the money preacher’s while. In addition to the usual empty promises of prosperity, these preachers are also selling anointing oil and “blessed water” – both which falsely promise to perform miracles. Please pray for Zimbabwe, that the truth would prevail and that Bible-believing churches and believers will not be fooled by this false gospel.

From Bulawayo, I travelled to Harare for a meeting with the denomination’s executive, and from there back to Johannesburg to meet with a small group of TCSA students who live in South Africa. Once again their hunger for teaching was evident. In addition to students in Zimbabwe and South Africa, we hope to soon have a “branch” in Botswana as a student from Botswana attended the seminars in Zimbabwe and will be returning to Botswana, zealous to encourage others to take the course as well.



The interpreter re-preaching my message at Luveve

I am grateful to Sun Valley Community Church for sponsoring the cost of the trip and for giving me time off to do this important work. My thanks also extends to Pastor Jeff and Tammy Scorziell who graciously shared their home and cottage with me during the visit, as well as the Leo’s in Johannesburg who

faithfully picked me up from the airport and accommodated me. They also hosted the meeting with the South African students. Lastly, I must commend the staff of the College in Zimbabwe, Pastors Tham Dube and Nqobile Mpoko and the full-time staff – Karl Malotane and Princess Nare – for the excellent work they are doing under very trying circumstances.



Students in Johannesburg

Please pray for the work of TCSA, for the finances and skills needed to keep this vital project going. Also pray for the churches in Zimbabwe to stand against the prosperity message.

Characteristics of Our Time – the Great Falling Away of the Last Days

By Johan Malan

The Bible sheds light on great changes that will occur in various spheres of life during the last days. From a spiritual point of view there will, on the one hand, be preparations among evangelical Christians to meet the heavenly Bridegroom during His secret coming and to subsequently share with Him in the further revelation of His kingdom (Rev. 5:9-10; 20:6). On the other hand, there will be a process of moral and spiritual falling away among the large number of spiritually deceived people in anticipation of receiving the multi-religious prince of peace who is described in the Bible as *the Antichrist* or *the beast* (1 John 2:18; Rev. 13:1-2). He will institute a humanistic

new world order (reminiscent of the ancient Babylonian Empire) which will be fallen man's deliberate effort to rule himself without God, and specifically also in opposition to God's kingdom (Rev. 13:7).

The supporters of these two kingdoms are both waiting on the appearance of a messianic leader to save the world from its serious political divisions, military confrontations, moral decline, health problems and economic crises, but their perceptions on who he is differ largely from one another. The one messiah will be God's Son from heaven who will rule by His divine power (1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 11:15; 19:15), while the other one will arise from the sea of nations to rule the world through Satan's power (Rev. 13:1-3). Humanity is now confronted by a final choice between the true Christ of the Bible and the false christ of all faiths. The prevailing opinion in the world is rapidly changing in favor of an antichristian new world order, and that orientation daily renders the general acceptance of an interfaith messiah a more substantial possibility. The following tendencies in the world are operating in support of the coming deceiver:

Weakening faith

Since Christ is bodily in heaven we can only experience His presence spiritually through the working of the Holy Spirit. We cannot see Him and are only united with Him by faith: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb. 11:1). When our faith is weakened it negatively impacts upon the quality of our relationship with the Lord Jesus as we backslide into a position where we can merely be described as doubting people of little faith (Matt. 14:31). We should prevent such a situation by building ourselves up in our most holy faith (Jude v. 20) and, in a convincing way, take a stand before all the unbelievers and agnostics in favor of a dynamic relationship of faith with Christ: *"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses"* (1 Tim. 6:12). Are you also committed to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"*? (Jude 1:3).

There are various indications that a sound, biblical faith is everywhere on the decrease. This phenomenon is part of a worldwide program to promote false religions and deception with a view to setting the scene for the revelation of the man of sin: *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron”* (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Although the apostle clearly emphasizes the demonic origin of apostasy, that does not minimize the accountability of the backsliders themselves for being apostatized. Their own part in denying the faith is evident from their receptivity to the lies of hypocritical liars. These preachers have a seared conscience, which alludes to the fact that they are slaves of false doctrines and hence collaborators of the devil.

