

The Pentecostals and Charismatics - End-time Revival or End-time Deception?

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Lecture 1

This paper is written by a Bible-believing German preacher and Bible teacher who joined the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement as a young believer about 1986. He was an ardent Charismatic for about four years, but then he was convinced by the Lord that in this movement not the Holy Spirit is at work, but a deceptive spirit. He separated from the movement, and through years of Bible study and critical examination came to a biblically founded repudiation of Charismatic teachings and practices. He wrote a book about this topic and holds seminars about the Charismatic movement in Bible-believing churches in order to warn the children of God and equip them with sound doctrine to discern the end-time deceptions.

These are the notes of a teaching lecture the author held in 2011 in Kenya, Africa. Due to the fact that the author is not a native speaker of English the text may contain some unusual and unidiomatic phrasing or even occasionally a false choice in wording. The author strongly recommends that all readers look up all the given Bible references and use a traditional, conservative Bible translation which is close to the original wording of the Holy Scriptures.

1. Introduction:

The Charismatic visions of an end-time revival

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements see themselves as a first wave of a big outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last times before the second coming of the Lord Jesus. They believe that God has promised through the prophet Joel to pour out His Spirit on the Church and the whole heathen world in the last days - "on all flesh", as Joel 2:28 says. They expect that God's Spirit will be poured out mightily on whole peoples, on millions and billions of men, and many of their prophets have foretold such an outpouring which would imply a mighty awakening and revival which is without parallel in history.

In the course of this "second Pentecost", they say God brings back all the supernatural gifts of the Spirit which were found in the days of the Apostles, like prophecy, healings, speaking in unknown tongues, etc. According to their teachings, God will appoint new apostles and new prophets who will lead the end-time people of God to big successes. The present Pentecostal and Charismatic churches understand themselves to be a vanguard, the forerunners of that huge outpouring which is believed to come soon - in fact, it is announced almost daily by some Charismatic prophet in the world.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic followers believe their task is to make that big outpouring come - by prayers and “spiritual warfare” against evil spirits, by huge “evangelistic” campaigns which show many signs and wonders, and by the ministry of their “apostles” and “prophets” who are supposed to prepare the way for the coming revival.

This vision of a dynamic, powerful and influential Christianity which will see even more glory and success than the apostolic church and the ultimate triumph of the Gospel in the world is very attractive for many Christians today. These groups have a dynamic and optimistic outlook, they mobilize masses of people, and success seems to confirm their teachings: It is estimated that about 600 million people belong to the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements - including a large section of Charismatic members of the Roman Catholic Church.

But the big question is not: Are these teachings attractive? But: Are these teachings true? Are they in accordance with the Word of God, with the Teaching of the Apostles which we find in the Holy Scriptures?

As children of God who live in the end-time we are frequently warned by the Word of God to be on our watch and take heed so that we may not be deceived by false prophets and false teachers:

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying: Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’ and will deceive many. (...) For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. (Mt 24:3-5 + 24-25)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1Jh 4:1)

Test all things; hold fast what is good. (1Thess 5:21)

Therefore we want to test the teachings and prophecies, the powers and gifts of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement by the unflinching standard of the Holy Scriptures.

2. What the Bible teaches about the end times

One thing we must stress at the beginning of our lecture is the vital importance of sound biblical teaching for us who are living in the last days of our present dispensation. Truly many “teachers” and many “prophets” are among us who tell us fascinating and fanciful stories instead of preaching and teaching the Word of God.

In quite a few cases you can see their true character as deceivers in the service of Satan from their life and the fruits of their “ministry”: They make big money from their preaching and healing and live in luxury; they seduce women and commit adultery; they teach outright heresies and pervert biblical truth. But sometimes things are not so obvious; many Christians are led astray because they trust false teachers and hold them to be powerful ministers of the Lord. They lack biblical discernment and do not know the Scriptures as well as they should.

1. What we need is first of all a *solid knowledge of all the Scriptures*. The false teachers always use some Scripture quotations to justify their deceptive teachings. But they isolate these Scripture passages from their context and true meaning, and they make them to say something quite differ-

ent. Also, they use some Bible texts and ignore others which would show that their interpretation is wrong. In order to detect such falsifications, we must know our Bible from Genesis to Revelation! So it is very helpful to read through the whole Bible once a year, or at least once every two years.

2. What we also need is an *understanding of Biblical doctrine*. Biblical doctrine is formed by studying and comparing all relevant scripture texts on a certain topic and extracting their true meaning. Biblical doctrine is based on all Scripture and does not contradict any Scripture. False teaching usually is founded on only some arbitrarily interpreted Biblical passages and ignores other passages which would correct it.

3. The third important clue to biblical doctrine and discernment is the fact that *the decisive doctrinal standard of the believers in Christ is the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:42)* which we find in the letters of the New Testament. Many false teachers come and try to teach us heresies by using the Old Testament (e.g. believers are obliged to keep the Sabbath) or by misinterpreting passages out of the Gospels or the Book of Acts while ignoring the letters of the Apostles which give us the authorized clue to the understanding and application of the whole Bible, directly inspired by our risen head, the Christ.

