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### **THE NEW AGE DECEPTION – Part 3**

The *New Age*, or the astrological *Age of Aquarius*, is supposedly the golden age when we come to realize that *man is God*, or *God is within*, or God is the *all in all*. Reportedly, some 40 million people, almost 20 percent of adult Americans, have embraced the New Age movement. We need to understand this deception because it has infiltrated education, entertainment, the media, the government, and the church.

One of the things that make this type religion so attractive is that it makes us, man, the center of the universe. If I am God, then obviously my happiness and fulfillment is what matters, and there are no laws or rules to which I am subject. I, and I alone, will decide what is right and wrong, good and evil. No person, no religion, no other “God,” has the right to judge or condemn my actions. There is no such thing as sin, it is all a matter of opinion.

The New Age has some similarity to Gnosticism, a heresy that started back when the New Testament was being written. It also has roots in pantheism, the doctrine that God is not a person, but that (1) all laws, forces, and manifestations of the self-existing universe are God, and (2) the acceptance of worship, or toleration of worship, of all gods of various religions and cults. (Sounds just like American culture, doesn't it?) The New Age is also closely connected to Buddhism. The New Age is also described by its followers as “A contemplative spirituality and mysticism that transcends all religions.”

Oprah Winfrey has, without question, been the greatest promoter of the New Age religion in our generation. With her popular television show (ten million daily viewers), which ran for longer than a decade, her magazine that has over 2.7 million subscribers, her “own” network, and her “Lifeclass” where she is the teacher, her influence has been pervasive. USA Today called Oprah, “A spiritual leader for the new millennium.” In a poll, Beliefnet.com reported that 33% of 6,600 respondents said that, “Oprah had a more profound impact on their spiritual lives than their pastors or priests.”

Oprah has repeatedly claimed that she is a Christian, but following are some of her quotes:

- “I have taken God out of the box (the beliefs of Christianity). My God is bigger than that. I believe there are many more paths to God than that.”
- “You need to go deeper than the Bible for your personal religion. You are your own best authority on the spiritual life.”
- “You can combine gems from the world’s traditional religions, mythology, psychology, healing methods, scientific wisdom, and your own experience to string a telephone 970-necklace all your own.” (That is, you can create a god to suit yourself.)
- “God is love, and God is in all things.” (Pantheism)

Oprah had New Age guru Deepak Chopra on her show many times, as well as the teacher she claims as her favorite, Eckhart Tolle. In a worldwide interactive event, Tolle taught the following:

- “All things are one with the universe. We are Light. We are ‘I AM.’ You are the Truth. We are God, or Being. We are Consciousness or Universal Energy.”
- “Man made God in his own image. Jesus did not come to die on the cross, he came to show the Christ-consciousness, which is in all of us.” (Oprah quoted this statement with approval.)

Eckhart Tolle said that his revelation came to him through “automatic writing,” where a person sits quietly, empties his mind, and allows the “Universal Spirit” to guide his hand as he unconsciously writes on a sheet of paper. (This is an occultic practice. It is also the way Joseph Smith received the doctrines of Mormonism from the “Angel Moroni.”)

Oprah also had New Age guru Marianne Williamson on her show. Marianne taught:

- There is no sin.

- A slain Christ has no meaning.
- The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself.

Josh McDowell says that Oprah confuses people because she claims to be a Christian, but she redefines “God, faith, salvation, heaven, hell, etc., and directly contradicts the Bible.” This is a common practice of all the cults, including Mormonism. Josh says, “The Christian God is a personal creator where all truth resides. When Oprah and others refer to God, it is an impersonal force. They say, ‘Look within yourself and find God-consciousness, or Christ-consciousness. That is God.’”

Imagine a religion where Jesus did not come to die on the cross, where there is no heaven, or there is a universal heaven, no hell, no sin, no salvation, where all spiritual paths in the world are equally valid, and where “god” is in you and in everyone and everything else you see. That is the New Age religion of Oprah and millions of others. A warning from the Apostle Paul to the church at Galatia, and to us:

*You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ. Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.* (Galatians 1:7-9. NLT)

And an exhortation and warning from the Apostle John:

*Anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.* (John 3:36. NLT.)

