

Warnings for the End

This is not a paper about the scheme of eschatology (study of the last things). This paper is relevant to you whatever your beliefs are regarding the end. This study is about the clear warnings that are given in the New Testament regarding the times approaching the Lord's return. Whether you are pre, post or non-millennial, everyone agrees that the following scriptures are warnings about the dangers for Christians in the end times. What then are these warnings?

Warnings regarding a falling away, deception and false signs

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess 2:1-12

In this passage we note four specific dangers for the church.

- Some will teach that the day of Christ has come, or is about to come (v2).
- There is a falling away (v3).
- Deception (v3, 10, 11).
- The coming of the lawless one is with an emphasis upon 'power, signs and lying wonders' (v9).

In this passage Paul is speaking to Christians for these reasons:

- Paul is addressing brethren (v1).

- His warnings about being deceived can only apply to believers, unbelievers do not know the truth at all; they don't need to be deceived.
- Paul's warnings make no sense to non-Christians.
- Paul draws a differentiation between believers and those who perish (v10, 12).

Despite this, the warnings imply that there are those in the church who appear to be Christians and yet: are deceived, suffer a strong delusion, believe a lie, fall away and are condemned. Although the church is for believers, the composition of church membership is dependent upon how well elders do their job. Poor leaders let anyone into the church community and many current churches reveal a hotchpotch of true Christians, superficial believers, non-Christian hangers on and people sincerely seeking salvation. Jesus made clear that many will stand before him on the day of judgment claiming church privileges who have no part in him (Matt 7:21-23). This is the rank and file composition that Paul has in mind.

First Warning

There are many people who call Jesus Lord, attend church, exercise supposedly spiritual gifts and even have positions of leadership, who are not really Christians and will be condemned by Jesus.

Now to the specific warnings given by Paul. He says that some will teach that the day of Christ has come, or is about to come (v2). From the very beginning there has been a millennial fervour which has led to wild prophecies and statements about the second coming of the Lord Jesus. This accelerated as we approached the year 2000 just as it did at then end of the first millennium (there were three false predictions for a rapture during 1997 when the first edition of this paper appeared). However, we are categorically told not to speculate about the time of the Second Coming, which even Jesus (in his manhood) did not know (Matt 24:36; Mk 13:32), therefore, people who do this are being fleshly and disobedient. This is part of a demonic deception to distract believers and set them up for worse heresies.

Second warning

Ignore predictions of dates for the rapture or the Second Coming of Christ. Avoid people who teach them.

A significant feature of the end times is that there will be a falling away (v3). This apostasy involves, as it must, a growing deception (v3, 10, 11). People only apostatise when they are tempted away from the truth. Paul says that they believe *the* lie because they did not receive a love of the truth. What is this lie. It is the same lie Paul mentions in Romans 1:25. It is the same lie which the serpent tempted Eve with. It is the lie that we can be independent of God, or even be like God, and please ourselves as to what is right or wrong. It is the usurpation of God's control over us by his word with the subjective feelings of our own nature. When we abandon the truth of God's word, when we feel no need for an objective Bible, when we replace that by subjective 'revelation', we have believed the lie and are on a downward spiral. It is a deception to think that by ignoring the Bible and trusting one's inner, subjective emotions (no matter what you call them) that one has ascended in divine revelation. No, you have fallen!

The Bible was given to us under amazing conditions. It was inspired by God and preserved throughout the centuries in wonderful ways, so that we have an assurance that the words we read are those which God gave to Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Paul and over thirty others. Why would God go to such lengths to preserve his written words, if all he needed to do was inspire them within us day by day? There is no new revelation above God's written word.

Any revelation God gives afresh to his people in encouragement is a restatement of what is already in his complete word, the Bible.

Throughout history, various millennial movements, which prophesied the imminent end of the world, were accompanied by three things:

- A fresh emphasis upon the sign gifts (whether practised or not).
- The supremacy of the inner witness over God's word, especially through 'anointed' prophets.
- The emergence of an authoritarian leadership which the people must accept without question.

The tragedy at Munster during the Reformation and the Irvingite Apostolic church in Victorian times are historic examples of this. A more modern example would be David Koresh at Waco or the Children of God sect.

We must beware because Paul says that those who follow such deceptions will fall away into condemnation; they will not be saved. These are people who are in the church but do not really know Jesus as saviour. They follow the lie, believe the false prophets, who are being fuelled by the lawless one, who is opposed to God. Once they have succumbed to this lie, and have abandoned the Bible, trusting in their own subjective inner revelation, God sends upon them a strong delusion. Their fate is sealed. There is no turning back. This is serious indeed.

