

False Prophets and Perverted Grace

Fred R. Coulter—July, 21, 2012

Almost everyone knows that if you read the New Testament you're going to find things completely different than how Christianity is taught today in this world.

What happened? *The seeds of what happened are in the New Testament itself!* Jesus gave the first warning. He said this many, many times. If you want a real interesting Bible study, look up the word 'deceive.' Just run that and see how many references you come to. We are warned over and over and over again, '**Don't let anyone deceive you.**'

Jesus told His disciples because they wanted to know when the end would be and what was going to happen, Matthew 24:4: "Then Jesus answered *and* said to them, '**Be on guard...** [beware, watch out] **...so that no one deceives you.**'"

Now when someone comes to deceive the best deception is a counterfeit that looks really good. I remember one time I ended up with a counterfeit bill, \$100 bill, that was supposedly given by our bank. I think Jim got it first and he couldn't get a refund, so he gave it me and said, 'See what you could do.' I took it over there and I said, 'Could you please check this. Is this counterfeit?' She took one look at it and said, 'Yes, it's counterfeit.' *Well, we got it from the bank. What's the chances of getting a real one?* A real counterfeit! What do I mean a real counterfeit? The money we have are Federal Reserve Notes, they have no value, except the psychological value.

So they said, '*We don't do that.*' I said, 'It came from the bank.' *We don't do that.* So I said, 'Don't you check them?' *Yes, we do.* I said, 'Well, this one must have slipped through. I'm one of your good customers over here, how about if you replace it just this one time for me.' *We can't do that.* A counterfeit has no value.

The coming of Jesus Christ and His message and what He taught is of such great value that many people want it so they can use it for their own ends and means. When did that start? We'll look at some of the start of it here in the New Testament.

Verse 5: "For many shall come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ'; and they shall deceive many." When you read 'many' that means *the majority of people*. So on the other hand you look in the Bible, the Church of God is called the '*little flock*. *Many called, but few are chosen.*' You are weak and have a '*little strength*,' but you have '*held fast to My Word.*' All of those things describe the true Church of God.

What makes the true Church of God the true Church of God? Because you can go to a Catholic priest and say, 'Can you show me out of your instruction books how the Catholic Church came to be?' They start out with the pope today and they go right on back and they go clear back to the time of the apostles and say, 'It goes back to Christ.'

Then you look at their teachings and you look at the New Testament and they don't agree. So, you do a little more research and you find that what started as the Catholic Church was not started by the apostles. The Catholic Church started 325_{A.D.} and it wasn't by an apostle. It was by a Roman emperor who was still yet pagan. He saw this sign, which was a cross and 'by this conquer.' He got tired of all of the arguments that the religionists were having, because there were a lot of arguments—because if there's one thing that Satan wants to do is destroy the Truth, counterfeit it. Use the name of Jesus. Make money off of it.

Someone gave me a book. I don't have time to read it, but I gave it someone else to read and give me a summary of it. The title of the book is *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*. Where does the money go? I can hardly wait to get the review.

But one thing I found out, the Vatican bank gives no reports. I'll be interested to see where the money comes from. You know what they say when they're doing all of these fraud investigations? *Follow the money!* They were warned. Jesus warned them over and over and over again. Let's see the very first encounter of someone wanting the name of Christ to continue his false religion. This man's name was Simon; he was also known as Simon Magus. Magus means *magician* or *sorcerer*.

This was no more than two years after Jesus ascending into heaven and the beginning of the New Testament Church. Simon Magus was stationed in Samaria. If you look at a map, Samaria is not too far north of Jerusalem. Did not Jesus and His ministry stop in Samaria as well? *Yes!* He talked to the Samaritan woman at the well.

But now let's see what happened here in Acts 8:5: "Then Philip... [who was just made a deacon at that time] ...went down to a city of Samaria *and* proclaimed Christ to them; And the multitudes listened intently with one accord to the things spoken by Philip when they heard and saw the signs that he did" (vs 5-6). They did, they were healing the sick, they were raising the dead, they

were casting out demons. And, of course, in Samaria they had plenty of those.

Verse 7: “For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many of those who had *them*; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But *there was* a certain man named Simon... [That means a *particular one*.] (notice what he was known for): ...who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery in the city and astounding the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be some great one” (vs 7-9). This means a great religious, powerful leader. Let’s see the influence he that he had.