If we want to achieve a good knowledge of sound doctrine, we need to study our Bibles thoroughly. We need to try and grasp the meaning of each verse and word in the Bible in order to get the true doctrine out of it. This means we must take heed to three more important points:

1. *We must make sure we read a good Bible translation which is close to the original wording and free from liberal and modernist theological influences.* Modern Bible versions like Good News, Living Bible, or the modernist New International Version are not faithful to the original Text and lead to misunderstandings and false teachings. The version that is most estimated in English-speaking countries is, of course, the King James Bible (Authorized Version). For believers who do not speak English as their first language, the choice is difficult; the New King James Version is, although it has some problems, the best choice in these cases. (Comp. David Cloud, *Myths about the Modern Bible Versions.*)

2. *We ought to use a concordance in order to find all the Scriptures where the topics we study do occur, e.g. healing of the sick, signs and wonders, tongues.* It is important for Bible study to get an overall picture of what the Bible says on a given topic. We need to regard every Scripture Text and interpret them all together; then we get a well-founded view.

3. *We ought to use good Bible commentaries which are free from liberal theology or false teachings.* We would recommend, among others, the Scofield Bible and the commentaries of William MacDonald, Arno Gaebelein, and Harry Ironside (all with the qualification of 1Thess 5:21!).

a) The heathen world in the last times: Revival or lawlessness?

The Pentecostal and Charismatic prophets and preachers are convinced that millions of people, in fact whole cities and countries and peoples will turn to Christ as a result of the mighty outpouring of the Spirit they announce. But is that optimistic prophecy backed by the inspired prophecy of the Bible? What does the Bible say about the development of the world short before Christ's return?

We cannot look at all Scriptures which testify to this topic, but just a few will give a clear picture. The first comes from the one and unique great Prophet that God sent to Israel and the world, our Lord Jesus Christ. He taught His disciples about the times when He as the Son of Man will come back:

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (Lk 17:26-30)

The Lord here says that the world in the last time will resemble the world short before the flood. Now was that a time of revival, of the conversion of many millions? What does the Bible say?

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually. (...) So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (Gen 6:5+12)

Just that will be the moral and spiritual condition of the mass of humankind when the Lord will return - according to His own unfailing words! This does not sound like "mass revival" and "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" - it means mass apostasy, occultism and outright rebellion against God. Even as in the days of Noah, the overwhelming majority of men will scoff at the preachers of righteousness, and they will drive their sinful frenzy to a point where the wrath of God cannot be withheld further, but must be poured out on the evildoers.

Our Lord also says the last times will be like the days of Lot, who had to see all the evil things and moral perversions the Sodomites committed. Now, among them you couldn't even find ten just people, otherwise the city might have been saved. Is it not so that our times see the "revival" of the sins of Sodom on a very large scale? Is it not true that not only the world, but also the outer façade of heathen "Christendom" is rapidly turning to the rotten paths of Sodom? The end of this will be God's wrath and not "the healing of the nations"!

So the Bible teaches very clearly, that the world will be full of lawlessness and perverse sins in the last days, and most of the people will not repent (cp. Rev 9:21; 16:9-11). 2Thess 2:7-9 shows that lawlessness is growing in the end, and it will have its peak when the Antichrist comes. In 2Thess 1:7-9 we find that the Lord Jesus, when He comes back to the earth, will send judgement on all those who do not obey Him:

... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes in that day ...

Also, in Rev 18:23 the Word of God says the Whore Babylon has deceived all the nations by its sorcery. How is that possible when all the nations have been converted? We know, of course, that there will be a time where all nations shall be converted, but this will only be a purified remnant of the nations in the Messianic kingdom, after the great judgements of God, and not in the Church dispensation, where it is only a small minority that is saved from among the nations.

b) The Church in the last times: triumph or decay?

The Pentecostal and Charismatic teachers and prophets frequently claim that the end time is the time of triumph and huge growth for the Church. Equipped with apostles, prophets, with supernatural gifts and the fullness of the Spirit, the Church is supposed to see millions of new Christians flooding in. It is said to be the head, and not the tail. It allegedly will overcome the powers of

darkness and throw them into the abyss, thereby freeing the masses from their oppression. It will establish the kingdom of God on earth.

But when we consult the Bible and study the teachings of the inspired Apostles of Jesus Christ on this topic, we encounter a picture which is totally different from the above. Again we cannot cover all the relevant Scriptures, but we will focus on two inspired prophecies about the situation of the Church in the last days:

But know this, that in the last days perilous (or hard, severe) times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2Tim 3:1-5)

Here we see that the last times are not the times of triumph and display of power for the true Church. Instead, the Word of God tells us that these times will be perilous, hard and evil times. The main reason which is given in our text is the dominance of people in Christendom who live like the sinners of Romans 1 - but they claim to be children of God, true believers!

They have a form, an outer appearance of godliness or fear of God, but they deny its power and very essence! They are false Christians, who have not the Holy Spirit, who have no longing to obey God, no spiritual mind, but they are open for every heresy and false teaching, and tend to draw the Church into the realm of this world.

The second inspired prophecy is also found in the second letter to Timothy - a very important letter to study for true believers in the last days!

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. (2Tim 4:3-4)

Here we have foretold a second typical feature of end-time Christianity: those who call themselves Christians will not endure the sound doctrine of the Bible. They will not love the teaching of the apostles about repentance, faith in Christ, self-denial and being crucified with Christ, renouncing the world and its lusts etc. In fact, they will deny these truths because they hinder them in living their own self-willed lives.

