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# THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: DISTORTED AND DEFORMED

## CHAPTER VI

### SATAN AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

In Ephesians 6, Paul warns:

*"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

*Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"*

Most Christians are totally oblivious to the spiritual warfare that is constantly being fought, both from within, as well as from without.

Yes, we are at war against the spiritual armies of the evil one. If you think that's not real, then you're already a casualty.

It was not long after Jesus left this earth that Satan came among the disciples and began to change their focus and consequently, what they were doing. Using his "*craftiness*" and his "*burning arrows*," Satan changed the center of their attention from Jesus and each other, to an organization; a building called *the church*. He changed what they spent their time thinking about and doing; from serving the Lord, to serving *the church* and it's been that way ever since.

Anyone who has ever participated in the building, maintenance and operations of a church building knows how time-consuming that can be. Many conscientious people believe they are serving the Lord when they are serving only the needs of church-owned real estate with an uncontrolled appetite for time, effort, and money. Just think of the time, energy, and money each building takes that otherwise would have been spent doing the things the first century Christians did.

Not only that, instead of depending on the Lord for the words to say, the things to do, and the places to go, as the early disciples did, Satan taught us to build theological seminaries, preaching schools, leadership training schools, ministerial academies, and to conduct endless *pastoral workshop conferences*. How else can the church find qualified ministers, pastors, preachers, elders, deacons, if they don't have a system to train them properly in that particular church's doctrine? Think of the time, effort and money siphoned away from the work of our Lord with that stratagem of Satan's!

Then, there is the whole mentality of "*image*" and "*formality*," Satan's chicanery at it's finest. When you read the New Testament, you don't see anything very formal among the early disciples. Can you imagine Paul, placing himself on an elevated platform (stage), behind a pulpit (which he must have to hold his notes) at the Corinthian church plant with all lights focused on him, talking to a group of people whose seating is arranged for the best view of him (even though they are looking at the backs of each other's heads)?

Can you imagine the Apostle Paul, teaching at a pastors workshop conference, telling those assembled:

*"... Sitting on the platform appropriately is vital. Wear the right socks, never cross your legs in such a way as to show the people the soles of your sandals...."*

More advice from the Apostle: *"...You're working on your house on your day off, and you discover that a trip to the local market is necessary. Always change your clothes before you go out in public. Never let the people see you in a context other than your sacred office and your pastoral dignity."*

Yes indeed, image is everything, not only to the world, but also to virtually all "organized/institutionalized local churches," who are in all aspects, **an exact replica of the world!**

Can you picture Jesus giving this kind of "workshop training" to the disciples:

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, how you look is what really matters. Create thou a good impression. Forget what I said earlier to you concerning having only one coat. Bringest thou two in case thou mayest be seen in public by those who payeth their tithes in great measure. And never, never let them smell the fish!"*

Satan has really "done a number" on us. Satan and the institutional church is alive and well. He has taken our focus off the Lord and each other, and has us focused on other things instead. He has successfully clouded the understanding of millions. He has changed the emphasis to form and structure, to law-keeping, to right behavior instead of the right spirit, to cleansing the outside of our dishes instead of the inside; from being faithful and serving our Lord to being faithful to and serving our institutional church.

Don't kid yourself. Our adversary really knows what he's doing. This war is serious and on-going! The New Testament is replete with warnings of false teachers and teachings, of lying signs and wonders, and of corrupt men who would seek to draw followers after themselves.

But God has not left His people defenseless. He has indwelt us with His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and provided us with the example of Christ, His teachings, the teachings of the apostles, indeed all of the Scriptures.

There is the ability to test all things and to be discerning, which is the responsibility of all believers. If the believer is to be armed against the deceptions of the enemy, and to remain free from his oppressive regime, then he must exercise discernment with continual vigilance. If this defensive weapon is seized and taken from you, then you are an easy prey for any who would desire to take you captive.

Yes this war is serious and for many, the time has come to realize that the enemy is right under their noses, week in and week out.

Because of this, one can very easily observe the fiendish trend in the Body of Christ that has been around quite a while. This trend is to scorn and belittle those who would exercise their God-given self-defense weapon of discernment.

Those who would obey Scripture and "test all things" are mocked and ridiculed from the pulpit, and labeled "*Pharisees*." They are called "*divisive*," "*un-submissive*," having a "*proud, haughty spirit*." The one unpardonable sin is to question someone's belief, or dare to say that it might be wrong.

