



PURSUIT



PURSUING WHAT GOD PURSUES.



LIVING FOR HIS KINGDOM.



FINISHING THE RACE.

OPEN HEAVENS 2015

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Pursuit (Introduction)

The purpose of this booklet is to draw attention to something that is happening all around us, but I believe for the most part the church in America is not recognizing. The “Prince of this World”, or as it is referred to in Eph. 2:2 — “The ways of this world and of the Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air” (NIV) — is having a direct influence on the average Christian and we don’t even realize it. This influence is endeavoring to make its way into every believer’s life. Once it has access to us, it now can influence our families, our churches, every level of society, and will direct the course of the nations and the world.

This influence is a Last-Days phenomenon. The further we move into the time of the last days, the more intense it will become. It literally has the potential to devastate and neuter the church of Jesus Christ from flowing in the power of God, and ultimately it will cause many people to lose their salvation.

Matt. 25 — Increase of iniquity.

2 Thess. 2 — Increase in lawlessness and spiritual blindness.

The dangerous part is that it is not a blatant, outright attack against the believer. It is a subtle, slow moving, ever-present evil that works on us every minute of every day. Its objective is to damage and endeavor to end our relationship with God.

ITS OBJECTIVE IS TO DAMAGE AND ULTIMATELY END OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

(CAUSE US TO LOSE OUR SALVATION)

It will do this by (1) distracting us with simply ‘Living Life’, (2) thus putting us to sleep spiritually. It is working on us to condition us, or desensitize us so that we accept as ‘normal’ — perspectives and beliefs that are not of God. It is an ever-present spiritual pressure that is re-shaping the world we live in. It is continually moving our culture and the environment we live in, to be Anti-the Messiah (Jesus / Christianity) and His Anointing. (The Holy Spirit and his work among us)

What is the ‘it’ we’re talking about? It is the ‘Spirit of Anti-Christ’. It is the constant spiritual pressure (Eph. 6:12) that surrounds us — trying to form and create us into something.

Here is how it starts

It is slowly moving people (all people — including Christians) away from PURSUING THE TRUE GOD AND WHAT HE WANTS — FIRST, to PURSUING WHAT WE WANT — FIRST.

Move us

From being GOD FOCUSED in life, to being SELF FOCUSED in life.

To move us

FROM LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND STRENGTH, to LOVING OURSELVES a little MORE, AND a little MORE AND a little MORE — until we have become MORE SELF FOCUSED (SELFISH) THAN GOD-FOCUSED. (LOVE for and OBEDIENT to God)

This isn't a Quick, Obvious attack on believers and the world. It is a slow, methodical, movement THAT IS SUPPOSED TO GO UN-RECOGNIZED.

It begins small, and then moves toward the Ultimate Goal:

- (1) Innocently. A slow re-arranging of priorities and schedules (for whatever reason) away from God and what he wants as a nation, community, church, family, person.
As believers, it slowly moves us away from what he's telling us by his Spirit — we're to be doing.
- (2) As believers, it encourages making choices without the leading of the Spirit. Using Wisdom of course — just not God's Wisdom. We say it's God's Wisdom, but unless we have heard from him — it's actually our wisdom. (James 3:13-18)
As unbelievers, God's opinion simply isn't considered. Any moral basis or scripture connected to God isn't considered. Decisions are made on a different basis. Again, it will be credited to wisdom and tolerance.
- (3) As unbelievers, it may just seem wiser to not become too religious about life.
As believers, we may have the thoughts: God gave us a mind to think and make choices. We don't have to hear from the Spirit or follow scripture about everything. That makes sense, doesn't it?
- (4) Our reasoning, intellect, desires, and pride now become big players in our life.
- (5) Things that are not of God, but of the Devil's Kingdom begin creeping their way into our lives. (Remember: it all begins very innocently) It doesn't have to be outright sin — but it will likely re-shuffle our focus in life, and the things we make a priority to spend our time on. (Very Innocently)
- (6) As that 'Iniquity' (Bend toward evil in our lives) continues to grow in us, our Love and need for God grows less and less. (Matt. 24:12)
- (7) Disobedience to the ways and desires of God begins to steadily increase. Of course, if it grows too much — we'll knock it back, because we're Christians. We take on the perspective of sin management, rather than sin elimination. After all, we don't want to get too different from this world. How would we reach them? (Where in reality, we probably haven't gotten anyone saved in years, if ever.)
- (8) As a result, our relationship with God begins to suffer. Intimacy isn't increasing. His voice isn't growing stronger. We aren't increasingly being moved by what moves him. Our concern for the lost in this world is not increasing. The amount of time we dedicate to Eternal Fruit isn't increasing.
- (9) The truth be known, these things will begin growing less and less of a priority in our lives.

STATUS QUO HAS ENTERED OUR LIFE.

AND WE'RE GOOD WITH THAT.

- (10) Now we're on a down-hill slide, toward the bigger goals of the Devil.
(Remember: he's the one behind this whole thing)
- (11) The first Big Goal: Strip Christianity of its power and influence. Which really means: Strip you of your spiritual power and influence.
- (12) Cause people to think they don't need Jesus to be ready for eternity.
- (13) Plant the belief that there are other ways to heaven. Jesus isn't the only way.
- (14) Promote the common acceptance of Pantheism and Universalism.
- Pantheism — there are many Gods and ultimately they are the same God.
 - Universalism — Everyone is serving God in their own way, therefore everyone is already saved.
- It's more important to be a good person and member of society than a radical Christian or Jew who thinks their way of salvation is the only way.
- (15) The last great deception will be when the Anti-Christ is promoted as being the embodiment of all Gods. He is going to be touted as either the supreme representative of all the deities mankind views as God; or, He is God.
- (16) The biggest goal:

ELIMINATE JESUS — AS THE ONLY MESSIAH AND SAVIOR — FROM THE LIVES AND THINKING OF THE HUMAN RACE.

FOR BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS — IT ALL STARTS VERY SIMPLY:

TURN PEOPLE FROM BEING GOD-CENTERED.

TO BEING SELF-CENTERED. SELFISH.

Remember: This is not going to be presented quickly. This is not a blatant attack on Jesus and Christianity. It's simply a moving of the marker, or standard of what the Word and the Spirit say are Godliness — so that one step at a time, we become a people and society that are more and more ungodly. It's a repeat of the process we find in Rom. 1. This works so well for a number of reasons:

- (1) It causes confusion because the clear, definitive boundaries no longer exist.
- Right and Wrong becomes a personal choice and personal preference issue.
- (2) I believe it's because of our fallen nature, we tend to measure against whether something is wrong and how wrong it really is. We make statements like:
- I don't think it's that bad.

- It's not like I'm (here we say something people may consider as extremely bad).
- Other people do it, and they're Christians.
- Are you saying that everyone who (fill in the blank) is not going to heaven?
- We're not saved by our works, anyway.
- You say this is wrong, what about (now we point out something that is considered to be sin that others are doing). So, unless the other people are corrected for their sin, no one should say anything about ours. (It's like 2 wrongs somehow make a right)

(3) Our standard of measurement is supposed to be Godliness, Righteousness, and the Word — NOT how wrong something is.

We're supposed to be trying to please God more — not looking for what we can get away with — without making him angry.