Verse 10: “To him they had all given heed from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’... [Here was quite a man. He had quite a following and he was practicing sorcery.] ...Now, they were giving heed to him because he had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip... [Here comes an intruder into his territory.] ...who was preaching the Gospel—the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ... [Remember Jesus said many would come in His name—right?] ...they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself also believed...” (vs 10-13). A fake belief! That’s why today we counsel people:

- Do you know about baptism?
- Do you know what it really means?
- Do you understand that you’re giving your life in burial to God?

“...and after being baptized, he steadfastly continued with Philip... [let’s get next to the center of power and follow along with that] ...and as he beheld *the* signs and great works of power *that were* being done, he was amazed” (v 13).

Verse 14 tells us something very important, because this shows us how bad a problem this was. It doesn’t tell us why Philip didn’t understand the problem. Let me give you the equivalent of it today. Simon—that’s very similar to Simon Peter—would be in the same position in Samaria as the pope today is in Rome. So, this was a big deal.

Verse 14: “Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.... [Two leading apostles—right?] ...Who, after coming down to *Samaria*, prayed for them, that they might receive *the* Holy Spirit; for as yet it had not fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid *their* hands on them, and they received *the* Holy Spirit. Now, when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, he offered them money” (vs 14-18). This is where the buying

of an ecclesiastical office is called ‘simony.’ He offered them money.

Verse 19: “Saying, ‘Give this authority to me also, so that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive *the* Holy Spirit’... [Peter said, ‘That’s very nice of you. We’re very happy that you believe in the name of Jesus Christ. We welcome all, everyone can come.’ *No!*] ...But Peter said to him, ‘May your money be destroyed with you because you thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money. You have neither **part** nor **lot** in this matter...” (vs 19-21).

Part means part of an apostleship. Who was the one who replaced Judas? *Matthias!* How was he chosen? *By lot!* What they’re saying here, you have neither part nor lot, you have absolutely nothing to do in this manner, because they *knew* that he was a sorcerer. Another way of saying it is, a Gnostic. If you want a real interesting study, you do this, you can probably do it online. Go online and look up Simon Magus, very interesting what it says. Because we’re going to see his ambitions never subsided one bit with this encounter with Peter and John.

Verse 21: “You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God”—because he didn’t repent. What would repentance amount to for him? *Repenting of all the evil powers that he had as a sorcerer and a wizard of dealing with familiar spirits*, because that’s what’s behind all of that. The Gnostics worshiped what? *The sun—s-u-n—not S-o-n.*

Verse 22: “Repent, therefore, of this wickedness, and beseech God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.... [Peter was saying, ‘We don’t even know if you can receive repentance, you’re so evil.’] ...For I perceive *that* you are in *the* gall of bitterness and *the* bondage of unrighteousness” (vs 22-23). You can’t have your spiritual condition described any worse than this.

Verse 24: “But Simon answered *and* said, ‘You beseech the Lord on my behalf, so that none of *those* things which you have spoken may come upon me.’ So then, after they... [Peter and John] ...earnestly testified and preached the Word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem; *and* they preached the gospel *in* many villages of the Samaritans *as they went*” (vs 24-25).

That’s the first encounter to take the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and change it. Today—just like back then—this kind of Gnostic worship went clear back to the time right after the Tower of Babel. There’s a very important book to read, called *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop. The reason it is important is because of this. This book thoroughly documents that not only does it go back to this point, I don’t think in that book it brings this out, but

where did the practices that Simon was doing here, how far back did they go and where did they come from? This is why the Bible is just not a book of tales and stories and spiritual things. There are other historical works out there that we can read and follow and learn of this. The rest of the title of the book *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop is: Roman Catholicism is the worship of Nimrod and his wife Semiramis.

Who is Nimrod? He comes into the same category. Put this in your notes, Gen. 10, and you might look up Nimrod, too. There are a lot of things online now. When we came into the Church 50 years ago any of these books you had to go get the book, you had to read it. Now you can sit down to your computer and you can Google it. Simon Magus—up comes the information. Nimrod, the mighty hunter—up comes information. He’s the one who put himself in place of God.

This book, *The Two Babylons*, shows that with the scattering of all the people at the Tower of Babel with their languages confused, they went to all the different areas that God sent them and the religion that they took with them was the religion of Nimrod as the father, Semiramis as the queen of heaven, and Tammuz, her illegitimate son, as the savior. So Satan had his counterfeit all lined up, about 1700 years before Christ. And here is one of his descendants with his teachings. You will find that when you read the history in McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* that he founded his own Christian-type religion. He went around and preached it.