Third Warning

There is a growing deception at the end. It focuses upon denigrating the word of God and strengthening a subjective inner witness. Often it results from the teaching of authoritarian leaders who may call themselves prophets. Their end is following the lie of the enemy and opposing God. This results in total delusion (a deception one can't escape) and condemnation. Resist anything which detracts from the word of God in any way. Christians are known by their love of the truth.

Paul explains that we can know the imminent coming of the lawless one because there is an emphasis upon 'power, signs and lying wonders' (v9). This is not just the sophistry that abounds today. Many Christians have been fooled to follow various practices under the name of 'signs and wonders' which are no such things. The evidence is that the Signs and Wonders Movement does not produce the goods. We are not seeing genuine miracles in the Biblical fashion. All we really see are people overcome by emotion, hypnotic suggestibility, falling over, ecstasy and enthusiasm.

The more that godly people have tested various Charismatic claims, the more they have been found to be either false or unfounded hopes. Many feel that they have been healed at meetings because of emotions stirred up by the atmosphere, long periods of standing up, repetitive singing, submission to a leadership figure, falling over, succumbing to an altered state of consciousness and so on. The rush of endorphins in the body's system alleviates all sorts of symptoms - for a while. Tragedies that result from wrongly accepting healing are becoming widely known. Deaths have recently occurred resulting from neglecting necessary medications. Other conditions have worsened; for instance when spectacles were thrown away as an act of faith to claim the healing. This has occurred throughout the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements.

The Signs and Wonders Movement does not act Biblically. Jesus and the apostles did not need long healing meetings with emotional worship to generate faith to heal the sick. When they did heal, the sick were completely dealt with instantly. This does not happen in Charismatic churches. Despite this, experience hungry Christians have flocked to such

meetings in the thousands, often paying large sums of money to do so. That there is deception in this is unquestionable in the face of the evidence.

However, towards the end we will see a change. Instead of spurious healings we will see real acts of power. Undeniable miracles will occur. This manifestation of *'all power'* will be by the hand of Satan. These miracles are said to be *'lying wonders'*, they will lead people into further deception. If people are being misled today with such a poverty of genuine healing, how much more easily will people be led into satanic deception when they see real miracles? The pragmatic argument is false. Just because something works does not mean that God is behind it. Only what honours God's word is true.

Fourth Warning

We should never seek signs and wonders in themselves. Jesus said that it was an evil and adulterous generation that did so. Signs and wonders can be imitated by the enemy. They have been around from the beginning and are no evidence of the truth. Moses did not dispute that Pharaoh's magicians had power, but he disputed whether they knew God's will. In the end there will be a growing focus upon signs and wonders. Christians should be very careful to avoid this focus. Our focus is upon Christ. If he answers our prayers for healing, we should glorify God; but the focus of our ministry is Christ and only Christ.

Demonic, deceptive, heretical teaching; hypocrisy and exploitation

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, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 1 Tim 4:1-5

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. Eph 5:6-7

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. 2

Pet 2:1-3

Spiritual warfare is a popular subject amongst Charismatics; much of it being focused upon geographical areas, which requires marching through the streets, or concentrated prayer to overcome supposed 'territorial spirits'. However, Christians must realise that the battle is for the mind, not the town or country. Demons do not rule earth, God does; the earth is his and all its fulness. Our town cannot fall into Satan's hands any more than God allows him to work through sinners, according to his plan, but our mind can fall into temptation quite easily. Evil things only happen in the Earth as God permits them and for his purposes.

Paul makes quite clear, here, that demons operate through false teaching. Satan is the master deceiver and a deception is something false that you believe to be true which leads you astray. The Devil wants your mind. He wants you to believe lies that will enable him to control you. If the lie is that you can defeat demons in an unbiblical way, he is happy to get

you fighting demons all day long. You think you are combating the enemy when all the time you are playing into his hand. If a few apparent victories cement the lie, Satan is happy to provide them. Again the key is - what does the Bible say?