They will consciously turn their ears away from the truth - a very serious act of departure from God and the faith! This rotten attitude towards truth is the basis for the powers of end-time deception to blind those false Christians; they will fall prey of strong delusions, because did not receive the love of truth:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but has pleasure in unrighteousness. (2Thess 2:9-12)

This Scripture passage is of central importance for the biblical understanding of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. The same principles that operate in the very last time when the Antichrist will be revealed operate today as well. Many false Christians who rejected the true gospel of Christ and prefer fables to the sound doctrine of God (2Tim 4:3-4), will turn to the false prophets and teachers of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, which is, in fact, a movement that is about to prepare the coming of the Antichrist, as we will see later.

As these people reject the divine truth, which admonishes to them to repent and give their lives to Christ, they will eagerly embrace false prophets and teachers who tell them fables - invented stories and fanciful teachings that allow them to live in sin and error. These false teachers are paid well for preaching a message that satisfies the itching ears of the listeners: "God blesses your ways; God is your friend, God gives you health, wealth and power". This is a divine judgement (1Pt 4:17); these people are enslaved by the strong delusions because they rejected the truth which would have made them free.

A third prophecy is to be seen in context with these two, and it shows the spiritual forces that push the mighty trends of deception in the end-time Church:

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 ... (1Tim 4:1-2)

Here we also have the latter times in view, and we see that the hidden cause for all the heresies and false teachings in the Church is the *activity of demons*, of deceptive spirits who lead the people astray by powers, false visions, dreams, signs and wonders, but also by cunningly invented doctrines which pervert the teachings of the Bible and lead the people on the broad way.

Again this confirms the teaching of 2Thess 2:9-11, because the powers of Antichrist and the strong delusions clearly are demonic in nature. This prophecy obviously alludes to the beginnings of the heretical Catholic Church in verse 3, but is applicable to every other heretical current in the Church of God; it has special relevance for the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, where these deceiving spirits operate more openly and massively than in many other heresies.

The Bible teaches that heresy and error will experience a rapid growth in the end time; in fact this unnatural, destructive growth is likened to that of cancer cells in God's Word:

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. (2Tim 2:16-17)

But evil men and impostors (or swindlers, deceivers) will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2Tim 3:13)

When we take these prophecies together, and compare them with quite a few other hints in the New Testament (e.g. 2Pet 2:1-2; 3:3; Jude 1:17-19; 1Pet 4:17; Acts 20:29-30), we can safely conclude that the Apostles teach us the very opposite of the false Charismatic prophets of today. The situation of the Church in the last times will be rather precarious; there will be many deceptions and false teachings, false Christians and false teachers, and the sound believers will have to struggle in order to keep the true path of Christ. They will have only a little strength (Rev 3:8).

The NT nowhere teaches that there will be new apostles or prophets or signs and wonders at the end of the Church dispensation; instead it warns decidedly against false apostles (2Cor 11:13; Rev 2:2), false prophets (Mt 24:11+24; Mt 7:15-23; 1Jn 4:1; Rev 19,20), false teachers (1Tim 4:1-2; 2Tim 4:3-4; 2Pt 2:1; 1Jn 2:18-26; 2Jn 1:7-11), and false signs and wonders (Mt 24:24; 2Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13-14; 16:14) in the last time.

c) The prophecy of Joel: On whom will the Spirit be poured out?

One of the main biblical proofs for the teachings of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement seems to be the great OT prophecy of Joel, where an outpouring of the Holy Spirit “on all flesh” is prophesied for the latter times. This prophecy is very often cited by the Pentecostals in order to show that their expectation of the big revival is biblically justified. But is that really the case? What does the prophet truly say? Who will receive that outpouring of God’s Spirit after all?

Let us read this important text:

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on the menservants and on the maidservants I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among them remnant whom the LORD calls (Joel 2:28-32; Joel 3:1-5 in other versions)

Now on the first reading, one might say: The Pentecostals have a point here! The Word says the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh! That obviously means that eventually all men on earth will receive the Spirit in the end time! That is how almost all Pentecostals and Charismatics understand this text; they claim that all men will one day be filled with God’s Spirit, and this is underlined by scores of “visions” and “revelations” which show millions and millions of people in ecstatic praise, filling stadiums and large public places, whole cities that are “converted” and whole nations that are “healed by the spirit”.

But we must read the Word of God thoroughly and precisely in order to get its true meaning. One central point is to read and interpret the Scriptures in their context and not out of context. So we will read this text once more, but we will include the preceding and the following verses this time:

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel; I am the LORD your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame. And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. (Joel 2:26-28)

Now when we include the verses which precede our passage, we get a clear idea who will really receive the Holy Spirit in the last days: *it is the people of Israel!* It is absolutely clear who *your sons* and *your daughters* are - the sons and daughters of the god-fearing remnant of the once chosen people Israel who will be accepted as God’s people again in the last time, when the Church has been enraptured and taken into heaven.

But why does God say: “on all flesh”? Now, if we study the Old Testament, the dispensation of the Law, then we will realize that under the Law, not every believer or God-fearing Israelite had received the Spirit of God. This privilege then was only for a few chosen instruments: The leaders and kings like Mose or David; the God-fearing high priests, and the prophets. The ordinary people of God did not receive the Spirit in those days (cf. Num 11:29).

But it will be different when Israel is accepted as God’s people again, when the New Covenant will be realized for Israel. Then God will put His Spirit into each believer’s heart (Ezek 11:19; 36:26), so when the Spirit is poured out on end-time renewed Israel, it will be poured out not only on

priests and prophets, but on *all flesh*, that is: *all converted Israelites* - sons and daughters, old men and young men, menservants and maidservants. This is the only possible meaning of “all flesh” in this passage; it is impossible to include the masses of the heathen nations in this expression, as we will see below.