Backsliding occurs when a believer acts contrary to his own conscience (an inner conviction, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, of right and wrong) and willfully prefers a false teaching above the truth. Paul admonished Timothy never to expose himself to deception but to remain true to his faith and good conscience, even if it gives rise to conflict and rejection by others. He was encouraged to continue proclaiming the gospel which Paul entrusted to him, that by it *“...you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck”* (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

Today there are many people who departed from the faith and became spiritually shipwrecked. They exposed themselves to Satan's lies by, for instance, listening to deceptive teachings in which biblical truths are distorted or denied, reading the wrong books or visiting the Internet websites of deceivers. Consequently, many of them have “rejected” the true faith and became teachers of deception themselves. Paul mentions examples of such false teachers who, during that early stage of the church history, have ruined the faith of many people by denying the hope on the resurrection from the dead and alleging that the resurrection has already occurred, thereby *“overthrowing”* the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:16-18).

In modern times it has become quite common

to deny all references to the resurrection from the dead – including that of Jesus Himself. Paul says: *“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished”* (1 Cor. 15:16-18). False doctrines of this nature inevitably lead to the ruining of people's faith and doubting the relevance of the Bible.

The devil has a very clear agenda with apostatizing, and that is to prepare the way for the acceptance of the great deceiver, the Antichrist, who will offer himself instead of Christ as the king and Savior of the world. Spiritual deception is a prerequisite for the appearance of the false world teacher. Jesus warned against this situation: *“Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many”* (Matt. 24:4-5).

Love that grows cold

Love for the Lord Jesus obliges us to faithfulness towards Him, holy living and to being rooted and grounded in His love as a basic moral and spiritual principle in our lives. The Antichrist will be the absolute opposite of these virtues and will be the man of sin, deception, lovelessness and double standards. It will be his objective to establish a culture of sin in the world, as evidenced by the fact that he is described as *“the man of sin”* and *“the son of perdition”* (2 Thess. 2:3). While the spirit of the Antichrist operates more strongly in the world during the end-time, sin and iniquity (lawlessness) become more acceptable – even in many churches, where behavior which was regarded as sin in the past is now openly allowed and shamelessly practiced.

The consequence of the proliferation of sin and unrighteousness is that Christians often adopt more carnal lifestyles and in the process inevitably become alienated from the Head of the church – Jesus Christ. In His Olivet Discourse on the end-time Jesus warned against a falling away of this nature: *“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold”* (Matt. 24:12). Sin will be rampant everywhere.

It is the express purpose of the kingdom of darkness to erode the love that believers have for Christ, to the point where they will ultimately turn their backs on the biblical Jesus and become

followers of a false Jesus. In early church history there are various examples of serious apostatizing. In His message to the church in Ephesus, Jesus said: *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent”* (Rev. 2:4). The congregation did not correct their serious spiritual errors and ultimately deteriorated to a position where they were forced to close their doors.

How do modern Christians react when distorted or biased presentations of the Lord Jesus, of the Bible and of the Holy Spirit are proclaimed in their churches, and when religious leaders openly start condoning sinful practices? Don't they realize that this is the work of the devil which is aimed at completely destroying their relationship of faith with the true Jesus? Paul writes to such a congregation that started well but later became the victims of deception: *“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted – you may well put up with it!”* (2 Cor. 11:2-4).

People who have grown cold in their love have already embarked on a wrong journey, and because of their own choices they are carried away into a spiritual wilderness. On this journey the devil will meet them in the guise of an angel of light, offer many liberties and freedom of expression to them, including friendly relations with the non-Christians faiths, and in the process introduce them to another Jesus who represents all religions on earth. The major purpose with spiritual deception will then have been achieved.