## **THE COMING ONE-WORLD RELIGION**

The Bible clearly prophesies in numerous places that as the end of the age approaches there will be “a great apostasy” and “a great falling away” from the revealed truth of the Bible. It says that while many “anti-Christ” will come (see the little book of 1<sup>st</sup> John), that “the man of sin,” who will be the big, ugly Anti-Christ, will come at the end, and he will have demonic power to do “signs and lying wonders.” In other words, he will have the power to do miracles, but that power will not be from God, and he will demand that all mankind worship him. (See 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2)

Jesus warned about these things, and the terrible persecution of Christians that will be a part of it, in Matthew 24, in Luke 21, in John 15-17, and of course the book of Revelation focuses on the difficult times that are coming and God’s final victory. I have never studied much about this subject because God called me to the ministry of inner healing and deliverance, so that is where I spend most of my time. But I know this time is coming since God says so in His Word.

I believe that the persecution of Christians will be centered on two factors. The first, the spear-point of the persecution, will be because of the church’s stance on homosexuality. Of course, we can already see the beginnings of trouble on this subject, but it is going to get much worse. I have read that already in Canada and in Sweden if a pastor preaches about the Biblical position on homosexuality, he will be subject to a prison term. Christians are already being called narrow-minded, unloving, and ignorant about biology and science, if they do not approve and celebrate the marriage of homosexuals. That is absolutely true if the Bible is not the Word of God, and if this life is all there is, and if there is not a judgment, and if the God of the Bible is not really God. But if these things are true, then the most loving thing we can do is to invite people to know Him, and to warn people of the consequences of living in rebellion to Him.

People have the freedom to live any way they want to, but God is the Creator, the Lawgiver, and the Savior, and He says in the Bible that some things are sinful and bring destruction. It is not loving to lie to people and tell them that homosexuality is OK, or that adultery is OK, or that sex outside of marriage is OK, or that shoplifting is OK, or that abuse toward your spouse or your kids is OK. We are all fallen creatures and may have done some of those things, but if we believe in the God of the Bible it is not OK to continue to do those things, and He has sent Christ to rescue us out of them.

In the first chapter of a letter written to Titus, Paul writes about people whose minds and consciences have become corrupted: *Such people claim they know God, but they deny Him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.* (Titus 1:15. NLT) And Paul makes it clear that God will not only forgive us but help us live changed lives in Titus 2:14: *Christ gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.*

The second factor that will bring persecution is for Christians to refuse to believe and approve of what the New Age movement is selling: that all religions are equal; that man is God; that there are no absolute truths; that anyone who says that any action is a sin is bigoted and judgmental. We know as Christians that God is love, that God loves all the world and

sent His Son to die on a cross that we might be forgiven and freed from the power of sin, that God desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

But it is a terrible lie to say that all men will be saved and go to heaven even if they continue to live in rebellion or in cold indifference toward the true God.

My friends, we need to read and study the Bible so that we understand it as well as we can. And we need to live according to the Bible, because *Faith without works is dead*. The day may be coming sooner than we expect when each of us will be put to the test through persecution. Will we be a part of the “great apostasy” and the “great falling away,” or will we be among the faithful who will stand, no matter what? What do you and I really believe?

## **SOME SINS ARE UNFORGIVABLE!**

Years ago I heard a traveling evangelist, Malcolm Smith, relate this story:

A certain woman, whom we will call Jenny, was sick in bed, and her friend, Joann, knew why she was sick. Jenny’s precious daughter had been molested by her grandfather, Jenny’s own father! When she had learned about what happened, Jenny was horrified, heartbroken, and furious. She had raged at her father, cursed him, and told him she would never speak to him again and would never allow anyone in her family to see him. She told him she would not call the police because she thought it would hurt and humiliate her daughter even more.

Then Jenny went home to a wounded little girl, and she spent her days remembering what her father had done. She cursed him again and again, and she talked about the situation endlessly to her friends. Finally, she got sick, and her friend was sure it was connected to what had happened.

Joann went to see her friend, and asked if she would please listen to a tape she had brought. When Jenny looked at the tape, she saw it was a teaching by Malcolm Smith about forgiveness, and she immediately threw it across the room and screamed at Joann: “How dare you bring me that tape! What my father did was unforgivable! I hate him and wish he was dead!”

Joann mumbled an apology, and as she was leaving she said, “Please, Jenny, just listen to it.” Jenny lay in bed, stewing and talking to herself, for a long time. Finally, she thought, “Well, it wouldn’t hurt anything to just listen to it.” She got out of bed, retrieved the tape, and listened to it. Then she listened to it again, and again. Tears started running down her face. For once, she started thinking about herself, how her anger and bitterness was ruining her life and making her sick and even making her daughter sick. She listened to God, and He started talking to her, telling her how much He loved her, her daughter, and even her father.