The basis we make decisions upon isn't supposed to be some sliding scale of how wrong / bad something REALLY is. Our goal should be to live as righteously as possible, with not even a hint of sin being a part of our life. But too often it becomes an evaluation of how close to the sin line we can live and still be righteous.

We should be making statements like:

- This is what the Word says.
- I've studied this issue — IN DEPTH — and this is what the Hebrew and Greek mean when it says...
- These are the Rhema Words I got on this.
- The Holy Spirit said this would please and glorify God because...
- This is the right thing to do to influence and win the people to Jesus whom I'm witnessing to. (They're watching me)
- I don't want to take the chance of damaging the Loving, Close Relationship I have with God.

That's why when something is brought up that may be questionable or even wrong, I hear Christians making excuses for their sin — rather than owning it and confessing it. We will make excuses for what we know deep down is wrong / sin. Rather than repent and make the corrections to stop it in our life. If we persist in this — after a while, we no longer feel the conviction of the Spirit. Just like in 2 Thess. 2:10-12 — we have been deceived by the evil we allowed to remain in our lives. The ultimate result is condemnation. (Loss of salvation) That's how deceit progresses and works its way through our lives. We literally submit to and embrace the deceit by not clinging firmly to the truth and what the Spirit is saying.

This is why we are told over and over in scripture to Watch, Pray, and Stay Alert.

THIS EVER PRESENT SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE HAS A 'DUMBING DOWN' EFFECT ON THE BELIEVER. WE LITERALLY BECOME BLIND AND DUMB TO

WHAT IS GOING ON AROUND US, AND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN US SPIRITUALLY. WE DON'T SEE IT — REALIZE IT — NOR UNDERSTAND IT.

This concept of not realizing what is happening to us or in us is shown numerous times in scripture. Here are a few places you can see it:

Matt. 25:1-13 — The 10 Virgins.

Luke 21:34-36 — The ways of dealing with life and pressure of the end times.

2 Thess. 2:9-12 — Not clinging to the truth, but delighting in wickedness.

Matt. 24:9-14 — Characteristics of a deceived society.

The purpose is to hinder what God is trying to do on this earth. The more it can be hindered — the better. Ultimately, to destroy the gospel and cause people to lose eternal life.

The reason I titled this book: 'Pursuit', is because for me it was the best word to describe what the Holy Spirit showed me. Mankind was created to Pursue. All of us are in Pursuit on a continual basis. It's built into our DNA. We are like God, and GOD IS A PURSUER. Since that's the way God created us, Satan can't change that. So the only thing he can do is what he always tries to do — pervert it. Therein lies the danger. If we don't recognize the perversion, we will get trapped in it. Resulting in Pursuits that are not Godly, (no matter how innocent — or neutral — they may seem) and will ultimately damage us spiritually.

The plan that Satan has is simple. It is to use what has already been built into us which is: 'OUR DESIRE TO PURSUE'. The goal is to twist it. Since he knows mankind will always pursue, his goal is to pervert that pursuit. He begins by casting doubt on and corrupting the truth. With the Ultimate End Result being — humanity turning their back on God and losing Eternal Life.

How is he going to accomplish that? One word sums it up: SELFISHNESS!!!

Causing Humanity (including believers) to be more focused on what we want than what God wants.

IT'S ALL ABOUT SELF. SELFISHNESS.

THERE IT IS!!! THERE IS THE SCHEME!!!

Seeing that scheme, and watching it work — is what has become a great concern of mine. As a pastor, one of my jobs is to sound the alarm to what I see happening around me.

This thing is infiltrating the lives of believers and the church with such efficiency that we are not even seeing or paying attention to the scriptural warnings about it. We are not recognizing the evil that is invading this world, society, the church, and our lives. We're being lulled to sleep, and the consequences are going to be devastating.

We need to become aware of what's happening. We must realize, we are watching a literal SPIRITUAL FORCE / ANOINTING (1 John 2 and 4 — 'Spirit [Breath] of Anti [Against] Christ [Messiah, Anointed One and His Anointing]') at work among us.

The closer we get to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the focus and intensity of this 'scheme' will be elevated to extreme heights in an effort to destroy Christianity. (the 'Salvation of our Lineage')

I AM COMPELLED TO EXPOSE IT!!!

2 Cor. 2:11 (NIV)

[11] in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Eph. 6:11-13 (NIV)

[11] Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. [12] For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. [13] Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Luke 12:35-40 (NIV)

[35] "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, [36] like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. [37] It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. [38] It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. [39] But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. [40] You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

1 Pet. 4:7 (AMP)

[7] But the end and culmination of all things has now come near; keep sound minded and self-restrained and alert therefore for [the practice of] prayer.

Since we know this is Satan's scheme, a question we must deal with is:

What standard of measurement have you established for the 'Pursuits' in your life?

How do we know if they are Godly or Ungodly?

Who really is our First Love? God or Us.

Remember, Godliness is not always measured by sin or righteousness. Things can begin very innocently, difficult to classify as sin or righteousness, and eventually

turn our hearts toward being more concerned about what we want than what God wants. Remember "...wisdom is justified and vindicated by what she does (her deeds) and by her children." (Matt. 11:19, AMP)

Are we aware of what is trying to be produced in us and our offspring / lineage?

Too often we mindlessly create a perception of something. We decide whether we want it a part of our lives, without ever hearing from the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:16) As a result it becomes a Pursuit of ours, (it's about us) not really knowing where it will ultimately lead us.

The overall purpose of this book, is to answer a few questions:

What is the top goal of Satan in our time?

What is the process he will use to deceive us?

What will the spiritual atmosphere and ultimately society be like in the last days?

Is it getting on us? Are we starting to live in ways that we've been warned against?

What does scripture say Godly Pursuit is supposed to look like?

Are we living our lives in Godly or Un-godly Pursuit?

How does this apply to Word of Life now and in the future?

To gain some understanding of how God is looking at things, we need to always reduce it to its core. When it comes to humans and this earth, most everything can be reduced to an on-going war between God and the Devil.

We are caught in the middle. God wants nothing more than to give Eternal Life to every human being. Satan wants nothing more than to stop or prevent that from happening. So we always have to look at what both sides are ultimately pursuing. Because what they are pursuing, one side or the other, will eventually become our Pursuits.

We will begin by establishing what we are talking about when we say 'Pursuit'. Let's define it and see if it is scriptural.

Chapter 1 — What is Pursuit? (Is Pursuit Scriptural?)

I made the statement at the beginning of this booklet that mankind was created to Pursue. It's designed into us by God.

In this chapter we're going to look at the scripture and see if the concept of Pursuing or Pursuit is actually a Godly or scriptural one.

What are we talking about when we say Godly pursuit? Let's take a look at the definitions of Pursuit and Pursue.

PURSUIT (Webster)

noun

- 1: the act of pursuing
- 2: an activity that one engages in as a vocation, profession, or avocation.
- 3: occupation.

PURSUIT |pər'sút| (New Oxford American Dictionary)

noun

- 1: the action of following or pursuing someone or something.
- 2: [with modifier] (often pursuits) an activity of a specified kind, especially a recreational or athletic one: a whole range of leisure pursuits.
- 3: the pursuit of profit: striving toward, quest after/for, search for; aim, goal, objective, dream.
- 4: a worthwhile pursuit: activity, hobby, pastime, diversion, recreation, relaxation, divertissement, amusement; occupation, trade, vocation, business, work, job, employment.