These "*institutional church leaders*" demand you climb on the bandwagon, and if you cannot agree, then you must remain silent at all costs. They call for us to experience now, and evaluate later. Adam and Eve had no experiential knowledge of good and evil. Then Satan called their attention to the attractiveness and desirability of the fruit, and enticed them to experience for themselves. In their later evaluation, they knew that they had been wrong to ignore what God had said on the matter, but by then the damage had been done.

Those "*in the church*" who would remove the defensive weapon of discernment are binding the minds and hands of the people. They are preparing God's people for the slaughter. But, why are they doing this? Why would they want to expose millions to the myriad deceptions of the enemy with no protection? Why do they take away what the Father has given?

The answer is that "*dumb sheep*" are no threat to "*church rulers*." This is what the "*system*" is supposed to produce. Few, if any, grow in this system. Few, if any, learn. Few come to be born from above, become filled with the Spirit, and have their very beings changed as a result. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. It is meant to produce dumb sheep and to KEEP THEM DUMB!

*The Church* has become a slaughterhouse slick with the spilled blood of saints who have been seduced by the proud and arrogant spiritual overseers inside the system.

The faithful plod forward to the killing floor, their trusting eyes fixed on their leaders. Error and deception is running rampant. Charlatans rule the pulpit; the video and CD catalogues; and the bestseller lists. Falsehood and deceit is being dispersed around the world.

From the beginning, Satan has always been present and active in persecuting and deceiving God's people. Make no mistake. It is a battle, and much is at stake.

Will you ever hear this from "*the pastor and his pulpit?*" Never!

When God created Adam and Eve, Satan was there. When God tested Job, Satan was there. In God's dealings with Sodom and Gomorrah, with the nation of Israel, with kings, and prophets, Satan was there. When Jesus was tested in the wilderness, Satan was there. In Jesus' dealings with Peter, Satan was there. In Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Satan was there. Whenever we look for the source of all the lying deception of the world, Satan is there.

Where is Satan now?

The Apostle John tells us that Satan has a “*synagogue*” too. Does that sound strange?” It shouldn’t. Remember what Paul said in 2 Cor. 11:

*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ.*

*And no marvel; for even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light.*

*It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.*

Today, Satan has "false apostles, deceitful workers, and ministers of righteousness." (i.e. his pastors, his reverends, his elders, deacons, overseers, etc.)

Where then would we expect these false apostles and ministers of righteousness that belong to Satan, to reside? In "*The synagogue of Satan!*" And what exactly are the things that Satan’s ministers do that prepare them to "*deceive the whole world?*" The Apostle tells us again:

*"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."*

Where do we find a "*synagogue of Satan,*" with false apostles, and false ministers of righteousness, witnessing to the world with power, and signs and lying wonders?

In a haunted-house with a sign out front saying: "Welcome! Worship with Satan and his Demons?"

Where is the synagogue of Satan? The synagogue of Satan is located "in the organized/institutional local churches!"

(Revelation 2:2) "*...you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars.*"

Where did the Ephesians try those false, lying, apostles? In some pagan temple or some other pagan religion? No, "in the church." Jesus Christ says: "*To the angel of the church in Ephesus write...I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and did try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and did find them false.*"

Where did Jesus know these lying apostles? "*In the church!*" What good would "lying apostles" be to some pagan religion? Where did Jesus say the synagogue of Satan is located? "*In the church!*"

***"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they art not, but are a synagogue of Satan." Rev. 2:8-9***

***"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens: I know thy works...Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie." Rev 3:7-9***

All of the seven churches were well aware of many pagan gods and pagan religions. These seven cities in Asia were filled with MANY PAGAN GODS. False apostles, and lying Jews, and synagogues of Satan are all located in the Church! Where do you think Satan's dwelling place is? Where is Satan's throne located? "In the church!"

***"Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison...These things says he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwell, even where Satan's throne is; and thou hold fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." Rev 2:10-13***

Satan cannot imprison "*members of the church*" unless Satan is in the church. His throne is in the church. His dwelling place is in the church! His synagogue is in the church!

And don't think that Satan just makes occasional visits to "*the church.*" No, Satan is permanently in the church until God sees fit to remove him. The word "dwelleth" (kataoideo) means to "*house permanently.*"

Satan not only has his false apostles in the church, his congregation of lying Jews in the church, his synagogue in the church, his very throne in the church, but Satan himself dwells permanently in the church. Satan does not attack the Church from without, but from within.

Where do we find them who "*say they are apostles [of Jesus Christ] and are not?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:2).

Where do we find them who have "*left their first love?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:4).

Where do we find them which "*say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:9).

Where do we find "*Satan's seat [throne]?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:13).

Where do we find "*where Satan dwells?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:13).