Paul states that at the end this activity will accelerate. There will be lots of deception based on lies mixed with truth. The root of these false teachings will be Satan and his hordes, however, human teachers will be the conduit for these errors. These men will be hypocrites. Claiming to lead people towards God they will, in fact, be leading them away from the faith. Their words will be empty. Their character will also be affected; since they teach hypocritically, they will act hypocritically. Under their supposed veneer of holiness they will be vain and greedy individuals who exploit those who follow them. Claiming to be like Christ, they exhibit a lifestyle, which is contrary to that of Jesus. They have money to spare, when he had none. They have luxurious houses when he had no home. They travel in expensive cars, in top class airlines or executive suite travel accommodation, he had to borrow a donkey. Their empty words are revealed in their teaching CDs, videos, books and web sites, notable for a complete lack of Biblical content; devoid of sound, historic Biblical doctrine. Sometimes their extremes are blatantly obvious, like when they prohibit marriage or eating meat. Several cults do this today and even some Evangelicals are insisting that only kosher meat is acceptable!

But note that these men are inside the church. They are respected leaders and many follow them. Their destructive teachings are brought in secretly. In other words, these men started off as, apparently, godly men but gradually they got side-tracked by the enemy and slowly brought in more and more false elements into their teaching. They took their eyes off Christ and became infatuated with something else; often something to enhance their ministry, like power, money or a sphere of influence. In extreme cases they end up by denying the Lord himself.

When someone encourages you to practice something that demeans Christ and his work then you are denying Christ. If you celebrate Passover, you are denying the cross, which superseded the shadow of this Old Covenant feast. If you become circumcised for religious reasons, you deny that Christ has cut off your old nature by his work of atonement on Calvary. If you encourage people to treat your word like that of God, if you cannot be questioned on important issues, then you have taken the place of Christ to the people.

Fifth Warning

The end is a time of many false teachers. These people manipulate and exploit God's people. They should be avoided. Make no mistake, false teaching is destructive. The path of error will lead to perdition.

Truth and staying alert are both vital

- 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.
- 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.
- 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief.
- 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.
- 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.
- 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 1 Thess 5: 2-8

Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness . Eph 6:13-14

The end will be a time when Christians are in danger of falling asleep. The end will be a time when people are saying everything is all right, there is peace, there is safety. Blessing is round the corner, revival is on the horizon. True believers will not be fooled; they remain alert and vigilant. The warfare does not stop. Why are we commanded to stand in the evil day? In order to stop falling asleep. The first thing you do when preparing to meet the enemy in this time is to put on the belt of truth. God's word is truth and it should be at the centre of our being. Just as the belt keeps the rest of the armour in place and holds the weaponry, so truth is key in our warfare.

Methods are meaningless. What is needed is truth. Why do leaders who pursue deliverance ministry (exorcism) contradict each other so much? One says this, another says the opposite, yet both claim success in driving out demons. How is this possible? One says you can't do anything until you have found out the demon's name, another says that you must never attempt to converse with a demon or ask it its name. Isn't someone being fooled here? Much of modern Charismatic warfare is centred upon technique. A method for healing towns, a method for personal deliverance, a method for evangelism and another technique for something else. This is all rubbish. What is needed is truth. What does God say? How can we know unless we focus on his word?

Sixth Warning

Christians are in danger of being lulled into sleep. Their certainty of salvation can make them careless. Their desire to be loving can result in trusting everyone instead of testing everyone. Truth is not only vital to avoid deception, it is like a belt which secures all the armour for defence against the enemy. Warfare is standing ground and not giving in. We are to resist the devil and not flee from him. We flee from lust, not battle.

Persecution and the Deception of False Christs

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you."

6 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many."

7 "But when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet."

8 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."

9 "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them."

10 "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations."

11 "But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."

12 "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

13 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 " So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

15 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.

16 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

17 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

18 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter.

19 "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.

20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

21 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it.

22 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

23 "But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

24 " But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;

25 "the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27 "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

28 " Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near -- at the doors! Mk 13:5-29

It is not our purpose to enumerate the things that will or will not happen at the end. We are simply looking for the warnings to Christians in the last days.

The deception that continues to increase at the end is not just a matter of false doctrine prevailing (which is already happening now) but worsens so that it becomes a situation where the church is plagued with false leaders. These are false prophets, false teachers and also false Christs. Now again, this is already happening to some degree. There have been many cultic figures to proclaim themselves as the Messiah, even women - such as the Shaker leader Anne Lee. Indeed, the modern Charismatic church is filled with false prophets and false teachers.

Jesus said that many would be deceived. Now he is not speaking about the world, which is already under demonic deception, he is speaking about the deception that comes upon the

church. The church at the end will be subject to an increasing deception that will infect the majority. Surely we are, at least, in the beginning of this now where church leaders worldwide have succumbed to heresy upon heresy and aberration upon aberration? Never has there been a time where there has been such a proliferation of false teachers.