PURSUE (Webster)

transitive verb

- 1: to follow in order to overtake, capture, kill, or defeat.
- 2: to find or employ measures to obtain or accomplish: seek <pursue a goal>
- 3: to proceed along <pursues a northern course>
- 4 a: to engage in <pursue a hobby>
b: to follow up or proceed with <pursue an argument>

PURSUE |pər'sú| (New Oxford American Dictionary)

verb

- 1: follow (someone or something) in order to catch or attack them.
- 2: seek to attain or accomplish (a goal), especially over a long period.
- 3: (of a person or way) continue or proceed along (a path or route).
- 4: engage in (an activity or course of action).
- 5: continue to investigate, explore, or discuss (a topic, idea, or argument).

In a layman's definition, To Pursue is to:

- Go After something or someone.
- Put in effort to acquire or overtake.
- Focus on something or someone to...
- To chase after it.
- To follow — to overtake.

The next question that should be asked: is the concept of Godly Pursuit even a scriptural one?

Let's look at what the Bible says.

(1) Does God Pursue?

A. God pursuing Adam & Eve

Gen. 3:8-9 (NIV)

[8] Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. [9] But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

B. God pursuing a person to intercede / mediate

Ezek. 22:30 (AMP)

[30] And I sought a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.

C. God pursues because he is Love

Genuine love will cause us to go after, chase, or pursue something or someone.

Ps. 6:4 (NIV)

[4] Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love. (cf. Ps. 31:16)

Ps. 23:6 (NIV)

[6] Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,

Ps. 32:10 (NIV)

[10] Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

Ps. 33:18-22 (NIV)

[18] But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, [19] to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. [20] We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. [21] In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. [22] May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

Ps. 36:5 (NIV)

[5] Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens...

Ps. 40:11 (NIV)

[11] Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me.

There are many more examples in Psalms of God Pursuing man because of his Love for them.

Isa. 54:10 (NIV)

[10] Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

John 3:16-17 (NIV)

[16] "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 14:20-23 (NIV)

[20] On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. [21] Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." [22] Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" [23] Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

John 15:12-13 (NIV)

[12] My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Rom. 5:6-8 (NIV)

[6] You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7] Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. [8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Cor. 8:1 (NIV)

[1] Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

1 Cor. 13:4-8 (NIV) — Love Pursues by its response, and what it does and does not do

[4] Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. [5] It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [6] Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. [7] It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. [8] Love never fails.

Can you see the Pursuit of Love? This is the Pursuit of God, because God IS LOVE.

1 Cor. 14:1 (NIV)

[1] Follow the way of love... (Love has a way it goes. We're to follow it. So it Pursues, and we Pursue with it)

2 Cor. 5:14 (NIV)

[14] For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Eph. 2:4-5 (NIV)

[4] But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Eph. 5:1-2 (NIV)

[1] Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children [2] and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 John 4:9-11 (NIV)

[9] This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. [10] This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. [11] Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:18-19 (NIV)

[18] There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. [19] We love because he first loved us.

Rev. 3:19 (NIV)

[19] Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

By just examining this one aspect of God — his love for us, can you see how God is a God of Pursuit?

Where you find Love, you find Pursuit. One of the main characteristics of Love is Pursuit.

What we pursue will depend upon what we love.

(2) Did Jesus Pursue while he was on the earth?

A. Sinners

Matt. 4:17 (NIV)

[17] From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

[10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

B. Teaching Pursuit and instructing believers to Pursue

If you read the gospels with the concept of Pursuit in mind, you will find it is a theme that runs through everything Jesus taught. He told us what was available to us, and then he told us to go after it. (That is Pursuit)

Here are some examples out of the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt. 5-7 — Sermon on the Mount

Matt. 5:19 (NIV)

[19] ... whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:23-25 (NIV)

[23] "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. [25] "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

Matt. 5:27-30 — Pursuing Holiness

Matt. 5:43-48 (NIV)

[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? [47] And if you greet only your brothers,

what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? [48] Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt. 6:1-4 (NIV)

[1] “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. [2] “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [3] But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, [4] so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matt. 6:5-13 — Pursuing a Reward from God in Prayer; Praying Correctly

Matt. 6:14-15 (NIV)

[14] For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matt. 6:16-18 (NIV)

[16] “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [17] But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, [18] so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matt. 6:19-24 — Pursue the Correct way of setting our Heart and viewing Money

Matt. 6:33-34 (NIV)

[33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [34] Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matt. 7:1-6 — Pursue correct Judgment

Matt. 7:7-12 (NIV)

[7] “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. [9] “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? [10] Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? [11] If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! [12] So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matt. 7:13-14 (NIV)

[13] "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. [14] But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matt. 7:21-24 (NIV)

[21] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' [23] Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' [24] "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Here are some other examples of Jesus teaching on Pursuit:

Matt. 9:14-15 (NIV)

[14] Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" [15] Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

Matt. 9:37-38 (NIV)

[37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. [38] Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matt. 10:5-8 (NIV)

[5] These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. [6] Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. [7] As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' [8] Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Matt. 11:28-30 (NIV)

[28] "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matt. 18:1-4 (NIV)

[1] At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" [2] He called a little child and had him stand among them. [3] And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 18:15-17 (NIV)

[15] *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16] But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* [17] *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

Matt. 19:28-30 (NIV)

[28] *Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. [30] But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.*

Matt. 24:4 (NIV)

[4] *Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you.*

Matt. 24:42 (NIV)

[42] *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.*

Matt. 25:13 (NIV)

[13] *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*

Matt. 25:34-40 (NIV)

[34] *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, [36] I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'* [37] *"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? [38] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? [39] When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'* [40] *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

Matt. 28:18-20 (NIV)

[18] *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

C. The reason Jesus walked on the water was because he was going out to (Pursuing) the disciples

Matt. 14:22-25 (NIV)

[22] Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. [23] After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, [24] but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. [25] During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

D. Jesus Pursuing the Cross and setting the standard for our pursuit of his will

Matt. 16:21-28 (NIV)

[21] From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. [22] Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" [23] Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." [24] Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. [26] What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? [27] For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. [28] I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

E. Jesus Pursuing Holiness in the Temple

Matt. 21:12-13 (NIV)

[12] Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. [13] "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

F. Jesus Pursuing the Father's Will

Matt. 26:39-42 (NIV)

[39] Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." [40] Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. [41] "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." [42] He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

G. Jesus Pursued, because of Love

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

[16] This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [17] If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? [18] Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

(3) Are we as Believers told to Pursue?

A. Scriptures already listed under #2 above

If you read the scriptures listed under #2 above, you'll see numerous times where Jesus told us to Pursue. I will repeat only a few of them again.

One of the most obvious statements concerning Pursuit is made by Paul.

Phil. 3:12-21 (NIV)

[12] Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. [13] Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. [15] All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. [16] Only let us live up to what we have already attained. [17] Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. [18] For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. [19] Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. [20] But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Paul is telling us a few things here:

- v. 12 — He is talking about our pursuit, and he is talking about Jesus pursuing us.
- v. 13 — He is describing pursuit as forgetting and straining for what is ahead.
- v. 14 — Here pursuit is being described as pressing on.
- v. 15 — If we are mature we need to pursue this perspective.
- v. 17 — This is the example Paul is setting and we need to take note & follow it.
- v. 18 — Now he is going to describe what selfish pursuit looks like.
- v. 19 — The description of selfish pursuit.