Let’s see how that manifested itself later, and what was happening during the days of the Apostle Paul. The seeds of the counterfeit Christianity were being sown.

Here’s quite a statement, 2-Corinthians 2:17: “For we are not like the **many**...” The many! There were many preachers out there claiming they were Christian, but were not. Not quite as bad as it is today. You open the phone book and you have in some cases page after page of churches, all *claiming* to be Christian, all *claiming* to get the things out of the Bible, but they don’t.

“...the many, who for *their own* profit... [What was Simon Magus rebuked for? *Wanting to give them money so he could have the power of the Holy Spirit!*] ...are corrupting the Word of God...” (v 17). That’s quite a thing—isn’t it? You corrupt the Word of God how? *By teaching that it doesn’t mean what it says.* We have it today in Protestantism—don’t we? *Yes!* ‘The Law has been done away.’ I’m going to give a sermon on that and what that has done to this society and to the world. We have it in

Catholicism. They say, ‘We don’t need the Bible. We can preach our Gospel without the Bible and we have our traditions.’ They fail to tell you what Jesus said of the traditions of the Jews.

So Paul, in defending himself, had to say: “...but we speak with sincerity, as from God, *and* before God, *and* in Christ” (v 17).

Let’s see some other things that he had to bring out. If someone is practicing sorcery, where do they get their power? From God? *or* From Satan the devil? Does Satan like to do miracles and wonders and signs? *Yes, indeed!* So, here Paul was having to defend his ministry.

2-Corinthians 4:1: “Therefore, having this ministry, according as we have received mercy, we are not fainthearted. For we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain... [look at how money threads through all of this] ...not walking in cunning craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully... [they were corrupting the Word of God and handling it deceitfully] ...but by manifestation of the Truth...” That’s why we have the Bible.

- God is a God of Truth
- Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- His Word is true

It ought to be handled that way as the Truth of God.

Now let me just do a little sidebar here. The United Bible Society is the world organization for all translations of the Bible. They are currently working on a Muslim-friendly Bible. Muslims are offended that Jesus is the Son of God, because that implies that God the Father had sex with Mary. They’re trying to think of a way on how to phrase it, because they don’t know the Truth about the nature of God. That there’s the Father, there is the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the power of God, not a God, they have no way of explaining to a Muslim that the Father had no need to have sex with Mary. He did it through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I’m sure that if it were explained properly, for a Muslim really wanting to know the Truth, he would understand that. But if you destroy Jesus as the Son of God and the Son of man, and we are to be the children of God ourselves, you destroy the whole Gospel. So here, that’s what they’re trying to do.

Someone asked: ‘Are they going to make the Koran Christian-friendly?’ That’s how far it’s gotten here. ‘Nor handling the Word of God deceitfully.’ So if you are not going to be faithful to the original language, which we have done in the *Faithful Version* here, in the Greek and the Hebrew, meticulously faithful to it, then you are handling the Word of God deceitfully.

“...but by manifestation of the Truth, we are commending ourselves to every man’s conscience before God. But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing; In whom the god of this world... [or this age] ...has blinded the minds of those who do not believe...” (vs 2-4). Let me explain something very clearly:

- You *must* believe in Christ
- You *must* believe in the Father
- You *must* believe the Word of God is true

If you don’t believe those, it’s just like the law of gravity when you drop something from your hand it falls to the ground. Your mind and your understanding is automatically blinded. People who are blind spiritually don’t know they’re blind spiritually, and they don’t know the power behind it.

“...the god of this world... [who is *none other than Satan the devil*] ...has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is *the* image of God, should shine unto themselves” (v 4).

One of the distinguishing factors about preaching the Truth and the true Gospel vs a counterfeit religion, v 5: “For we do not preach our own selves but Christ Jesus *the* Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” That’s how it is to be preached.

Let’s see the difficulty that they were having in the Church at Corinth. He’s talking about many who handle the Word of God deceitfully, many who are corrupting the Word of God. That means they weren’t telling the Truth. It’s amazing what you learn in the Bible if you go through and concentrate on these different things.

Paul is writing to them, 2-Corinthians 11:1: “I would *that* you might bear with me in a little nonsense; but indeed, do bear with me. For I am jealous over you with *the* jealousy of God because I have espoused you to one husband, so that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent... [Satan is involved again in this—right?] ...as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus... [Are there many versions of Jesus? *Yes, indeed!*] ...whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel.... [changing the Gospel] ...which you did not accept... [Here was their problem. The Greeks liked to listen to many different opinions and then draw their own conclusions. What did they do?] ...you put up with it as *something* good” (vs 1-4). This is good!