Where do we find "*the doctrine of Balaam?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:14).

Where do we find "*them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I [Jesus] hate?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:15).

Where do we find "*that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 2:20).

Where do we find them who are *lukewarm and spewed out of Jesus' mouth?* **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 3:16)

Where do we find them that "*have a name that you live, and are dead?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 3:1)

Where do we find them that "*are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?*" **IN THE CHURCH** (Rev. 3:17).

Where do we find "*the DEPTHS of Satan?*" **IN THE CHURCH**, of course Rev. 2:24).

**Does anything change or turnaround in our present situation? Yes. It gets worse!**

Where do you find the Biblical phrase "minister/servant" being turned into "*Chairman/Duly-authorized head/Eldership Rule?*" **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do we find men bringing the gospel for money? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where is the place in which you are told to go and show your greatest devotion to Jesus Christ? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find *religion* and *liturgy* quenching the Spirit and replacing Christ? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find "the pastor putting asunder what God has joined together?" **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do we find mortal men claiming to be "*clothed with the Authority of Christ?*" **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do we find sins of gossip and slander acceptable? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a place where those in so-called "leadership positions" are placed upon pedestals? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a place in which you never question the leaders? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you go to a place and see that there are the performers and there is the audience? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a sanctuary "*filled with God's special presence*?" **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find a place in which "*pleasing man is the same as pleasing God*?" **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find men binding heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's shoulders but they themselves will not move them with their finger? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find the simple believing every word? **IN THE CHURCH!**

Where do you find the blind leading the blind? **IN THE CHURCH!**

When people were converted to Christ and His gospel, did they attend the synagogues to "*worship and fellowship*"?

No! They were persecuted in the synagogues! They left the synagogues. They left "*the mother Church*," if you will.

Jesus said, "*I will build My Ecclesia...*" (Matt. 16:18). Jesus didn't say that He would purify or purge the existing church. No, Jesus built a New Ecclesia; His Ecclesia "*MY Ecclesia*."

And so it was in the religion of Judaism that the people learned of God and the Law of Moses. But when they learned of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they were forced to **"COME OUT OF HER..."**

In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, we read:

*"And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "*I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.* **Therefore, come out from them** and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

And again, in Revelation 18:4-5, "*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her*



*plagues; For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."*

The Christians in the earliest centuries understood what it meant to *"come out from among them and be separate."* There was a cost to count that few of us can even compare to; for they gave their very lives for the truth.

As Christians we have been called out by God into His royal Assembly; His family. It's no coincidence that Ecclesia has this very thought in mind. For not only has God, in His Word, shown that we have been called out from among the world, but also even the RELIGIOUS world!

In Jesus' (and the apostles') day it was the religious world of Judaism. Judaism was the epitome of organized religion. It was filled with rules, rituals, ceremonies and observance of holy days and religious meetings. God called His people to come out from that camp and to be joined with Christ. In fact, there is a prophecy in Isaiah where God showed His utter disgust for man's religious worship (which had become lip service and going through the motions but void of any sincere heart).

The people had become so self-deceived with their religious worship rituals that they actually believed they were righteous because of them. Sound familiar? Doesn't the same problem abound today? I found this passage very interesting in the Message Bible. It certainly gets right down to the crux of the matter. Read it and then compare it in your KJV or ASV.

### **Isaiah 1:12-17:**

*"When you come before me, who ever gave you the idea of acting like this, Running here and there, doing this and that; all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship? Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings. Meetings, meetings, meetings; I can't stand one more!*

*Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way. No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening. And do you know why? Because you've been tearing people to pieces, and your hands are bloody.*

*GO HOME and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong. Learn to do good. Work for justice. Help the down-and-out. Stand up for the homeless. Go to bat for the defenseless."*

God's Word sounds a loud call to all of those who are His that we are not to be about the business of building and concerning ourselves with earthly cities (religious centers and temples) here on earth (as the Jews did), but to keep our eyes peeled for the city yet to come. That's where it's at! That's where we are to store up our treasures.

If you don't think so, you have fallen prey to the spirit that rules inside the walls of the Babylonian/Institutional church.

God is in the business of not only building His True Ecclesia, but also delivering His True Ecclesia from a Babylonian captivity of religious bureaucrats and controlling spirits.

You will not change the Synagogue of Satan. You will not teach the Synagogue of Satan. You will not convert the Synagogue of Satan. We are to "COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE" and James tells us to "Submit yourselves therefore to God. RESIST THE DEVIL and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Once you are delivered, you will learn very fast just how little interest indeed many of your supposed Christian friends have in God's Truth.

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