Sometimes the apostasy is ironic. This is the case, for example, where people leave one erroneous movement only to land in another. When many left the Charismatic Movement in the mid-90s, as a result of the Toronto scandal, they left for something that appeared to be more historically founded and joined the ranks of the growing Jewish Root Movement. However, they were only to find that this contained just as many errors and heresies as the one they left. These two movements mimic the situation of the early church, which was plagued on the one hand by Gnostic mystics but on the other by Judaisers. Both the Jewish Root Movement and the Charismatic Movement are filled with false teachers, false prophets and are based upon foundational doctrines that are heretical and develop practices that are unbiblical. Certainly, much grace and wisdom is needed in these days.

The false leaders that emerge in these times do so specifically to deceive the elect (Mk 13:22). The end is a time where there is a proliferation of independent false preachers who lead people astray. One of the ways to spot such false teachers is to see to what degree they endorse historical statements of faith. We know that these confessions, creeds and catechisms were used by God to strengthen the church throughout history and were the result of the efforts of many godly men, men who were given by God to the church to equip the saints. We may differ on minor matters here and there, but in general these statements contain the essence of salvation truth. Men that have no basis in historic confessions, or who deny their value, are not to be trusted.

Seventh warning

We must beware of false teachers, false prophets and false Christs. All leaders must be tested and their teaching constantly evaluated against Scripture. Even Paul's teaching was tested in this way (Acts 17:11). Preachers who fail the test must be avoided. Another method of testing false teachers is to evaluate their teaching alongside sound historic confessions of faith: such as the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Standards, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Savoy Declaration or the 1689 Baptist Confession.

Selfish, greedy, proud men; persecution

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,

7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;

9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance,

11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Tim 3:1-13

From all the passages we have seen so far, we can see that the business of deception is the major growth industry of the end times. This deception allows people to adopt morals that are invalid; that is, they endorse or legalise bad behaviour and unrighteousness. Society, in general, gradually adopts worse and worse ethics. This lapse of moral standards begins to affect the church which becomes more like the world. Only those who walk away from the institutional churches can hope to keep their purity; all forms of institutional church grow in worldliness.

Thus we see the same sort of appalling behaviour, which Paul lists here, in the church as in the world. This is why we are told to turn away from these people; the people are in the church. Wicked people in the world have always behaved like this but at the end two things predominate: 1) this wickedness becomes endemic throughout society instead of just in a few; 2) this behaviour infects the outward, institutional church which becomes no different from the world.

Eighth Warning

We must turn away from those who profess to be believers but manifest the sins spoken of by Paul.

As well as moral corruption in the church, there is a proliferation of false teaching. In 1 Tim 2:12-14 Paul explains that Adam was not deceived by the serpent but Eve was; Adam sinned from rebellion but Eve sinned through deception and for this reason women cannot teach or have authority in the church. Paul amplifies that here and tells us that women, in particular, are prone to be led astray by false teachers who practice a sort of Christian hedonism rather than true piety and a superficial form of power rather than godliness. In other words, gullible women (not women of faith) are particularly prone to fall for Charismaticism and Jewish Root ideas which are based upon emotionalism and doing objective 'religious' things (sacramentalism). Looking at the population of such churches, it is true that there is a preponderance of women members. Women also suffer more from guilt, being of a more tender conscience than men, 'loaded down with various sins and lusts' and are thus more susceptible to false teachers who appear to deal with this problem in an objective way.

Practical Christianity is not spectacular; it is, by comparison to false religion, quite humdrum, downbeat and simple. A normal Christian meeting in a home based on the Lord's Supper is very uneventful, humble, simple and normal. There is nothing 'flash-bang' about real Christianity. Conversely, much modern supposed 'worship' is filled with excitement, emotionalism, loud music, dancing, jumping, shouting, corporate singing with jollity and so forth. This is the temptation for gullible women (and to be honest, many young men also). The temptation to choose flashy objective religion becomes more powerful at the end; this is the religion of paganism which was always external, objective, and rooted in all sorts of activity and emotionalism.

Another weak characteristic of gullible women is that they are always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. [Now not all women are like this, Paul is speaking about gullible women. I know of many truly godly women who overcome these endemic weaknesses.] Some women have a constant thirst for new knowledge, the more obscure the better, and yet never come to a sound knowledge of what is important. The doctrine we learn from Scripture must transform our minds so that we are renewed in our actions. Biblical knowledge leads to godliness and righteousness, not intellectual titillation. It is not wise to pursue relentlessly arcane and obscure ideas about Scripture, which do no good. Such would include an over-enthusiastic study of numbers, symbols, Jewish cultural background or prophecies. In the time of the end, this sort of gullibility that does not lead to godliness will increase.