B. Seek First his Kingdom and Righteousness

Matt. 6:25-34 (NIV)

[25] “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? [26] Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? [27] Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? [28] “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. [29] Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. [30] If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? [31] So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ [32] For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. [33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [34] Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- Here we are seeing Jesus contrasting the two kingdoms and our pursuit of them.
- You have the earthly kingdom where the people are pursuing their physical needs by worrying about or setting their mind on the physical realm.
- But then you also have the way that Jesus said it is supposed to be done. He said pursue God’s kingdom and his righteousness and God will take care of the physical realm.

C. Where we set our mind is a huge realm of Pursuit

The heart and the mind are the field where thoughts are sown and eventually produce a harvest. The things we allow our mind to dwell on will turn into the things we Pursue.

That’s why we find so much information in the Bible concerning the heart of the person which is really the deepest part of the soul and spirit. We know the Spirit can think, reason, and have emotions. We also know the soul is defined as the mind, will, emotions, reasoning, intellect, etc. So let’s look at a few scriptures that deal with a heart, the mind, and the things that we do that come out of them.

Col. 3:1-18 (NIV)

[1] Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. [3] For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. [5] Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. [6] Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. [7] You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. [8] But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from

your lips. [9] Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. [11] Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. [12] Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [13] Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [14] And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. [15] Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Matt. 15:16-20 (NIV)

[16] "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. [17] "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? [18] But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' [19] For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. [20] These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

Prov. 4:20-27 (NIV)

[20] My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. [21] Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; [22] for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. [23] Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. [24] Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. [25] Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. [26] Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. [27] Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

Eph. 4:17-5:21 (NIV)

[17] So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. [18] They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. [19] Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. [20] You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. [21] Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. [22] You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; [23] to be made new in the attitude of your minds; [24] and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. [25] Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. [26] "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27] and do not give the devil a foothold. [28] He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must

work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. [29] Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. [32] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. [1] Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children [2] and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. [3] But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. [4] Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. [5] For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. [7] Therefore do not be partners with them. [8] For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light [9] (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) [10] and find out what pleases the Lord. [11] Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. [13] But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, [14] for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." [15] Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. [18] Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. [19] Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [20] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [21] Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Rom. 8:1-17 (NIV)

[1] Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, [2] because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. [3] For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, [4] in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. [5] Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. [6] The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; [7] the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. [8] Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. [9] You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. [10] But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of

righteousness. [11] And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. [12] Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. [13] For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, [14] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” [16] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. [17] Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

1 Tim. 6:11 (NIV)

[11] But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

D. To be in strong Faith is a Pursuit

John 6:28-29 (NIV)

[28] Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”
[29] Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

James 2:14-26 (NIV)

[14] What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? [15] Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. [16] If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? [17] In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. [18] But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. [19] You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. [20] You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? [21] Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? [22] You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. [23] And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. [24] You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. [25] In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? [26] As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

1 Thess. 1:3 (NIV)

[3] We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph. 2:8-10 (NIV)

[8] For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9] not by works, so that no one can boast. [10] For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

E. The seven churches in the book of Revelation

Two of them could be considered remnant churches. Jesus did not correct them on anything, nor did he threaten to remove their candlestick. He simply commended them for what they were doing and told them to keep it up.

The other five churches needed to correct some things. Even though he commends them on some of the things they are Pursuing, they need to make some changes. There are some things they have stopped Pursuing and they need to begin to Pursue them again. If they did not, he would come and remove their candlestick. (which means they would no longer be considered a church or have the life of God in them)

Here we will see Jesus, who is the Lord of the church, telling them to Pursue some things. And he says that the Holy Spirit is in agreement with this because his last statement to all the churches is listen to what the Spirit has to say.

As you read these, please notice: over and over Jesus points out what they are going after and Pursuing. He is commending them for what they are Pursuing. He also states what they are not Pursuing, but need to. (I underlined both)
Notice: Jesus is watching the Pursuit of these people.

Rev. 2:1-3:22 (NIV)

[1] “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: [2] I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. [3] You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. [4] Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. [5] Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. [6] But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

*[8] “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: **(Remnant, or Bride Church)***

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. [9] I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. [10] Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

[11] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

[12] “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. [13] I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. [14] Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. [15] Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. [16] Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. [17] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

[18] “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. [19] I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. [20] Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. [21] I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. [22] So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. [23] I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. [24] Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): [25] Only hold on to what you have until I come. [26] To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— [27] ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’— just as I have received authority from my Father. [28] I will also give him the morning star. [29] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[1] “To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. [2] Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. [3] Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. [4] Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. [5] He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life,

but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. [6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

*[7] “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: **(Remnant, or Bride Church)***

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. [8] I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. [9] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. [10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. [11] I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. [12] Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. [13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[14] “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. [15] I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! [16] So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. [17] You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. [18] I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. [19] Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. [20] Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. [21] To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. [22] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

F. Genuine Love always manifests in some form of Pursuit

Go back to the concept of Love (p. 11-13) that we talked about earlier concerning God and his Pursuit of us.

John 14:15 (NIV)

[15] “If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 15:9-17 (NIV)

[9] “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. [10] If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. [11] I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. [12] My command is

this: Love each other as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are my friends if you do what I command. [15] I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. [16] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. [17] This is my command: Love each other.

1 John 2:3-6 (NIV)

[3] We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. [4] The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [5] But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: [6] Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

[16] This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [17] If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? [18] Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 5:3 (NIV)

[3] This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

We could continue showing examples of Pursuit. The Scriptures are literally laced with them. In fact, it's very difficult to read much scripture without being shown or told how to live this life and what to Pursue. So by now we should be able to see that Pursuit is a scriptural principle.

Now let's look at the ultimate goal that Satan is trying to accomplish in the in-time world.

Chapter 2 — ‘Spirit of Anti-Christ’

Here is the problem every person faces. Satan’s attack is ultimately on the Gift of Eternal Life that God has offered to mankind. He will do everything he can to make sure we either never get it, or we lose it.

Add to that problem, the time or age we are living in. We are in the End Times. It’s in our era that wickedness / lawlessness takes a giant spike in intensity. Here are a couple of verses that point that out.

Matt. 24:12-13 (NIV)

[12] Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, [13] but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

2 Thess. 2:7-8 (NIV)

[7] For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. [8] And then the lawless one will be revealed...

There are numerous characteristics that go along with this spike in wickedness and lawlessness. We will look at them later in the chapter.

Let’s first look at the ultimate goal of evil for the time we and our offspring are living in.

The book of 1 John is one of the few books that directly deals with the power of Anti-Christ. This book also brings clarity to the ultimate goal of this evil of our time, and ultimately the man who will be the Anti-Christ.

How does John describe what is going to be happening in the time we live in?

In 1 John 4:3 he calls this evil the ‘Spirit of the Anti-Christ’. Directly translated from its original language it would read: the ‘Breath (Spirit) of the Anti-Anointing/Messiah (Christ)’.

What is John trying to tell us? I will enlarge on it in a bit, but in a nutshell he is saying two things:

(1) The statement in itself is stating the ultimate purpose of this time will be to undermine, discredit, and disprove the claim that Jesus is the Christ — and to convince people that Jesus IS NOT the Christ.