Refuting promises on the second coming

A substantial part of the false messiah's preparations to take control of the world and deceive all people is to deny that the true Messiah will descend from heaven to catch away His

disciples from earth, thereby saving them from the great tribulation of the end-time. This blatant rejection of the truth has already penetrated various Christian churches and explains the suspension of preaching on the second coming, since they regard all promises on the return of Christ as myths and figurative speech without any real substance. People who have adopted this view do not deem it necessary to watch and pray in order to be worthy to “escape” the coming tribulation period (Luke 21:36). Deceived believers who deny the literal fulfillment of biblical prophecies also reject as unreal the *“catching away”* (Gr. *harpazo*) of believers as described in 1Thessalonians 4:16-17 as it interferes with their plans to establish an earthly kingdom in which they will be the rulers.

According to the entire non-Christian world, as well as liberal theologians who have abandoned a biblical future expectation, there are no concrete reasons why we should *“wait for His [God's] Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come”* (1 Thess. 1:10). All the promises in the latter verse are denied by critics of the Bible, namely that there is a heaven, that God has a Son who was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, and that He will return from there to save us from the wrath of the tribulation and from divine judgments. The skeptics also strongly deny that humanity is heading for a time of judgments and accountability to God. They prefer to proclaim the establishment of a kingdom on earth and to promote the deceptive assertion that man can positively change his own destiny by conquering and removing all evil from the world; consequently, they do not look forward to a Savior from heaven to liberate them. This view has already taken root to such an extent that more and more people from various quarters are scoffing at evangelical believers who expect the second coming of Christ.

Unfortunately, there are also many Christians who do recognize certain aspects of biblical eschatology, but not everything. Some of them do believe in the reality of a tribulation period under the rule of the Antichrist, as well as divine intervention at the end of the tribulation during the public appearance of Christ, but they strongly deny the possibility of a pre-tribulation rapture. By

doing so they remove the focus of believers away from the Lord Jesus and fix it on the coming tribulation period and the Antichrist. To such people, the devising of survival strategies during these trying times becomes their main concern, while the glad expectation of Christ's soon coming for His bridal congregation is relegated to a "later event," thereby losing its immediate relevance. An unbiblical teaching of this nature by Christians suits the deceptive views of the enemy as it deprives Christians of the anchor of Christ's appearance to save them from impending judgments. People who proclaim this view are doing more harm than good as they partially support the agnostics' theology of denial.

Doubting the Bible

From the inner circles of various Christian churches and their theological seminaries, an escalating campaign is waged against the Bible as the authentic and inspired Word of God. Not only is the divine origin of the Bible questioned, but also the correctness and applicability of evangelical doctrines – including the doctrine on the second coming. Paul unambiguously confirms the truth of the Bible as God's Word, the necessity of heeding its teachings, the deity of the Lord Jesus, His capacity as Judge, as well as the obligation of Christians to keep on proclaiming these truths even though they may be rejected and oppressed by modern agnostics. We should abide by what we have been taught by the Lord and guard against the false teachings of the apostates:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist,

fulfil your ministry" (2 Tim. 3:16–4:5).

The destructive campaign by various prominent "Christian leaders" against the Bible as the authentic Word of God gave rise to the fact that the outside world has even become less concerned about the Bible than ever before. Christian constitutions and state-supported Christian education are rare phenomena in the world. Because of this, fallen man has gone to greater extremes in regarding himself as the sole master of his own destiny. These developments have further opened the way towards the establishment of a humanistic and antichristian new world order, which will be used by Satan and his kingdom to declare war against the true Christ when He returns to earth after the tribulation period to judge His enemies and restore the throne of David in Jerusalem.

The scientific worldview

There is an increased abandoning of the Bible as the basis of a Christian worldview while modern man is embracing the scientific worldview. According to this cognitive orientation the Bible is regarded as mythological and primitive, since only phenomena which can be scientifically verified are accepted as truth. Consequently, everything which is supernatural, and hence outside the field of scientific inquiry, is classified as wishful thinking and fiction – that includes the existence of God, heaven and hell, the biblical account of creation, the virgin birth of Jesus, the atoning value of His crucifixion, His resurrection, ascension and second coming, the promised resurrection of all deceased people, eternal life, and the creation of new heavens and a new earth. Biblical morality is viewed as obsolete and intimidating rules which do not apply to modern societies. Science also denies the existence of an opposing kingdom of darkness under the control of Satan and his fallen angels (demons) and regards statements on these phenomena as metaphors and references to primitive superstition.