Ninth Warning

In the last days there will be many women who are gullibly led astray by deceptive doctrines and impressive leaders. However, the folly of false teaching becomes manifest since false teachers resist the truth, have no faith and their corruption becomes clear. Women must, therefore, be especially careful regarding what they subscribe to.

Notice also that false teachers are men of corrupt minds who actively resist the truth. False teaching is a choice not an accident. We cannot excuse or tolerate false teachers for one second, we must expose them because they are actively working against the truth. A genuinely godly man who may have strayed into false teaching will welcome sound criticism, just like Apollos did when corrected by a married couple. Indeed, we get the impression that Prisca was more solid in her faith than Aquila, but Apollos did not resent being corrected by a woman because he learned more about the truth. However men who resist criticism and persevere in heresy are to be condemned and avoided because they are of corrupt minds.

Now while false teachers may live in luxury, affluence and boast of their wealth, true teachers suffer. Paul lists his types of suffering and warns Timothy to expect more of the same. Godly people will suffer many tribulations and this should be expected and prepared for. Suffering should not come as a surprise to be feared and cried over, but must be embraced with faith. The godly know that God is supervisor of all things and gives the faithful suffering in order to make them more like Christ. The suffering is always tailored to the individual so that he learns how to be more pious.

Tenth Warning

All believers will suffer persecution and this will increase as the end draws near. The more godly you become, the more you will experience persecution because the world cannot stand the light of truth.

Conclusion

Now we have formulated ten warnings from the apostolic writings on the end, and I am sure that we could find ten more if we had time to develop this investigation, but these ten are enough. What is crucial to understand is that the end is a time of deep deception that floods the church and many fall away as a result. What has happened in the last 40 years, since the Charismatic Movement took hold in the UK, has revealed a flood of errors and heresy spawned in the church so that every historic heresy, once thought to be dead, is now filling the minds of gullible believers. Can you believe that there are famous Christian leaders in the UK who believe that God does not know the future? However, this is only the beginning of the deception; there is worse to come. The outward church will gradually join with the world and condemn the true church, the elect of God.

In such times it is absolutely vital that you protect your mind. Filter what you listen to and read; carefully check what you are taught to see if it is Scriptural. Read the old sound confessions of faith which are guides as to what is true regarding salvation. [Yes Baptists will dislike some parts of Presbyterian confessions and the Reformed will dislike parts of Baptist confessions, but both are united regarding essential matters.] We must have a renewed mind and it is renewed by studying Scripture with faith, prayer and patience. Let what you learn transform you so that your behaviour is always becoming more like Christ.

Beware of modern fads; beware of the proliferation of modern trendy paperbacks from exciting Charismatic authors, which lead people away from the truth. Better to study old tried and tested doctrinal works that actually do people good. Nowadays it is easy to gain solid books by good authors quite cheaply, such as the practical works of Puritans or the sermons of Spurgeon, the works of Pink and so forth. It is even possible to get most good books free to download off the Internet. The best Bible study program for ordinary believers (as opposed to teachers) is free on the Internet; it is E-sword, look it up, however choose the best commentaries and not the Arminian ones.

For more information on Internet resources ask me for my paper on what is available. For information on the best theological and practical works in print, again ask me for a paper on it. These include:

- *Systematic Theologies* – an evaluation and comparison of all the key dogmatics, plus some other works on specific doctrines and historic studies.
- *Biblical Language Resources* - an evaluation of all the best technical aides to understanding the original texts, such as interlinear Greek works and lexicons.
- *Essential Book List for Bible Students* – a list of great books on all sorts of subjects.
- *Straightforward Books of Teaching and Encouragement* – a shorter list in tabular format.
- *Internet Resources* – 34 pages of web addresses on all sorts of Biblical and practical subjects.
- *Spurgeon on commentaries* – I can pass this on as it is in the public domain. It is the bulk of his book ‘*Commenting and Commentaries*’ where he lists, in order of usefulness, the commentaries available up to his time (late 19th c.). These still remain amongst the best works today.

Whether you consider yourself a theologian or not (actually you all are) get a simple systematic theology and read it. There are useful summaries, such as Berkhof’s ‘*Summary of Christian Doctrine*’ which is a small paperback or RC Sproul’s ‘*Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*’. While we may not agree with everything they say, they are a good start. The more you understand what is true essential doctrine and what is heresy, the easier it will be to spot false teaching when you hear it or read it.

Do not be children in understanding ... but in understanding be mature. 1 Cor 14:20

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
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