Jenny got out of bed, got dressed, and went to see her father. Her father was shocked to see her and wondered what she was going to do. She said, “Dad, what you did was terrible, and you know that. I can’t trust you to be alone with my daughter, maybe never again. But I came to tell you that I forgive you, and I love you.” Then she left.

Her father was stunned. He couldn’t believe his daughter would forgive him. He felt dirty, disgusting, and he despised himself. Time passed, and this father came to Christ.

Guess what happened to the daughter? She was completely healed. And even the grand-daughter started getting well and started enjoying life again.

Some things, from a human standpoint, are unforgivable. But our loving Heavenly Father has forgiven us for the most unforgivable sin of all, for crucifying His Son. If we will ask for His help, He will enable us to forgive and to be healed.

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## **BIBLE PUZZLER**

Frequently when I read the Bible, it raises many questions that don’t seem to have answers; for example, the story in John 5 of Jesus healing the paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda. (I suggest you get your Bible and read this story.)

- Vs. 3 says that a great multitude of sick people lay there; blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for an angel to come and move the water, at which time healing power seems to have been present to heal whoever entered the water first. That, itself, is a puzzle to me.
- Unless the account leaves out some details, Jesus apparently walked past a multitude of sick people to get to the paralyzed man. I don’t understand that, but God is sovereign, He sees what we can’t see, He has purposes we can’t fathom,

and it is true to our experience that some are healed through faith and some are not, or at least not healed in the moment we pray.

- Jesus asked him, *Do you want to be made well?* I think I understand that. Some years ago a number of us fasted and prayed for a member of our fellowship who had been in a wheelchair for many years. On the day we met and prayed for him, he admitted that since he received an adequate disability income he was frightened at the idea of being healed and didn't really want to be. There can be other reasons that people are content to be sick also.
- In Verse 8, Jesus healed the man. He told him to rise up, take up his mat and walk. Immediately, that happened. There is no evidence in this account that the man had faith in Jesus. In fact, in Verse 13, when the Pharisees asked the man who healed him, he said he didn't even know who it was! A stranger walked up to him, asked him if he wanted to be healed (the man didn't give a straight answer to Jesus' question); the stranger told him to get up, and he did. I'm sure he thought, "What happened? Who was that man? What is going on? I'm healed! Glory to God!"
- This is really a puzzler: Jesus finds the man later and says, *See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.* What? Sin no more? Was Jesus talking about something that the man did 38 years before? *No more* makes it sound like an ongoing sin. What in the world had he been doing? Certainly not visiting bars or stealing sheep. He had been lying there paralyzed for 38 years. In God's eyes, the man had obviously been sinning. We can only speculate what his sins might have been: perhaps he was filled with bitterness toward God because of his lot in life, or bitterness toward some person he blamed for his condition, or bitterness and self-condemnation toward himself. Perhaps he was hating the people who went ahead of him into the pool when the angel stirred the waters. Perhaps he was filled with envy and greed toward the wealthy people who visited this beautiful pool every day. Perhaps he was eaten up with sexual lust and perversion. Perhaps he had a twisted form of pride and regarded himself as a victim and martyr. God only knows what his sins were, but they were sins of the heart, not of the body, and those may be worse in God's evaluation. His sins were so serious that his soul was in mortal danger, and God saw that he had a far worse problem than being paralyzed for 38 years.
- Note: The heart condition of a "nonentity" – a disabled person, a child, a person of a despised minority, a person living in desperate poverty, a prostitute, a person with leprosy or aids, you and I, is of tremendous importance to God!
- Jesus *Only did what He saw the Father doing.* Jesus must have had a vision of the Father walking to the man and healing him. So Jesus did what He saw the Father doing and healed the man. Then He warned him that his soul was in desperate danger unless he repented.
- Jesus said in Verse 17, *My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.* Genesis says that after God created all things, He rested. Some people think that God retired at that point. Jesus corrects our impression and says that His Father has never stopped working. The creation, I believe, is an ongoing process. Stars are constantly dying and being born. Roots of grass and trees are reaching out even now that the days are warming. The fields and forests are turning green. Every day "someone" paints another beautiful sunset. Babies are being born. Who do you think is behind all of that, Mother Nature? Even now, God is reaching deep into hearts and minds and preparing souls to open to the Savior. Jesus said, *No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.* Our God is an active God. He is a dynamo of energy and power and love! Love is a verb.
- I have given up trying to understand very much about God. His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. But based on the little I know about Him, He is magnificent! He is worthy of our thoughts, study, adulation, service, and our very lives. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.* Yes!

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