This interpretation is confirmed by quite a few other prophecies in the OT; we will only cite two of them (comp. also Isa 32:15; Ezek 39:29):

For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on your descendants and my blessing on your offspring ... (Isa 44:3)

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on me whom they pierced. (Zech 12:10)

So it is clearly established that the outpouring announced by the prophet Joel will be on the converted people of Israel and not on all nations. On the contrary, the verses following that prophecy show that at the same time the heathen nations will face severe judgement from the LORD:

For behold in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgement with them there on account of my people, my heritage Israel ... (Joel 3:1-2)

The way the apostle Peter quotes Joel in Acts 2:16-21 basically confirms this view as well. Peter does not say: Here you find the prophecy *fulfilled*, but he simply says that the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost is of the same quality as the one predicted by Joel. In fact, the signs in heaven mentioned in Joel 2:30-31 did not happen at Pentecost, and the outpouring then can only be interpreted as a first or partial fulfilment, whereas the final or complete fulfilment will be come to pass in the last days.

At Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out in a similar way as it will then, in the last days, when the complete fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy will come. The Spirit was poured out on Jews alone, who called upon the name of the Lord; the Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem, and the Spirit brought true prophetic gifts to the people of God. But the aim of that outpouring was altogether different from that which will come. At Pentecost, the Spirit came to form the Church of Jesus Christ, the Assembly of God, a new people of God formed by former Jews and Gentiles who now were to become one new man in Christ.

The Spirit of God was only once poured out on the Church; according to the promise of our Lord, this Spirit of truth will abide with the church forever; He will dwell with all believers of the Church dispensation and be in all of them (Jn 14:16-18). We never hear of any promise that there will be several outpourings of that Spirit for the Church, because He has been poured out once and for all at Pentecost, and will stay with the Church forever: **“whom he poured out [Greek in the sense: once and for all] on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Tit 3:6).**

d) The Pentecostal prophets tell lies and pervert the words of the living God

When we compare the “inspired prophecies” of the Pentecostal and Charismatic camp and their teachings with the truly inspired prophetic Word of Scripture (2Pet 1:19-21), then it becomes very clear that there is a fundamental contradiction. Only one statement can be true. If we follow the Charismatics, there must be a great end-time pouring out of the Spirit on all peoples, and billions shall be converted before the Lord Jesus comes back. If we follow the Bible, there will be lawlessness, overabounding sodomitic sin and anti-Christian movement in the world, and the Church will

be ridden with heresies, false prophets and pseudo-believers - it will be a great falling away instead of a great awakening!

Now who is right? We can only believe one of the two doctrines. And, of course, every true believer should accept the Bible's teaching and reject the wishful theories of the Pentecostal false prophets. We have seen with the prophecy of Joel that the false teachings of the Charismatics can only be maintained if one perverts the true meaning of the Words of God. The false prophets of the end-time thus commit the same sin as the false prophets in old Israel, about whom the LORD had to say:

How long will this be in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make my people forget my name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbour, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream, and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD. Is not my word like a fire? says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who steal my words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who use their tongues and say 'He says.' Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams, says the LORD, and tell them and cause my people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD (...) For every man's word will be his oracle (or burden), for you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. (Jer 23:28-36)

3. Beware of the false prophets in the last times!

We have seen until now that the teachings of the Pentecostal and Charismatic camp are contrary to the Bible and that they picture an illusionary mass awakening in the last times. The Bible unmasks these people as false prophets and false teachers. But the Bible has more to say about this movement - and these are Scriptures which hardly ever are taken seriously or expounded by Charismatics. The Bible gives us frequent and serious warnings about a strong influence of false, deceitful prophets in the end time, and we ought to have a closer look on these warnings.

a) The warning against false prophets in Matthew 24

First of all we should look at the important speech of our Lord at the Mount of Olives, where He teaches His disciples about the end of time, the glorious moment when He, the Son of Man, shall come in might and glory to set up His Kingdom. The time before that great event will be characterized by certain traits, and one of them, in fact, the most prominent, will be the activity of false prophets:

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying: Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ' and will deceive many.

And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows (literally: of labours = labours of birth with a woman).

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. (Mt 24:3-13 + 24-25)

In that very important passage, the Lord shows certain characteristic traits of the end time. We should note that this includes the time when the Church is on earth, but also the time afterwards when Antichrist comes, when the Great Tribulation happens and the remnant of Israel turns to Christ. These end-time characteristics develop in the form of labour pains as in the birth of a child (that is the meaning of "sorrows" in Mt 24:8). That means: the symptoms like false prophets, wars, famines etc., will occur with increasing intensity and frequency as the end comes closer.

In fact, the first and most prominent feature our Lord mentions as characteristic of the last times is *deception*: "**Take heed that no one deceives you**" (v. 4). This end-time deception will have a Christian mask. The false prophets will come in Christ's name, and they will talk in the first person as if Christ spoke through them: "I am the Christ". The warning against them is twice repeated in our text - a very rare phenomenon which shows how serious the danger is. "**Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many**" (v. 11). "**For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders**" (v. 24).