Kind of like Fox News—fair and balanced. We’ll get the good-sounding lies over here and then

we’ll get the bad-sounding lies over here and we’ll condemn all the bad-sounding lies over here so you can have the good-sounding lies over here.

Notice how this comes about, v 13: “For such *are* false apostles... [Stop and think about that. There were those who were calling themselves apostles but were never sent by Christ. False apostles, telling you the truth. *No!*] ...deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” That’s why it’s important to understand the basic things in the Bible:

- Sabbath
- Holy Days
- True preaching from the Word of God

Those are the keys. If they don’t conform to this, if they keep:

- Sunday
- Halloween
- Christmas
- Lent
- Easter

A lot of Protestants are keeping Lent now, too. Did you know that? *Even some Southern Baptists!* They’re not of God! Those are things you cannot find in the Bible, but those are traditions of men that are based upon the lies that are exposed in the book, *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop.

Easter comes from the Babylonian word ‘Ishtar’ which is the goddess, the queen of heaven, who was the wife of Nimrod. Other name is Semiramis. Have you heard that in a Sunday-keeping church? Have you heard it as a homily in one of the Catholic cathedrals? *No!* What do they say of Sabbath-keepers? *They are blasphemers!* What do they say of Holy Day keepers? *You belong to a cult!*

If what we do is the Truth and what they do is not the Truth, who really belongs to a cult? A cult would have to imply you don’t believe in the Truth. But that’s how Satan labels his enemies. What is his philosophy? *Kill the messenger!* How do you do that? *You slander them!*

Verse 14: “And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works” (vs 14-15).

Let’s come to the Epistle of Jude. Jude was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, called Judas in Mark, the sixth chapter. He wrote this just before the war beginning in 66_{A.D.} A lot of the Jews who said they had believed in Jesus were now falling away

and going with the rebellion. They were perverting the Gospel. Let's see how this developed.

Jude 3: "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting *you* to fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints." In other words, at this time all the Truth was known, with perhaps the exception of the book of Revelation.

Now notice what he writes about here, what happened, v 4: "For certain men have stealthily crept in, those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness, and are personally denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Quite a thing! That's quite a statement— isn't it? It was urgent! Let's see that Peter writing in the same timeframe also said the same thing. Then since we obviously won't have time to go into any more history with this message, I'm going to read you one of the founding statements of Martin Luther concerning grace because they were perverting the grace of God, saying 'the laws have been done away, you don't need to keep them.'

That's why we're going through this sermon series *Grace Upon Grace* so we understand that the only ones who are under grace are those who have the Spirit of God within them. No one else is.

2-Peter 2:1: "But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies..." How does false doctrine come about? *A little bit at a time!* Satan works incrementally. Doesn't change it all at once—a little here, a little there, a little more, a little more. Then a huge crisis and then BANG! the switch is accomplished.

Now notice how bad this is: "...personally denying *the* Lord who bought them... [That is, paid the price for their sins.] ...and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; and because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed" (vs 1-2).

So, you meet a nice minister who is a local Protestant fellow and you come up to him and say, 'I've been reading my Bible and I can't find anywhere in there about Sunday-keeping. I can only see that we are to keep the Sabbath. What do you think?' Listen to his answer: 'Oh, well, we don't have to do that anymore.' Is the Sabbath the Truth of God or not? Is it something we are to keep or not? If

that is so, if we are walking in the way of Truth, what will we be doing?

He'd say, 'You don't need to keep those.' *You know, I also read somewhere that Halloween was from the pagans.* 'Oh, yes, but that doesn't matter anymore. We do it for the kids.' *I also read someplace that the Christmas celebration with the tree the apostles never did that, but why do we do it?* 'Oh, well, that's in commemoration of the birth of Christ.' *Really? I thought it was pagan.* 'Well, it doesn't make any difference now, we've cleaned it up.' The pope will say, 'I've blessed it.' Sprinkle a little 'holy water' on it and it's okay now.

Notice again v 3, *money is involved*—right? "Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for gain; for whom the judgment of old is in *full* force, and their destruction is *ever* watching." I will leave it up to you to read the rest of that chapter. It's pretty denouncing.