(2) That this Anti-Messiah, or Anti-Anointing influence will be in the spirit-realm. It surrounds us like ‘breath or air’. That’s why the Holy Spirit (via Paul) described it as “the ways of this world and of the Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air.” (Eph. 2:1-3)

This thing is of Satan. It literally permeates the atmosphere that surrounds us. It emanates from the evil side of the spirit realm and will be continually trying to move people toward the belief that Jesus IS NOT the Christ, or the ONLY Christ.

To say it another way, John is telling us that the Anti-Christ Spirit will be promoting the concepts:

Jesus is not the way of salvation for the human race. And / or: Jesus is not the ONLY way of salvation for the human race.

I want you to notice some things about it. Let's take a deeper look at what John had to say about it in 1 John 2:18-27, and 4:1-6.

1 John 2:18-27 (NIV)

[18] Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. [20] But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. [21] I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. [22] Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. [23] No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. [24] As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is what he promised us—eternal life. [26] I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. [27] As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

There are a number of things we should notice here:

- v. 18** — Even back in John's time, the process was underway. He was also part of the Last Times.
- v. 19** — A division was and still is taking place because of the 'Anti-Christ Spirit'. He describes them as either belonging to the church or not belonging. If they have left, it was an indication that they didn't really belong to or were a part of the church.
(At this point we're not sure what he means by that, but he will tell us)
- v. 20** — This has to do with an Anointing and the Truth.
- v. 21** — The reason for this book is because they know the truth. Therefore he can explain this to them. They know the truth, so they will recognize what he's about to say as truth. The truth cannot lie, so he can't be deceiving them.
- v. 22** — The real liar and deceiver is the person who denies Jesus is the Christ. (The Messiah. Messiah means the 'Only Way' or the 'Only One' who provides salvation)

If we deny Jesus as being 'The Way', or 'The Only Way' of salvation, John says we are an Anti-Christ. (We are a person who is Anti the True or Holy Anointing — v. 20)

- v. 23** — We can't be serving the same God, if we're not serving the same Son of God. (If we say Jesus is not the Messiah / Savior — we can't be serving the same God. That is what is being proclaimed now. Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, etc. — we all serve the same God. He just manifested himself to different cultures by a different name.) THIS IS THE ULTIMATE DECEPTION THE ANTI-CHRIST SPIRIT AND PERSON WILL TRY TO INSTILL.
- v. 24-25** — Be careful that you remain in the message that was given earlier about Jesus being the Son of God, and his Father. This keeps us in our salvation and will give to us what he promised: Eternal Life.
- v. 26** — There is a group of people who are saying it doesn't work this way. There are other ways of salvation besides Jesus.
- v. 27** — However, as for the true church of Jesus (true believers) we have received the true Anointing from him, and it is in us. We don't need anyone to teach us 'who' our salvation comes through. This Anointing we've received teaches us — It is Jesus.

This Anointing we received from Jesus is real. It will teach us about ALL things. Follow what it has taught us about the source of salvation (Jesus), and remain in that understanding. Because there is a 'counterfeit' anointing.

It's that Counterfeit Anointing (Anti-Christ Anointing) that is teaching people the wrong things and leading them astray. It is a lie. It is the reason people are leaving the church and going off to believe there are other ways of being saved. (This will become more prevalent as time goes on)

Because this is happening, we can't just believe everything that comes along. We must learn to test the spirits. That way we can identify the Anti-Christ Spirit.

1 John 4:1-6 (NIV)

[1] Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. [4] You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. [5] They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

In context, this is not talking about demonic spirits that need to be cast out, etc. It is talking about the over-all Spirit of Anti-Christ.

- v. 1 — Just because a prophet is saying something, doesn't mean it's of God. Test what is being said. Because of this Anti-Christ Spirit and how it affects people, there are many people who have become False Prophets.
- v. 2-3 — Take this verse in context of what he said in chapter 2. He was talking about the source of our salvation — the Messiah. Here he says the Spirit of God will say that Jesus came in the Flesh. Remember to connect that statement with chapter 2 and why he came to this world in the flesh. He came as our Messiah and Savior. Tie this back into the book of John, chapter 1 where it is talking about Jesus having come in the flesh. What does it say there as to why he came? To be the Light and Life of our salvation. He came to bring salvation.

So John is still on the same theme. Salvation cannot come through anyone other than Jesus the Christ. (The Anointed One, the Messiah).

THIS IS GOING TO BE A HUGE ISSUE IN OUR FUTURE.

THIS WILL BE THE CULMINATING ISSUE BEFORE JESUS' RETURN.

The Anti-Christ Spirit is fighting against the Anointing and the Messiah, so anyone who has been influenced by it will deny that Jesus came in the flesh and became the only Savior of mankind. (Which Jesus himself professed — John 14:6) If this simple, but major point is not acknowledged, which I state again — 'Jesus is the only Messiah or Savior of the human being', if this point is not agreed to, then we can know that person is under the influence of the 'Breath of the Anti-Anointing / Christ'. In fact in chapter 2, John said this kind of person is an anti-christ.

This spirit was already beginning its work in the world when John was alive.

- v. 4 — True believers have overcome this line of reasoning because of the anointing of Jesus that lives within us. (Again, refer to ch. 2)
- v. 5 — The Anti-Christ Spirit and the people under its influence are from the world. This will be the viewpoint of the world, and the world will listen to them. (There will be agreement)
- v. 6 — When it comes to this issue of 'who' salvation comes through, John says the people who know God and his anointing (ch. 2) will listen to the ones proclaiming Jesus is the only way to heaven. That He is the only Messiah. This is how we recognize the Spirit of Truth. These people are not deceived or under the Counterfeit Anointing. (2:27) They are not under the delusion and influence of the Spirit of Anti-Christ.

But the people who don't listen to this or agree with it are not of God. They are of the counterfeit anointing (2:27), they are of the spirit of falsehood. They are of the Anti-Christ Spirit. (4:3) And this is how we recognize and test the Spirit of Anti-Christ. The Anti-Christ Spirit says that Jesus is not the only Messiah or way of salvation.

That is the influence that literally flows through and emanates from the 'air', or 'spirit' world around us. It is attacking the Anointing and the fact that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

So now we know the MAIN OBJECTIVE of what is happening in the evil side of the spirit world, which infiltrates the air around us and tries to get people to believe that way.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO UNDERMINE THE FACT THAT JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION. HE IS THE ONLY MESSIAH. HE CARRIES THE TRUE ANOINTING.

But how will it operate in order to desensitize and deceive everyone in the world so we believe it? (Incl. Christians — Matt. 24:22-24) It's simple to see that you can't just have people make the jump from being solid believers in Jesus to denying he is the 'Only Way', or 'A Way' at all. What will happen to slide people away from the truth and blind them into believing this Ultimate Lie.

The Bible has a lot to say about what this man called 'The Anti-Christ' will be like. It also has a lot to say about the 'Spirit of Anti-Christ' which will be the wave of lawlessness (Selfishness) that he rides into power.

I've listed many of the characteristics I could find on what the man will be like. If we can see what he will be like, it is easier to identify the 'spirit of the age' that will propel him into power. Because it's the 'Spirit of Anti-Christ' that John said has been at work and is at work now. It will continue to set the spiritual atmosphere and set the stage for this man to gain favor and ultimately the power to rule in the earth.

So here is a list of his characteristics. I've underlined the ones that stand out to me as things that we should pay particular attention to.