The more churches there are that give full recognition to the scientific worldview without realizing its absolute inability to identify and verify supernatural phenomena, the more of them become spiritually impoverished by sacrificing their faith in favor of humanly conceived rational thinking with all its limitations, particularly in the

field of assessing religious beliefs and practices. Man and his natural abilities are elevated to a supreme position, and thus becomes his own god. No wonder that a humanistic leader with unusual talents and charisma will be accepted as a world leader. It is precisely in this area where the devil will exploit the naivety of modern man with the sinister view of enslaving humanity to control every aspect of people's lives.

When faith in the true God is everywhere on the verge of vanishing, and together with that also faith in the spiritual realities of the unseen world, fallen man will take full control of his own life. At the end of the tribulation period there will be very few people who still believe in the true Jesus and serve Him, and that is the reason why He said: *"When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8).

Pursuing of a false peace

The peace which Christ offers differs radically from that which the world pursues. He said: *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you"* (John 14:27). During New Testament times people commonly greeted one another by saying: "Peace" (Heb. "Shalom"). Through His death Jesus provided a legacy to His disciples of the peace of the forgiveness of sins, and because of that they enjoyed the peace of God which surpasses all understanding (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7). The world cannot in any way offer an inner peace of this kind to people.

However, the peace which the Lord Jesus promises is not only confined to a spiritual peace in the heart as He will one day return to also establish a physical kingdom of peace on earth: *"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David"* (Isa. 9:7). Peace will prevail everywhere on earth: *"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore"* (Isa. 2:4). There will be no need for military training as all people will live together peacefully. The Messiah Himself will be the personification and maintainer of peace on earth (Mic. 5:5; cf. Hos. 2:18).

The world tries everything possible to imitate the peace of Christ, but to no avail. They cannot

offer anyone salvation from sin and peace in their hearts, neither can they bring about lasting peace among the divided and hostile nations. They do try to establish peace on earth, but their plans are based on compromise, persuasion, promises of financial assistance, and often also on intimidation and military threats. They can, at most, achieve a false peace, which is not lasting and genuine; but they nevertheless see this as a last resort because they have rejected the peace which only Christ can give. They *"speak peace to their neighbours but evil is in their hearts"* (Ps. 28:3).

A false saviour

Because of rejecting the God of the Bible the world is inevitably moving towards a covenant with *"the god of this age,"* i.e. Satan who blinds the minds of people so they should not understand or accept the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). In his continued war against Christ, Satan will offer the world an alternative, multi-religious messiah who will establish a false unity and brotherhood on earth. Humanity will be overjoyed when this unity materializes, and all nations will serve and worship their newly-found leader: *"And all the world marvelled and followed the beast ... and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him? ... And he was given authority over every tribe, tongue and nation"* (Rev. 13:3-4, 7).

This false savior will initially come in the guise of a prince of peace who rides on white horse (Rev. 6:2), but when he later declares himself to be God in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, he will order the summary execution of all who refuse to worship him in his new capacity as self-declared God (Rev. 13:15). This disillusionment will only occur in the middle of the tribulation period of seven years which means that, through deception and deceit, the false messiah will succeed in gaining the support of many people during the first 3½ years after his appearance. Daniel says of the Antichrist: *"A king shall arise having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty. ... Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart"* (Dan. 8:23-25).

The great shock

An unprecedented shock in the modern history

will strike humanity when the church dispensation is concluded and the hidden kingdoms of God and Satan are suddenly revealed. The first of these dramatic events will be the catching away of the true church of Christ during the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17). To evangelical, Bible-believing Christians, faith will be fulfilled in seeing when they meet Jesus and accompany Him to heaven (John 14:2-3). Their place on earth will suddenly be empty, but this situation will be exploited by Satan to reveal the king and false christ of his kingdom (the Antichrist) to the world.