Now we come down to what we consider the beginning of the more modern era, because there are so many modern eras that came along. There was a time Martin Luther, on Halloween night, I think it was 1517 or 1518, he had his '95-theses written. He went up to the cathedral in his town and he nailed it to the door. That supposedly started the Protestant Reformation.

Along came a man—and I have the book and I've read it—named Karlstadt. Karlstadt was a very interesting man because he believed the New Testament and the Old Testament and he kept the Sabbath and believed that it should be kept. He tried over a number of years to get Martin Luther to quit Sunday-keeping, because that's following the Catholic Church. 'Didn't you nail up on the Wittenberg Cathedral the '95-theses of what you disagree with the church? Why then do you keep Sunday?' He never kept it.

Along came a trial. There was the farmers' revolt. The farmers didn't like the way that Martin Luther was doing what he was doing and they didn't like what the Catholics were doing so they revolted. What did Martin Luther do? Go stand with the farmers against the Catholics? *No!* He united with the Catholics to defeat farmers. So, you have a man thoroughly compromised in Martin Luther.

How do you square dishonesty and deceit with the Truth of the Word of God? *You pervert grace! You make sin acceptable!* So, it came time for him to understand about 'by grace you are saved,' and he never understood it. But here's what he said of grace:

Grace puts you above the Law (I'm paraphrasing it.) You don't have to keep the Law.

Because he rejected the Sabbath, now he has to reject all law. Isn't that what we have in Protestantism today? 'The Law has been done away.' Let me read you a quote from his writings about the perverted grace that he taught. Now think on this and listen to these words:

Be a sinner and let your sins be strong, but let your faith in Christ be stronger... [nothing like being double-minded] ...and rejoice in Christ Who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where righteousness can exist. No sin can separate us from Him **even if we were to kill or commit adultery a thousand times each day.**

How's that for perverting grace? Let's go to James 2 and we will understand why Luther called the Epistle of James 'an epistle of straw.'

James 2:1: "My brethren, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons. Now then, if a man comes into your synagogue..." (vs 1-2). That's what it is in the Greek—'sunagoge.' It's not church. So here they were converted Jews in the twelve tribes scattered abroad where he sent the epistle.

"...wearing gold rings *and dressed* in splendid apparel, and *there* comes in also a poor man in lowly apparel, and you give preference to the one who is wearing the splendid apparel, and say to him, 'Seat yourself here in the best place'... [put in a good offering while you're at it, too] ...and you say to the poor man, 'Stand over there'... [you stink, you should have washed your clothes before you came] ...or, 'Sit here under my footstool'; then have you not passed judgment among yourselves, and have made yourselves judges *with evil opinions*?" (vs 2-4).

You're judging their heart by what they wear. You don't know! You don't know what's in a person's mind. No one can read anybody else's mind, *God can*, but no one else.

Verse 5: "My beloved brethren, listen. Did not God Himself choose the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor *man*. Do not the rich oppress you, and do they *not* drag you into *the courts*? Do they not blaspheme the worthy name by which you are called?... [a Christian] ...If you are truly keeping *the Royal Law* according to the Scripture... [let's see how the book of James flies right in the face of what Luther wrote] ...'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you have respect of persons, you are practicing sin... [Sin

is the transgression of the Law.] ...being convicted by the law as transgressors" (vs 5-9).

No sin can separate us from Him even if we were to kill or commit adultery a thousand times a day. (Luther)

Verse 10: "For if anyone keeps the whole law, but sins in one *aspect*, he becomes guilty of all. For He Who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not commit murder'... [Exactly what Martin Luther was writing about—correct?] ...Now if you do not commit adultery, but you commit murder, you have become a transgressor of *the law*" (vs 10-11). ***Perverted grace!*** The New Testament tells us to

- *prove* all things
- *hold fast* to that which is good

Remember this: ***Truth always agrees with Truth and can be proved and re-proved over and over again!*** That's how they perverted the grace of God.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 24:4-5
- 2) Acts 8:5-25
- 3) 2-Corinthians 2:17
- 4) 2-Corinthians 4:1-5
- 5) 2-Corinthians 11:1-4, 13-15
- 6) Jude 3-4
- 7) 2-Peter 2:1-3
- 8) James 2:1-11

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 10
- Mark 6

Also referenced:

Sermon Series: *Grace Upon Grace*

Books:

- *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church* by Jason Berry
- *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop
- *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological & Ecclesiastical Literature* by McClintock & Strong

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