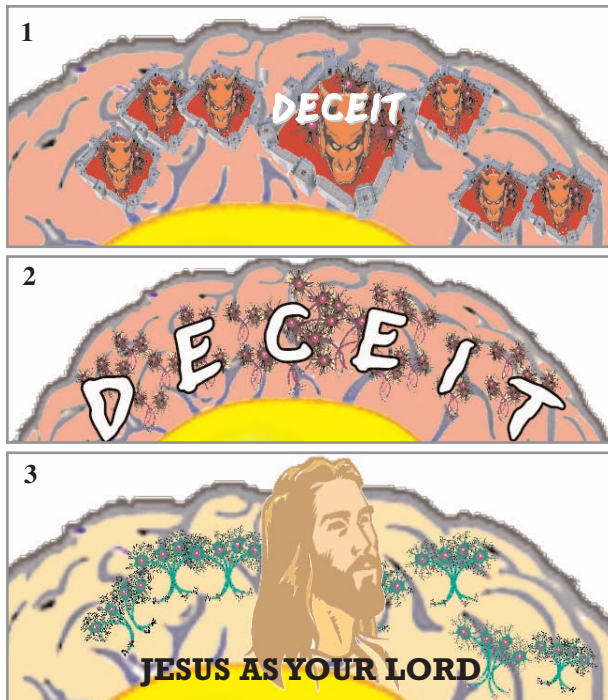


Prophetic Insight
March 30, 2017

JESUS CHRIST Savior, Deliverer, Healer, LORD

Have you ever thought about how so many Christian denominations and sects limit their emphasis of Jesus solely to His role as “Savior”? How few ever mention the need for Jesus as *Deliverer*. Even fewer trust Him to be *Healer*. And only a minute fraction call for their faith community to live with Jesus as their LORD. So we’re writing these Prophetic Insights because the time is growing very short for people to repent of entertaining **habitual mental deceit**.

As long you *aren't* delivered and freed from the deceitful influence and agitation of demonic strongholds (1) lodged in your brain, or healed of the sting of toxic memories (2) which strongholds leave behind, you won't allow Jesus to be LORD of your life (3). Why? Because your memory trees are still filtered and skewed by deceptive influences, they retain elements of *deceit* which will continue to keep you from fully embracing Jesus as LORD of your life.



If Jesus isn't LORD of *all* of who you are, He's not Lord of you *at all*.

You've heard this before: **Once a person is deceived, he doesn't recognize that he is deceived, because he's been deceived!** And what's so difficult within Christian circles is that people not only *don't want to believe* they're deceived, but even worse, many *enjoy being deceived*. Even when Jesus walked the earth there were those who falsely believed they were in right standing with God. But our Lord Jesus told them the truth about themselves:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

A stronghold is a *demonic fortress of thoughts* housing evil spirits that:

1. control, dictate, and influence your attitudes and behavior.
2. oppress and discourage you.
3. filter and color how you view or react to situations, circumstances, or people.

Today the **spirit of deceit** dominates politics, education, the media, and Christendom. So many Christian minds contain memory trees filtered and tainted by

habitual mental deceit. In other words, their thinking processes, including their religious beliefs and faith practices, are filtered through undemolished demonic strongholds or toxic memories. They've been neither delivered nor healed of them by Jesus.

Tragically, “Christians” who are being influenced by any form of Satan's deception are the hardest to convince about the depth of love relationship *and* the obedient way of life our Lord calls for in His own.

Jesus emphatically emphasizes the only way of life in which you will be welcomed into heaven:

Restoration Ministries International

Sharing the Hebraic Foundations of the Earliest Followers of Jesus
Preparing Today's Followers of Jesus to Do Their Part in His Kingdom

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21; see also 12:50).

When deceit taints your thinking processes, it’s often revealed when you encounter a situation in which you have to *face the truth*. This Prophetic Insight offers several examples that expose **habitual mental deceit**. For instance, you may think you trust God — but perhaps that trust hasn’t been tested!

• *There’s an old story of a man who falls down a cliff. But before falling to certain death, he’s able to grab hold of a limb protruding from the side of the cliff. As he grips the limb with all his might, he hears a voice from the top of the cliff.*



“Hello!” the voice says. The man hanging on for dear life frantically yells to a figure that he can’t quite make out: “Yes, please help me! I’m losing my grip. Please help me!” A calm voice comes from the top of the cliff, “Do not worry, My child. It is God. All you have to do is let go.” There’s a long pause. The man looks down at the 200-foot drop and the raging river below...takes a deep breath...and yells back, **“Is there anyone else up there?”**

Many who host **habitual mental deceit** sympathize with the man’s extreme circumstance and conclude that *he has a right* to doubt God. But those who aren’t snared by deceit have a different view. Living intentionally with Jesus as LORD of their daily life and by His Spirit fulfilling their responsibility to do Father’s will enables them to recognize the *deception and sinful attitude* behind the man’s doubt. So, how did *you* feel about the man’s doubt after you read the narrative?

• **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13; see also 1John 3:16). Think about the *disregard of self* in a soldier’s unhesitant sacrifice when he willingly jumps on a hand grenade in a foxhole in order to save his comrades. As you read this oft-repeated personal anecdote, see if you can grasp the inroads of sinful self-preservation and **habitual mental deceit** in those who refused to jump on the grenade:



With different groups who came to our retreat center during our almost 11 years there, Mike would simulate dropping a hand grenade in their midst. He’d tell them they had 3 seconds to respond, and would count off: “1...2...3...BOOM!!!”

- 50% of the teenagers and women would jump on the grenade to save others.
- 10% of the men jumped on the grenade.
- 0% of the clergy ever jumped on the grenade. Every one of them leaped over sofas and tables to save themselves!