The shock of the Rapture will have various far-reaching consequences. Crumbling convictions on the existence of God and His heavenly kingdom will be rapidly and drastically reviewed. To those who remain behind, the kingdom of heaven will still be hidden from the eye and people will have to engage in a relationship with Christ by faith. However, they will be confronted by extreme hostility as the kingdom of darkness will offer the world a very popular, but false, christ who will conclude a covenant with all nations and religious groups – including Israel and the deceived part of Christianity. Only the small group of new converts in the tribulation period who follow the true Christ, will know that this new leader is false. They will be able to resist him and prevail over him spiritually in the name of Christ, but a martyr's death will be the consequence of rejecting him and his global government (Rev. 6:9-11; 12:11).

When the popular leadership of the Antichrist is threatened by opposition in the middle of the tribulation period, he will institute a military dictatorship which will forcefully deal with his adversaries all over the world (Dan. 11:44). He will then show his true colors and, during a short period of 42 months, subject the entire world to the destructive nature of Satan's fully revealed kingdom on earth.

The end of deception

The present process of increased deception will only be terminated when Christ returns to earth at the end of the seven-year tribulation to destroy the Antichrist and his followers (Rev. 19:19-21). The remnant of Israel and the nations will then all confess their sins with great sorrow and be reconciled to Jesus Christ who is the only true

Savior and King of the world (Zech. 12:10-14; Matt. 24:29-30; Acts 15:16-17). The second coming of Christ will bring an end to all false religions and idolatry: *"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day, says the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered"* (Zech. 13:1-2).

A similar spiritual awakening and reconciliation to God will also occur among members of all nations who survived the great tribulation. They will regularly go up to Jerusalem where the throne of the Messiah will be to celebrate religious feasts to the honor of His Name: *"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles"* (Zech. 14:16). That will be true dedication motivated by changed hearts: *"At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts"* (Jer. 3:17).

Jerusalem will be the political and religious capital of the world where the Lord Jesus will rule from the throne of David. He will be honored and served by all, while the spiritually revived people of Israel will be highly regarded by all nations: *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also. Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you"* (Zech. 8:20-23).

The Lord also promised through Isaiah: *"They [the nations] shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11:9). During the coming dispensation

of the revealed kingdom of God on earth the saved Israel will be the special witnesses of the Messiah to evangelize future generations among all nations: *“Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit”* (Isa. 27:6).

However, we are still in the church dispensation in which we are spiritually subjected to influences from both the kingdoms of God and that of Satan. As Christians we are engaged in a war against evil, and because of that we have to put on the whole armor of God to remain standing against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-12). During this dispensation the majority of all people on earth are on the broad way of sin and thus hostile towards the true church of Christ and also towards Israel as God’s people. That is the reason why all nations will be gathered against Israel during the coming tribulation, where God will enter into judgment with them because of their anti-Jewish and anti-Christian beliefs and actions (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2-3, 12-13; Joel 3:1-2). The deployment of military powers in the Middle East will be the consequence of intensive deception by the Antichrist. He will enjoy the assistance of deceiving spirits that will be sent out by the devil to further incite all nations against Israel, against Christianity and also against the coming Messiah from heaven (Rev. 16:13-14).

When the true church as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) has been removed from earth by way of the Rapture, the Antichrist will be revealed (2 Thess. 2:7-12). After that, the deception and persecution of new believers who reject the Antichrist will soon begin and give rise to the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21). There is no room for any compromise with this deceiver and his false teachings; therefore, every person on earth has the responsibility of deciding to which kingdom he wishes to belong. This decision will determine his eternal destiny.