So we have the warning of our loving Lord that as the end times unfold, false prophets and false signs and wonders will spread in the church, as the evil one tries to deceive the children of God and lead them a wrong way.

b) How to detect the false prophets: Matthew 7

But the warnings against these false prophets go even more into detail. In Matthew 7, our Lord Jesus Christ gives a lesson about the false prophets which we should heed well.

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day: 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Mt 7:15-23)

Here we have several important hints which we will follow.

1. First of all, let us notice what a false prophet is in the Scriptures. In the Greek of the NT their name means “false, lying, deceiving prophet”. So he claims to be a prophet, but he is a fake and tells lies to the people of God. Now what is a true prophet in the Bible? It is a chosen, sanctified speaker of God himself, who does not speak his own words, but passes on the very Words of the Lord who has sent him. A true prophet is an inspired messenger of God. A false prophet is a person who poses as messenger of God and claims to have a new word of God, but in reality he tells lies and false visions; he is a speaker of Satan who leads the people of God astray.

2. Second, our Lord warns us about the perfect camouflage of these prophets. They come to God’s people in sheep’s clothing, that is, they make the impression of being true, reborn believers, children of God, sheep of the Good Shepherd. In fact, many of them seem to be fascinating men of God, full of power, accompanied with signs and wonders, people who seem to be spiritually far above the ordinary child of God. But our Lord also reveals to us that all this is just a show, a beautiful façade with a totally different reality behind it. In their inner heart, they are darkness, unrighteousness, thirst for power. They are ravenous wolves who want to prey on the true sheep (comp. Acts 20:29).

3. Third, our Lord shows us how to detect these wolves in spite of their clever camouflage. It is not mainly by their speeches and stories. A good deceiver will tell in his sermons about 80% of biblical truth, and mix it with 20% deadly error. In some cases, when the deception is very cunning, it might be 90% truth and 10% error. But still, the overall result is error and destruction, not edification. If you want to detect these deceivers, you first of all have to test the fruit of their messages and ministry. If the fruit is bad, e.g. it leads to doctrinal errors, personal sins and schisms, then the tree itself is bad. And as some of its fruit may look good, but in reality is poisoned, you have to determine whether the tree is bad, and then reject even those fruits that seem to be harmless and delicious (comp. Gen 3:6). We must remember that never there will come good fruit from a bad tree!

4. Fourth, our Lord gives us a decisive clue to detect the false prophets by the severe passage which shows us the end of their glamorous and boastful ministry. In vv. 22-23 we see how these ministers of the devil will come to the Lord and say: “**Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?**” The Lord, the one who knows the hearts, will then answer them: “**I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!**” But we not only know the dreadful end of these self-ordained prophets by these verses. We also see that there are three central characteristics of the false “ministry” of the end-time deceptive prophets: They prophesy in Christ’s name; they cast out demons in Christ’s name, and they do great signs and wonders in Christ’s name.

c) The pseudo-prophetic movement of the last days unmasked

If we take the teachings of our Lord together, and take them serious as inspired prophecy which will come to pass, then we have to expect in the end times an influential movement of false prophets, who bring unbiblical messages in Christ’s name, and whose ministry is characterized by prophecy, casting out demons and performing great wonders. Now if we look at the history of the Church in the last two centuries, we will only find *one* great movement which shows all these three characteristics of false prophets, and that is the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement!

It is the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement which boasts of its prophets as having the new revelation of God for the end time, and boasts that the “gift of prophecy” with dreams, visions and inner voices is given to each one who has received its “baptism of the spirit”. It is this movement which boasts of their ability to cast out demons out of every Christian, out of all unbelievers and even out of the heavenlies, out of whole cities and countries. And it is this movement which

boasts of the big wonders and signs that happen daily in its midst, whose preachers and prophets claim that the great power of God is working through them (comp. Acts 8:9-10).

In the centuries before, there had been similar movements on a smaller scale, like the Montanists of the third and fourth century, or the Camisards in the 17th, or the Irvingites in the 19th century. In all these movements, the prophecies proved to be lies, and their fruit was deception and destruction. But none of these earlier movements gained an impact on the Church comparable to that great movement which began at the start of the 20th century in the USA. If there is any fulfillment of our Lord's prophetic announcement in Matthew 24, it can only be this movement which has spread over the whole world and penetrated almost every branch of the Church on earth.

“See, I have told you beforehand” (Mt 24:25) says our Lord and Master. If we are prepared to listen to His words and take His warnings, His teachings serious, we can detect the end-time false prophets without much difficulty. But many Christians have already been poisoned by the deceptive spirits of the movement, and they are unable to see the obvious; they prefer to be deceived instead of facing the truth which hurts. What about you and me?

4. The origins and essence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements

There is one last point left which is made clear by the precise Word of Truth, the inspired word of the Bible, if only we see the connection between different messages and teachings of the Lord in the Scriptures. And this is something the devil wants to keep in the mist, in half-darkness, so that the clear truth is not made known to God's people.

We have seen that the whole movement began with an “outpouring of spirit” and saw uncountable such “outpourings” since. But as the true Holy Spirit was poured out only once on the Church, at Pentecost - how are we to account for the Pentecostal “outpourings” in the last days? Or, to put the question more clearly: What sort of spirit was poured out? According to the Biblical teaching, it cannot be the Holy Spirit. But what spirit was it then?