• Years ago Larry Burkett, the founder of Christian Financial Concepts, publicly shared a personal testimony that made us closely examine our own walk with Jesus.

Before his bout with cancer, Larry believed that God was *number one* in his life. But afterward, when he was honest with himself, he admitted that God had really been no higher than *number four* to him. That realization alone convicted his heart, and he spent the rest of his years living with new priorities.

• When Mike was counseling church leaders a few decades ago, one congregation that had suffered with relational tension for years asked him for help.

After a series of meetings with the leadership he asked them, “Describe the focus of your worship.” Pausing a moment, one of the

elders replied, "We worship our pastor's sermons because that's what *he* worships." The others nodded remorsefully. They'd uncovered the idolatry that was the source of their ongoing strain— **habitual mental deceit** that left the whole congregation without conviction about their misplaced spiritual priorities. After the elders repented they dismissed their pastor—who refused to repent because he saw no need to change.

- After our return from Israel with the manuscript which was later to become our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, a leader of a certain congregation read the manuscript.

He told us indignantly, "We can't have our people trusting Jesus the way you call for. If we do, we'll have **mayhem** in our congregation. You need to *control and direct* people, not have them trusting Jesus."

It's strange to think that those of us who trust our Lord as Head of His Church could be called "*instigators of mayhem*" by those who control the religious establishment. But in their **habitual mental deceit** they fail to understand that obedient trust brings divine order, not chaos.

It's self-evident that once a systematic, organizational process is set up to keep things running smoothly, relational dependency on Jesus as LORD is staved off. The religious hierarchy impedes all attempts by its members to serve the KING and His KINGDOM interests. Rather, through their **habitual mental deceit** they encourage service to the *organization's agenda* by keeping the religious system and its programs running smoothly.

- A religious system takes on a life of its own. Years ago a close friend was addressing a congregation in England.

He asked them, "If Jesus were dead, how long would you go on meeting together?" The congregants talked among themselves and

replied, "We would just keep going on as we do now, with or without Jesus." Their social system filled their spiritual niche just fine, thank you!

"The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and My people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?" (Jeremiah 5:31).

"Both prophet and priest are godless; even in My temple I find their wickedness," declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:11).

To give deeper insight into the **habitual mental deceit** that dominates many "Christian" leaders, here are some comments made over 25 years ago by Peter Drucker. America's guru on management, he exerted great influence in western Christendom, although few today know who he is or what he wrote.

If you attend a faith community in which the clergy have no personal friendship or relationship with you, then read this carefully. Drucker commends large congregations for their *shrewd marketing strategy*.

"[People] were bored with traditional churches and increasingly stayed at home... [Leaders of today's larger congregations] saw attendees as **"potential customers."** So they asked what the customers need and want in a church. They focused, as a result, on the individual's need... And they try to satisfy the desire of the affluent younger people..."

Drucker's main point is that these "successful" congregations *focus on attracting and keeping people* rather than staying repentant and serving Jesus as LORD. These "success-seeking wannabees" rely on good market analysis and go out and compete for people who might fill their pews (and offering baskets). With leaders of entrepreneurial

ability at the helm, little “*papacies*” or “*corporate empires*” have been established all over Christendom. But when these leaders are questioned about the *biblical basis* for their goals and methods, no biblical foundation can be found to support them. Size and popularity —“nickels and noses”—remain the measurement for clergy success today.

Vested Interests Keep Congregants Trapped In Habitual Mental Deceit

“Saul said to them, ‘Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?’” (1Samuel 22:7; read the chapter for context).

Finally we want to discuss the main reason so many faith communities remain ensnared in **habitual mental deceit**. This ongoing deception continues generation to generation within a faith community through the “vested interests” of its leadership who are controlled by undemolished strongholds and/or toxic memories which still pain them.

Vested interests drive those who, because of personal position and power, want to maintain the status quo. Over the years I (Mike) met with many elders and church leaders whose clergy were found to be involved in adulterous or homosexual relationships. When I asked these leaders if they knew about the sexual sin before it was exposed publicly, they all answered “Yes.” They also confessed that they feared confronting their clergyman because the charge might be denied and the accusers would lose their own position and status.

In *A Passion For God’s Presence*, Wayne Jacobsen wonderfully exposes the power of vested interests in congregations

today. Jacobsen illustrates his point with the story of *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. A group of royal advisors seeks to keep their jobs by lying about the deceived emperor’s nudity. As the king parades through the town in his “new clothes,” a little boy with no vested interest at stake shouts the truth: “He’s naked!” Jacobsen correlates the fable with the history of Christianity:

It’s easy for us now to look back at those generations, not sharing their vested interests, and see how believers sold out to political and personal corruption during the Middle Ages; to high finance prior to the Reformation; to terror and murder during the Inquisition; to natural reason during the Enlightenment; and to liberalism early in the [20th century]...

We stay *captive to deception* by the same appeal of personal interest... So it is with the church today: many people *are making Christianity just what they want it to be, whatever fits their interest...* It doesn’t take great wisdom to unmask deceit—only a desire to *look at things the way they really are, not the way we want to see them.* (emphasis added)

Truth means reflecting Jesus as LORD of your life no matter what others think or say about Him—or you. The moment you individually or collectively stop living within the total LORDship of Jesus, you begin to serve the ruler of darkness. There is no middle ground. You are either a servant of the LORD Jesus or a slave of Satan, the ruler of this world system (see Ephesians 2:2,3).

There’s more to come in our next Prophetic Insight. But ask yourself this: Have you personally experienced any of the examples of **habitual mental deceit** we cited in this Insight?