Modern-Day Divination

By Sarah H. Leslie

Divination was expressly forbidden in the Old Testament. It was included on a list of serious occult practices that were to be avoided:

*“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth **divination**, or an **observer of times**, or an enchanter, or a witch.... For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto **observers of times**, and unto **diviners**: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.”* (Deut. 18:10, 14)

Despite the prohibition the Israelites practiced this occult art, especially in the context of other idolatries, and it is one of the sins that caused God’s judgment to fall upon their land:

*“And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used **divination** and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.”*
(2 Kings 17:17)

The prophet Jeremiah warned about *“prophets [who] prophesy lies in My name... a false vision and **divination**”* (Jer. 14:14). Jeremiah warned that idolatry was deceitful, wicked, vanity and folly. He said the people were guilty of walking *“after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim”* (Jer. 9:14). Baalam’s sin? Divination (Numb. 22:7, Josh. 13:22, etc.). Ezekiel spoke of the prevalence of *“lying **divination**”* (13:6,7) and *“false **divination**”* (21:23; see also 22:28).

In the New Testament the apostles encountered *“a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of **divination**”* who *“brought her masters much gain by **soothsaying**,”* indicating that divination can be a very profitable enterprise (Acts 16:16). The ancient Romans practiced a form of augury, examining flights of birds and the entrails of sacrificed animals, in order to ascertain their future fate. They also tracked omens, strange births, unusual natural phenomena, shooting stars in the sky, etc. *Plutarch’s Lives*, a historical account of many ancient Greek and Roman warriors, described how many battles were waged based on generals divining the “signs.” (See an example of this in Ezek. 21:21.)

The ancient Greeks relied upon their oracles, most notably the Oracle at Delphi, which delivered obscure predictions about future events. These murky “prophecies” were believed to be inspired by the gods. Hence there is a strong correlation between divination and the gods of idolatry (and

astrology). Any failure of a prophecy to come to pass was blamed on misinterpretation of the hearer, not the priestess who delivered the oracle.

Occult encyclopedias say **divination is any method of finding out what will happen in the future.** These methods can include Tarot, Runes, *I Ching*, fortune-telling, horoscopes (astrology), palmistry, reading tea leaves, etc. In our modern-day world many of these old forms of divination still exist, and some have been revived as the New Age Movement has risen in influence. There has also been a notable increase in various forms of “divination” coming into the church. Much of what passes today for “prophecy” is, in fact, divination. So how can one tell the difference?

Divination is reliance upon reading “signs” in order to ascertain the future. But God’s Word has already told us everything we need to know about the future. Christians are in danger of putting too much stock in trying to read the “signs.” In fact, in the New Testament there are stern warnings about looking for “signs.” Jesus told the Pharisees and Sadducees that *“A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah”* (Matt. 16:4)

Ironically, a true sign of the endtimes is an increase in believing false **“signs and wonders”** and following **“false prophets.”** This will become such a severe deception that it could *“seduce, if it were possible, even the elect”* (Mark 13:22). 2Thessalonians 2:9 warns of the coming Antichrist, *“whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”*

It is true that there will be signs in the heavens – drastic and dreadful signs – at the very end of this age that will be unmistakable in their indication of God’s imminent judgment. According to Scripture, the entire earth will be engulfed in a fiery chaos. Peter wrote: *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”* (2Peter 2:10)

If you knew for certain that tomorrow the sun would turn to darkness and the moon to blood,

wouldn’t you want to spend your remaining hours pleading with and warning your family and friends to accept Jesus as their Savior? Yet there is no certain day or date given in Scripture (*“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh”* [Matt. 25:13; also Rev. 3:10]). Therefore, we are to live as though every day were our last. And not waste time trying to read (divine) the “signs” when we already know that *“the hour is coming”* (John 5:25). Jesus repeatedly told us, *“Behold, I come quickly”* (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7,12,20).

Here is one way to sort out the truth. False prophets base their false prophecies on reading (divining) spiritual-sounding “signs.” If their teaching makes you fearful and scared, it indicates the error of divination. Note that producing fear can be quite a lucrative business. But Jeremiah warned the Israelites that the idolatrous practice of reading “signs” in the skies can provoke fear, and not to fall victim to it: *“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them”* (Jer. 10:2). What should be feared? Jeremiah wrote: *“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD”* (Jeremiah 8:7).

Peter, after describing the terrible day of the Lord in 2Peter 3:11, calmly assures believers to have no fear but rather hope. We who *“look for such things”* should be even more diligent in making sure that we are living holy and godly lives:

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”
(2Peter 3:12-14)