Characteristics of the Anti-Christ

Dan. 7

- He will be a man. (v. 8)
- Very persuasive in speech. (v. 8)
- Will rise to power from a 10-kingdom base. (v. 24)
- Will have to subdue three kings to stay in power. (v. 24)
- He will be a blasphemer of God. (v. 25)
- He will try to change times and laws. (v. 25)
- He will overcome the Christian for 3½ years. (v. 25)

Dan. 8

- He overcomes the Christian. (v. 10)
- He makes himself to be God. (v. 11)
- Takes away the Jewish sacrifices in the middle of the Tribulation. (v. 11)
- He in some way damages the temple. (v. 11)
- He will overcome the Christian/Jew and parts of their worship. (v. 12)

- He will overcome truth and will practice/prosper against it. (v. 12)
- He will be a fierce (strong, hardened) man. (v. 23)
- He will understand witchcraft, etc. (v. 23)
- He will have tremendous power. (v. 24)
- He will be empowered by Satan. (v. 24)
- He will be very successful in destruction especially with people in authority or those that serve God. (v. 24)
- He will use trickery to prosper. (v. 25)
- He will exalt himself. (v. 25)
- Through peace, he will destroy. (v. 25)
- He will try to overcome Christ. (v. 25)

Dan. 9:27

- Will make a covenant with Israel (known as “the man of peace”).
- Will break the covenant in the middle of the tribulation.
- Will stop Israel’s sacrificing.
- Make the temple desolate.
- Until judgment comes.

2 Thess. 2

- He will be a man of sin/lawlessness. (v. 3)
- He will be doomed to destruction. (v. 3)
- He will try to make himself to be God. (v. 4)
- He will set himself up as God in the Jewish Temple. (v. 4)
- He will try to receive any and all worship as God. (v. 4)
- Once the spirit of rebellion is released, then he’ll take total power. (v. 7)
- He will be destroyed by God Himself. (v. 8)
- Satan will give him power to do signs and wonders. (v. 9)
- He will be very good at deception. (v. 10)

Rev. 13

- Satan will give him a throne, authority, and power. (v. 2)
- Possibly will be killed and raised from the dead. (v. 3, 12, 14)
- He will receive worship along with Satan. (v. 4)
- He will be a bragger and blasphemer. (v. 5)
- He will specifically blaspheme God and everything of God. (v. 6)
- He will overcome all people, especially Christians/Jews. (v. 7)

- The False-Prophet will receive his power from the Anti-Christ. (v. 11-15)
Here are some additional scriptures and insights on Deception.

The Great Deception

There is one HUGE characteristic of the End-Times that we must be on guard to. This will be a time of deception like never seen before on earth.

A. Jesus warned us about it

1. Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mark 13:5-6, 22
2. Even the elect could be deceived. Matt. 24:24.

B. Paul warned us about it

1. 2 Thess. 2:3, 9-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:13, 4:3-4.

C. John warned us about it

1. Rev. 20:3, 8

D. The Anti-Christ will be a deceiver

1. Dan. 8:12, 24-25; 9:27; 11:36-45.
2. Matt. 24:15-31; 2 Thess. 2:3, 9, 10; Rev. 13:1-18; 19:20.
3. Rev. 16:12-16. (Via the False Prophet)

Deception is part of the Spirit of Anti-Christ which is alive and well and at work in the world. (1 John 4:1-3)

What is deception? In layman's terms it is something that is false, but appears so real, people are tricked, persuaded to believe it is the real thing.

This spiritual anointing and power will be ever on the rise with the anointing and power of the Anti-Christ Spirit. We must be on guard, and ever increasing our discernment to distinguish what is truth (good) and what is false (evil). (Heb. 5:12-14)

E. Here is how it will work in the church. (Believers)

Matt. 24:12-13 (NIV)

[12] Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, [13] but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

1. This scripture is not talking about people who don't love God. It's talking about people who do love God, but their love will grow cold.
2. How will it happen? As wickedness and the influence of it grows around us, it has a destructive and corrosive effect on a believer's Love for God. To Love God is to put him first and do what he wants in everything. (Obey him)

Wickedness, or Lawlessness attacks that perspective. It does everything we described in the introduction of this book. As a result we become deceived, and our Love for God grows cold. We leave our first love — which is pursuing what pleases God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And begin to live our lives according to what pleases us. (Selfishness)

2 Thess. 2:7-8 (NIV)

[7] For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. [8] And then the lawless one will be revealed...

3. What is the secret power of lawlessness?

(G3466) KJV — ‘Mystery’ (NIV — ‘Secret’)

“From a derivative of “muo” (to shut the mouth); a secret or “mystery” (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites).”

(G458) KJV — ‘Iniquity’ (NIV — ‘Lawlessness’)

“From 459; illegality, that is, violation of law or (generally) wickedness — iniquity, transgression of the law, unrighteousness.”

(G459) From 1 (as a negative particle) and 3551; lawless, that is, (negatively) not subject to (the Jewish) law; (by implication a Gentile), or (positively) wicked — without law, lawless, transgressor, unlawful, wicked.

4. We’ll explain these definitions, but let me say that these are alive and well in society and the church in America.

5. The ‘Secret’ power of lawlessness — or to use another word in the definition is to say the ‘Silent’ power of lawlessness.

- a. This wickedness is not going to operate as open, willful rebellion. It won’t be Loud, noisy, and demanding to be heard.
- b. This is going to be operating quietly, below the surface. It won’t be talked about for what it really is — Lawlessness. Yet it will be promoted.
- c. What is a huge aspect of how it operates?

Wickedness, or Lawlessness attacks our full-out, 100% submission to God. It undermines it, and tries to stop it.

It does everything we described in the introduction of this book. As a result we become deceived, and our love for God grows cold. We leave our first love — which is pursuing what pleases God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And begin to live our lives according to what pleases us. (Selfishness)

F. The Great Deception

If there’s one term that can follow everything the Devil does — it’s “The Great Deception.”

1. He gained access to the human race by deception. (Gen. 3, 1 Tim. 2:14)

2. He tried it with Jesus. To gain access to the 2nd Adam. (Matt. 4:1-11)
3. And it will be a favorite ploy at the End of Time. (Rev. 20:3, 8)
4. He is a Liar and the Father of Lies. (John 8:44) Lying is at the heart of Deception.

The Anti-Christ will gain his power and authority from the Devil. That's why the Bible says that he will also be a person of deception.

Realizing this, some of the kinds of questions that should go through our minds are:

- What is society going to be like for this type of person to come to power, and be acceptable to people?
- What is the average person, family, and government going to be like? (This is some pretty drastic stuff that's going to prevail.)
- What is currently happening that is going to take us to that extreme?
- What happened in the moral fabric of humanity that opened the way for this?

If we can find the answer to some of these questions, we will quickly see what the average person and overall society will be like leading up to this time.

THIS IS THE TIME WE'RE LIVING IN RIGHT NOW. WE'RE WATCHING IT BEGINNING TO TAKE SHAPE ALL AROUND US.

What's so awesome is: the Bible tells the answers to these questions. It very openly and directly lays out what the attitudes of people and society will be like leading up to the revealing of the man — Anti-Christ. Remember: the power of Anti-Christ is already at work and gaining momentum. If we'll simply pay attention, we will see it at work all around us.