A deceptive spirit is poured out on deceived people

The first occurrences of the Pentecostalist “outpouring of spirit” happened in North America (Canada and the United States) in 1901 and 1905. The recipients were adherents to extreme groups of the “holiness movement” who taught a “complete sanctification” which allegedly eradicated all sin, lust or sinful desire out of the heart to produce a “clean heart” and sinless perfection already here on earth. This error was quite popular in those days; it had its roots in the teachings of John Wesley and Charles Finney, among others.

Some of these groups taught a “three step sanctification” with the new birth as first stage, the “entire sanctification” as second, and then the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” as third and highest stage. They expected an outpouring of the spirit according to Joel and a renewal of the apostolic gifts of prophecy and wonders. People fasted and prayed for days to receive that “baptism” and “outpouring”, and after some time, a spirit was poured out indeed; it manifested itself in prophecies, tongues, trembling, trance and unconsciousness, in strange and uncontrollable movements, jerks and cries, in miraculous healings.

The fruit of this spirit was an endless wave of splitting up of churches and groups, a dirty wave of heretical teachings, of moral sins, adultery and fornication, and an uncountable mass of false

prophecies which were proven lies by the outcome, of deceptive wonders and healings, of greed and filthy gain, of domination and manipulation of people by self-styled “prophets”, “apostles” and “shepherds” ... The sad inside story of this movement would fill volumes. It proves by the criterion of our Lord that it was a false spirit which was poured out then.

And when we consider the Lord’s judgement on the teachings these deluded people held, then we can understand the judgement of God which underlies this sad counterfeit “revival”. The heresy of “complete sanctification” is addressed and characterised in the first letter of the Apostle John:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1Jn 1:8-10)

The false teachers of “complete sanctification” claimed just what John characterizes here; they claimed that after their mystical “sanctification experience”, they had no longer any sin and sinned no more. Now the Word of God condemns these heretical teachings with very serious words. Those who say such things deceive themselves, and, more serious even, they make God a liar, because God clearly teaches that the flesh and sinful lusts and sin remains in the child of God until the glorious day when we are transformed and will be as He is (1Jn 3:2; Phil 3:20-21).

Now we can understand better why the God whom these heretical fanatics made a liar permitted a spirit of lie and demonic deception to be poured out on them. They turned away from the sober teaching of Scripture, from Biblical truth, and so they received a lying spirit, a spirit which deceived them even further and plunged them in a system of false teachings which is quite difficult to escape from once one has put oneself under its influence.

This is in full accordance with the teaching of 2Thess 2:9-12 where we read that, because the deceived people did not receive the love of truth, God sends them strong delusions, that they should believe the lie. They come under the working of Satan with all its deceptive power, signs and wonders, just because they turned away from God’s truth. We are reminded of the equally serious word of the Apostle Peter: **“For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”** (1Pet 4:17).

In the OT, we have a telling and important precedent for such an outpouring of a deceptive spirit on false people. In Isa 19:14 we read that the Lord poured (or mingled) into the Egyptians a perverse spirit (or a spirit of dizziness). In 2Chr 18:22 we read that the Lord judged his unfaithful king Ahab by allowing a lying spirit to deceive him: **“The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”** A very striking parallel with the workings of the false spirit of the Pentecostal movement is found in Isa 29:9-11:

Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep [or unconsciousness], and has closed your eyes, namely the prophets, and He has covered your heads, namely the seers. The whole vision [or revelation] has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver unto one who is literate, saying: ‘Read this, please’. And he says: ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’

In a like manner, the lying spirit that forms and leads the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement makes its followers spiritually drunk and blind for the true teachings of God’s revelation, the written Word. They hunt after all sorts of dubious “prophets” who sell them their fancy pseudo-revelations, but they become blind for the sound teaching of the Apostles. They fall to the ground and lie in ecstasy and think, they receive a “blessing” by it. But their true situation is prefigured by the words of Isaiah the prophet:

But these also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are they gone astray. The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are overpowered by wine, they are gone astray through strong drink; they have erred in vision, they have stumbled in judgement. (...) For with stammering lips and a strange tongue will He speak to this people, to whom He said, This is the rest, cause the weary to rest, and: This is the refreshing. But they would not hear. And the word of the LORD was unto them Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little: that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. (Isa 28:7-13; Darby translation)

The bad fruits of the false spirit

This leads us to the second point we want to consider. In 1Jn 4:1 we are expressly commanded: **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”** How are we to test the spirits of the prophets? Now some have thought this means to call upon these spirits and command them to identify themselves or to formulate a doctrinally sound confession. But this is not the right way and may bring harm.

The right way to test the spirits is shown us in the teaching of the apostolic letters. We think this is hinted at in 1Jn 4:6, when the apostle John underlines that the true servants of God accept the sound teaching of the apostles: **“We (the Apostles) are of God; he who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”** So we have to look whether the Charismatic prophets truly listen to the doctrine of the Apostles and abide by it.

It is by testing their teachings by the teachings of the Word of God, and also by testing their workings by the inspired teaching on how the Holy Spirit works in the believer. We have already seen that the teachings and prophecies of the false Pentecostalist spirits are contrary to the sound teaching of the Lord and His apostles. But how about the working and the effects of that spirit? Can we test them and see which sort of spirit we have before us?

I believe we can, and if we compare the teachings of the NT about the fruit and the effects of the Holy Spirit on the believer, we can safely conclude that the fruits of the false spirit in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements testify to its demonic nature. We will only mention three points here, as we want to treat this topic more extensively in our next lecture:

1. The true Spirit of God works self-control and not compulsive reactions: God’s Spirit leaves the believer always his own conscious decision; He leads and sometimes urges believers to do God’s will, but He never overrules his personality or robs him of his self-control. In fact, self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit, the last one mentioned in Gal 5:22-23. Many symptoms of the false Pentecostalist spirit show that this deceiving spirit works by compulsion; it steers the people without and often against their will. So we meet, especially in the so-called “Toronto blessing”, but also apart from that, with symptoms like compulsive laughter, compulsive hopping or convulsions, compulsive shouting or speaking in tongues, and so on. This is never the Spirit of God, of whom we read: **“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”**, and: **“the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”** (1Cor 14:32).

2. The true Spirit of God works sobriety and vigilance, not drunkenness or unconsciousness. The false Pentecostalist spirit frequently throws its followers into unconsciousness; this was not a new phenomenon of the “Toronto blessing”, but has occurred from the beginnings of that movement. Many deep ecstatic experiences of that spirit are associated with states of trance, hypnotic states, “spirit drunkenness” or unconsciousness, e.g. the ill-famed “slain in the spirit” symptoms. But the Spirit of God works not trance and unconsciousness, but **“a sound mind”** (2Tim 1:7). The spiritual person is exhorted to watch (i.e. to stay awake), to be vigilant and sober (comp. Rom 13:11-14; 1Cor 15:34; 1Cor 16:13; Eph 5:14; 1Tim 3:2; 1Pet 4:7; 1Pet 5:8; Rev 3:2-3):

“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober ...” (1Thess 5:5-8)

The express states of “spiritual drunkenness” which have caused prominent Charismatics to declare themselves as “barkeepers” of their false spirit, are clearly not in accordance with the character of God’s Holy Spirit; they are caused by the end-time spirits of deception (1Tim 4:1). Therefore we read in 2Tim 2:26: “...and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

3. *The true Spirit of God glorifies God through decency, not erratic or undecent behaviour.* The false Pentecostalist spirit leads its followers frequently to a behaviour which dishonors God. Examples from a much longer list would include speaking in assemblies against God’s order (1Cor 14:26-40); behaving compulsively like animals or laughing and shouting without self-control; violation of God’s orders for women to behave still and not dominating men, and so on. (Comp. also lecture 2 on this topic.)

c) The cancer-like growth of the error

The first wave of this end-time deception was the Pentecostal Movement. It originated in extreme Holiness circles, as we saw, and it was soon detected as an aberration by the sound Bible-believing churches. It separated its followers from sound churches and built a movement of its own, quickly divided into dozens of sub-groups mostly orientated to respective “anointed apostles” and “anointed prophets” who often condemned each other and claimed divine inspiration for themselves only. There were some quite large organisations, though, like the Assemblies of God, or the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, which was founded by the woman “apostle” Aimee Semple McPherson.

The Pentecostal churches were a growing, but isolated section of Christianity for about sixty years. An important change took place in the 1960ies, when an increasing number of members and pastors of mainline protestant churches (which were all liberal in their orientation) received the Pentecostal “spirit baptism”, and the liberal leaders of these churches subsequently came to tolerate or even encourage such “renewal movements”. This development had been prepared in the forties and fifties by interdenominationally working Pentecostal “healers” like oral Roberts or William Branham, by the efforts of Demos Shakarian and his “Full Gospel Businessmen”, and largely through the efforts of David du Plessis, a Pentecostal preacher from South Africa who influenced liberal church leaders of the ecumenical “World Council of Churches” to open their churches for the “spirit baptism”. In the sixties, this pervert seed grew up, and through the influence of people like Episcopalian Dennis Bennett, Lutheran Larry Christenson, and faith healer Agnes Sanford.

Soon the charismatic “renewal” spread within every mainline denomination in America, including, from 1967, the Roman Catholic Church. The teachings and practices of these groups were essentially the same like with the older Pentecostals, although liberal theology and denominational traditions were integrated. The movement also reached Europe and spread throughout the whole world. The special characteristic of the “classical” Charismatics is that they choose to stay in their denomination instead of forming separate churches. They penetrate these denominations like leaven and thus spread the experience of their “spirit baptism” very efficiently.

The Catholic Charismatic renewal has become one of the largest and most important groups within the classical Charismatics. They claim about 120 million followers in 230 countries all over the

world. They are acknowledged by the last three Popes and furthered by prominent members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, e.g. Cardinal Suenens or the Pope's preacher, R. Cantamalessa.

Besides these denominational renewal movements, there is a growing number of independent Charismatic churches and new denominations like the Calvary Churches or the Vineyard Fellowship. Many of these are open for massive heretical teachings, e.g. the Word of Faith movement (Kenneth Hagin), many are preachers of the false prosperity gospel or of the "positive confession" heresy. These independent Charismatics are usually grouped around some "especially anointed" leader and experience rapid growth. There are also very many Charismatic missions and parachurch organizations like "Youth with a Mission", charismatic television channels (PTL) etc. An "evangelistic" outreach of sad fame in Africa is Reinhard Bonnke's organisation with its sensationalist healing crusades.

In the eighties of the 20th century a "third wave of the Holy Spirit" was announced by some Charismatics, especially John Wimber. This new deceptive "wave" was directed to the traditional evangelical churches which had before been less influenced by Charismatic teachings and practices. Special efforts have been made to export the Charismatic false spirit to non-Charismatic evangelicals, and the attractive Charismatic music, especially "praise & worship" songs, function as an effective "door opener" mainly with younger believers.