In the next chapter of this book, we're going to reveal and identify the problem or situation everyone on this earth is facing. (Including the body of Christ — his church)

Chapter 3 — ‘Un-Godly Pursuits’ (‘Identifying The Situation / Problem’)

I have re-listed the characteristics of how the Anti-Christ Spirit places its influence / pressure on people. It’s continual and constant. With the purpose of slowly sliding us into its agenda.

It begins small, and then moves toward the Ultimate Goal:

- (1) Innocently. A slow re-arranging of priorities and schedules (for whatever reason) away from God and what he wants as a nation, community, church, family, person.
As believers, it slowly moves us away from what he’s telling us by his Spirit — we’re to be doing.
- (2) As believers, it encourages making choices without the leading of the Spirit. Using Wisdom of course — just not God’s Wisdom. We say it’s God’s Wisdom, but unless we have heard from him — it’s actually our wisdom. (James 3:13-18)
As unbelievers, God’s opinion simply isn’t considered. Any moral basis or scripture connected to God isn’t considered. Decisions are made on a different basis. Again, it will be credited to wisdom and tolerance.
- (3) As unbelievers, it may just seem wiser to not become too religious about life.
As believers, we may have the thoughts: God gave us a mind to think and make choices. We don’t have to hear from the Spirit or follow scripture about everything. That makes sense, doesn’t it?
- (4) Our reasoning, intellect, desires, and pride now become big players in our life.
- (5) Things that are not of God, but of the Devil’s Kingdom begin creeping their way into our lives. (Remember: it all begins very innocently) It doesn’t have to be outright sin — but it will likely re-shuffle our focus in life, and the things we make a priority to spend our time on. (Very Innocently)
- (6) As that ‘Iniquity’ (Bend toward evil in our lives) continues to grow in us, our Love and need for God grows less and less. (Matt. 24:12)
- (7) Disobedience to the ways and desires of God begins to steadily increase. Of course, if it grows too much — we’ll knock it back, because we’re Christians. We take on the perspective of sin management, rather than sin elimination. After all, we don’t want to get too different from this world. How would we reach them? (Where in reality, we probably haven’t gotten anyone saved in years, if ever.)
- (8) As a result, our relationship with God begins to suffer. Intimacy isn’t increasing. His voice isn’t growing stronger. We aren’t increasingly being moved by what moves him. Our concern for the lost in this world is not increasing. The amount of time we dedicate to Eternal Fruit isn’t increasing.
- (9) The truth be known, these things will begin growing less and less of a priority in our lives.

STATUS QUO HAS ENTERED OUR LIFE.

AND WE'RE GOOD WITH THAT.

- (10) Now we're on a down-hill slide, toward the bigger goals of the Devil.
(Remember: he's the one behind this whole thing)
- (11) The first Big Goal: Strip Christianity of its power and influence. Which really means: Strip you of your spiritual power and influence.
- (12) Cause people to think they don't need Jesus to be ready for eternity.
- (13) Plant the belief that there are other ways to heaven. Jesus isn't the only way.
- (14) Promote the common acceptance of Pantheism and Universalism.
- Pantheism — there are many Gods and ultimately they are the same God.
 - Universalism — Everyone is serving God in their own way, therefore everyone is already saved.
- It's more important to be a good person and member of society than a radical Christian or Jew who thinks their way of salvation is the only way.
- (15) The last great deception will be when the Anti-Christ is promoted as being the embodiment of all Gods. He is going to be touted as either the supreme representative of all the deities mankind views as God; or, He is God.
- (16) The biggest goal:

ELIMINATE JESUS — AS THE ONLY MESSIAH AND SAVIOR — FROM THE LIVES AND THINKING OF THE HUMAN RACE.

FOR BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS — IT ALL STARTS VERY SIMPLY:

TURN PEOPLE FROM BEING GOD-CENTERED.

TO BEING SELF-CENTERED. SELFISH.

It is going to be the slow, but ever present increase and encroachment of wickedness. It is like an ever increasing pressure that works on people to move them away from a Godly, scriptural stance and posture in life. It pushes them toward evil, and the self-justification of what they are doing. It works so slowly, and with such deception, the average person has no idea what's happening to them.

We as Christians are not immune to this movement of Anti-Anointing. That's why we're told over and over — don't be Deceived. Deception works ever so smoothly and slowly that if we aren't paying attention, it will suck us in and the worst part is we won't know we've been deceived. It makes so much sense to us. Yet that wisdom, which is not in line with the scripture — in reality is demonic. No matter how right it may seem. (James 3:14-16)

James 3:13-16 (NIV)

[13] Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. [14] But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. [15] Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. [16] For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Let’s start by looking at a few of the things Jesus had to say about the period of time we are living in.

In all the scriptures I use below, I have only selected the verses and underlined the portions that reveal the attitudes of the time.

Matt. 24:3-42 (NIV)

[3] As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” [4] Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. [5] For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

[9] “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. [10] At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, [11] and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. [12] Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, [13] but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. [14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

[36] “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. [37] As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. [38] For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; [39] and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

[42] “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

v. 4-5 — Deception will be running rampant.

The problem with deception is that it is so difficult to recognize. Deception is not blatant. It is subtle. People who are deceived don’t realize they’re deceived. It becomes a blinder over their eyes. They can’t see it.

Christians who are deceived are extremely difficult to help. No matter how obvious the deception is to people around them, they are blind to it. The only one who can point out the error, and show them the deception is the Holy Spirit.

If an individual tries to point out error to another believer, unless the Holy Spirit is involved in the situation convincing and persuading the person — what usually happens is they will rationalize and justify their choices and

behaviors. It's very difficult to help them see what people around them are seeing.

- v. 9** — Hatred of, Persecution of, and the Death will be prevalent for people who believe in and follow Jesus.
- v. 10** — Many people back away from Christianity and their faith in Jesus. They will betray and hate other believers. (Presumably a result of v. 9)
- v. 11** — However, prophecy (via religious people, fortune telling, etc.) will be prevalent. These prophets will also work in deception.

This point is very interesting to me. As I look around, I ask myself where are all the prophets in America? There doesn't seem to be too many in the secular world. So when Jesus says many false prophets will arise and deceive many people, it makes me ask if these are going to be in the church?

I don't think the average believer is going to look at the prophecy of an unbeliever with a lot of sincerity. On top of the fact, there aren't what I would call 'many' prophets in the unbeliever realm. We know from the Old Testament accounts that false prophets can be in what we would call the church. So unless something really changes on the world scene, my conclusion is that these false prophets that will deceive many people — this is happening in the church.

v. 12 — Wickedness

G458. ἀνομία (*anomia*, *an-om-ee'-ah*) — From G459; illegality, that is, violation of law or (generally) wickedness — iniquity, transgression of the law, unrighteousness.

G459. ἄνομος (*anómos*, *an'-om-os*) — From 1 (as a negative particle) and 3551; lawless...

- As 'Iniquity' (KJV) or 'Wickedness' (NIV), or 'Lawlessness' (AMP) increases, the Love for God (and/or Love for fellow human beings) will get less and less.

- v. 38** — The people will be living life as usual. (Viewing life as being 'normal')
- v. 39** — Therefore, they were oblivious to what was happening around them and about to happen.
- v. 42** — Evidently, people are not 'keeping watch' or paying attention.