The characteristic which distinguishes the Charismatics from their elder brethren, the Pentecostals, seems to be that the earlier movement was still influenced by its Holiness roots and had in some way a more conservative character, whereas with the Charismatics, reckless wordliness, moral laxness and even New Age and esoteric influences can spread unchecked. With the growing success of the Charismatics, however, the younger generation of Pentecostal pastors seem to have adapted very much to their more efficient colleagues, and an increasing mingling of the two currents can be observed.

d) The crucial role of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the end-time deception of the Church

We have seen that the Pentecostal and Charismatic wave is rapidly swelling in these last days. If numerical growth and outward success were a sure sign of God's blessing, as many believe, then surely the Charismatics could claim to be God's vanguard. But we have already seen that in the last time, it is heresy and departure from the faith that is growing, spreading like cancer (2Tim 2:17). The remnant of faithful believers, on the other side, is said to have "a little strength" (Rev 3:8). So the growth of these movements is according to Scripture, but it fulfils warnings like those in 2Tim 3:13: "**But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived**". In the end time, the false teachers will draw by far the larger crowds as compared to the true teachers:

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 ... (2Pet 2:1-3)

This is not to say that there are no true believers among the Pentecostals and Charismatics. I am persuaded there are quite a few souls who have believed in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and are true children of God, although deceived by the false teachings and spirits of these movements. On the other hand, the sad fact is that usually a majority, in Charismatic churches often a very large majority of adherents show no biblical evidence of a new birth and of biblical salvation. This is

due to the false gospel which is preached in these circles, to the false Jesus that is revered, and to the false spirit that works (2Cor 11:4; see second lecture).

Why is it that this openly unbiblical movement has such a success? Well, the answer is that it is furthered by Satan who uses it to open up the nominal Christians for the coming anti-Christian deception. There are three destructive effects of the movement which the devil uses massively in end time Christianity:

1. *The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements persuade people to consider false revelations, subjective experiences and feelings more important than the written Word of God.* The inspired Word of Scripture is the only sure guide for our faith and life - that is the sound principle to which most evangelical believers still adhere - or: used to adhere, before the deceiving influences of the Charismatics perverted that principle. Wherever the false spirit of that movement gains influence, people are subtly turned away from simple faith in Scripture. They become accustomed to regard the messages of some “anointed” prophets, the dreams or voices of their deluded hearts an even more authentic and topical “word of God” than the Bible. And this mystical leaven is used by the devil to draw many evangelical Christians away from the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

2. *The pentecostal and charismatic movements prepare the people to accept signs and wonders as a divine confirmation and authentication.* This prepares the way for the even stronger delusions which are to come when Antichrist appears on the scene. The false prophets of that movement teach their followers to accept those as divinely authorized, who perform signs and wonders. Now we know that at the peak of the Anti-Christian deception, Satan will use a super-prophet as his tool who will perform the most amazing wonders and signs - in order to seduce people to worship the Antichrist and his image (comp. Rev 13:12-15; 2Thess 2:8-12). Whenever we see Charismatic “faith healers” proclaim their mighty signs and wonders, we ought to remember that one day a fascinating miraculous healing will bring deluded men to worship the dragon and the beast (Rev 13:3-4)!

3. *The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements enable the absorption of many bible-believing Christians into the ecumenic movement and the future world religion of the Whore Babylon.* It is telling that the liberal, ecumenical, Christ-renouncing World Council of Churches has gladly welcomed the Charismatic movement. They estimate it highly because they rightly see that in face of the unbridgeable divisions between denominations in the realm of doctrine, this “renewal” based on false spirituality, false revelation and false experience can be an effective bridge to unite very different groups. And this is truly the case. The charismatic leaven has brought about a totally unbiblical ecumenic unity where deluded Baptists and Pietists dance together with liberal theologians, catholic priests, evangelical church growth adherents and Pentecostals in a wild “worship dance” around an invisible calf, all drunk with the false spirit and its tongues, visions and emotions.

Conclusion

We need not be bewildered, burdened or discouraged by all the things we have heard and read. Our Lord, when He taught His disciples about the end time and its dangers, still told them: **“Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near”** (Lk 21:28). The Lord Jesus Christ has won the victory over Satan and his deceptive spirits. The Lord has promised: **“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** (Mt 16:18). So we need not be anxious about that.

But still it is our responsibility to keep to the sound doctrine which our Lord has given us through His Apostles. The Lord will preserve us and guide us safely through these last times with all their dangers. But it is our part to keep in close fellowship with Him and to keep His word. He will preserve those who are faithful. Do you want to be among His faithful remnant that overcomes and will receive the crown? It will cost a price in these days, to keep His word, to keep faith and holiness and to live as crucified and risen with Christ - but the reward will be wonderful.

So let us look up unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebr 12:2)! Let us stay away from the end-time false prophets and instead heed the sure prophetic word of the Bible, **“as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”** (2Pet 1:19)! Let us stay with the little flock of true believers, with **“those who call on the Lord with a pure heart”** (2Tim 2:22), with the small faithful remnant within the end-time Church of whom is written: **“See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, and you have kept my word, and have not denied My name”** (Rev 3:8). The Lord will keep us and give us strength to persevere until the end!

**Now unto Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory
with exceeding joy,
to God our Saviour, who alone is wise,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and forever.
Amen.**

Jude 1:24-25