The book of Mark adds a few details to this.

Mark 13:9-13 (NIV)

[9] "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. [10] And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. [12] "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. [13] All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

- v. 9** — Not only are we to ‘watch’, but we need to ‘be on guard’. There will be increased persecution from all levels of government because of a person’s stance on Jesus and his Word.
- v. 12** — This will infest families. They will betray each other.
- v. 13** — The core of the problem: Jesus. Anyone who takes a stand for Jesus will be made a target.

As believers, our focus and job will be to ‘stand firm’ until it’s all over.

Presuming Jesus knew what he was talking about here, and I would think we are safe in presuming that, the increase of public sentiment against God, Jesus, the Bible, etc. is going to continue to grow until it gets pretty wicked.

For us to think that this is only going to take place in the unbelieving society, I think is a mistake. We are seeing the same type of attitudes enter and be accepted in the church as are in society. In v. 13 it says all men will hate you because of me, I think that includes the Christian families too. In Matt. 24:10 Jesus said, many will turn away from the faith and betray each other. To me that is a clear indication it is happening among believers in the church.

Notice how that in Luke, Jesus expresses his concern for how much faith will even be around when he returns.

Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

[1] Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. [2] He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. [3] And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ [4] “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, [5] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” [6] And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. [7] And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? [8] I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

The question that comes to my mind is this: How did the church ever get to this point?

That’s simple: Instead of being an unmovable force of restraint, (2 Thess. 2:6) too many believers lost their saltiness and hid their light. (Matt. 5:13-16) As a result, instead of us influencing them to become like Jesus — we submitted to their influence and became like Satan. I realized putting it that way will probably shock some people, and of course our first instinct is to deny and say we are nothing like Satan. I would love to quickly agree with that. But the bottom line that we must measure against is what kind of fruit is coming from our lives. If it’s not righteousness or light from God, there’s only one other person we can be like — which is Satan.

The next scripture describes how society got to this point. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, really does a very insightful job of laying out the attitudes of society in the last days.

Here the Holy Spirit is revealing in plain English what the Spirit of Anti-Christ will cause a person and society to become.

This scripture is not just talking about unbelievers. It's talking about what 'People' will be like. That means there will be Christians like this also.

2 Tim. 3:1-9 (AMP)

[1] BUT UNDERSTAND this, that in the last days will come (set in) perilous times (terrible times) of great stress and trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear]. [2] For people will be lovers of self and [utterly] self-centered, lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate [greedy] desire for wealth, proud and arrogant and contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive (blasphemous, scoffing), disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane. [3] [They will be] without natural [human] affection (callous and inhuman), relentless (admitting of no truce or appeasement); [they will be] slanderers (false accusers, troublemakers), intemperate and loose in morals and conduct, uncontrolled and fierce, haters of good. [4] [They will be] treacherous [betrayers], rash, [and] inflated with self-conceit. [They will be] lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God. [5] For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it [their conduct belies the genuineness of their profession]. Avoid [all] such people [turn away from them].

This is a very bleak description of the attitude that will be prevalent in the last days.

WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST OF THE LAST DAYS!!

THESE ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIETY AROUND US!!!

THESE ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE TRYING TO GET INTO THE CHURCH.

To take the time to look at all these characteristics and try to explain them would be a book in and of itself. However if you take a close look at them, I think it's really obvious they can be summed up in one simple attitude: SELFISHNESS. Everything in that list can be summed up in:

- I want my way.
- I am proud of what I have or am.
- I will belittle or berate you if you think otherwise.
- I don't care what you want or prefer; I'm going to do it my way.
- And I'm not really interested in what God thinks, my focus is on my own pleasure, happiness, and what entertains me.

That whole list can be summed up in one simple word: SELFISHNESS. There is the underlying attitude that the devil is going to use against people in the last days.

It's unnerving to watch the attitude of selfishness gain momentum all around us. Isn't it interesting to see the SELFISHNESS that Jesus spoke about in Matt. 24 coming to life around us. It's doing exactly what he said: causing the Love for God to grow cold. Even pushing it to the point where people who take a stand for God become the focus of the discontent and must be controlled, silenced, or removed from society.

We are watching this happen around us right now. It is gaining in intensity. It is gaining great inroads in influencing and even changing the laws in society. So if the Spirit of Anti-Christ is capable of changing laws, it shouldn't surprise us to think that the man — Anti-Christ will pursue changing laws. (Dan. 7:25)

And here's the scary part to me: many or even most of the Christian churches in America are accommodating this move toward wickedness. Instead of taking a godly and scriptural stand against it, we're watching Christianity adapt to this wickedness and welcome it right into the churches.

There is the answer to the question we asked earlier: How did we ever get to this point? We are being influenced and desensitized by an Anti-Christ Spirit and atmosphere that is slowly moving us into a lawless and wicked society. That lawlessness and wickedness is being built on one basic foundation: SELFISHNESS. This is exactly what Jesus and Paul said would happen.

Matt. 24:12 (NIV)

[12] Because of the increase of wickedness...

2 Tim. 3:1-2 (AMP)

[1] BUT UNDERSTAND this, that in the last days will come (set in) perilous times (terrible times) of great stress and trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear].

[2] For people will be lovers of self and [utterly] self-centered...

2 Thess. 2:3-8 (NIV)

[3] Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. [4] He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. [5] Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? [6] And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. [7] For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. [8] And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

THE SECRET POWER OF LAWLESSNESS IS ALIVE AND WELL. IT IS WORKING AMONG US. What is it doing? IT IS PUSHING ON PEOPLE TO MAKE US SELFISH.

SELFISHNESS is the main foundation to iniquity, wickedness, and lawlessness!!

Here are some additional scriptures that give more characteristics of what this time is going to look like:

Luke 21:34-36 (NIV)

[34] "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. [35] For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. [36] Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

- 'Dissipation' — "Dispense; Waste or Squander; Indulgence in pleasure to the point of Self-Harm."
- 'Drunkenness' — "State of Being Intoxicated; Intoxication."
- 'Anxieties' — "Worry; Worries; Cares."
- 'Life' — "Present Existence; Things that Pertain to this Life."

The Seven Churches of Revelation

It is usually thought that only the Laodicean church is giving characteristics of what the last days Church will be like. However I'm not sure that is true. When you look at all the churches and the negative characteristics that Jesus said needed improving, they seem to go hand-in-hand with other scriptures that tell us what the last days Society will be like.

Because of that I have listed the Scriptures concerning the seven churches in Revelation so we can look at them one more time. In the previous listing of these churches, we looked at them from the perspective of what they were doing right, and what they still needed to Pursue.

This time let's look at the items Jesus stated as being wrong with them. The things they needed to repent of and fix. These are characteristics of what is going to 'try to get in', or 'is going to be in' to the last days church.

Rev. 2:1-3:22 (NIV)

[1] "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

*[2] I know your deeds, ("**deed, labor, work**") your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. [3] You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. [4] Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. [5] Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. [6] But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

Characteristics:

- Though this church was doing some awesome things, Jesus was no longer first. If Jesus wasn't first, then who was? My guess is this: they were looking out for their own interests first. That's the way our old nature does it. Unless we are intentionally looking out for the interests of someone else before our own, we will gravitate to taking care of what we want first. It's called: SELFISHNESS.

[8] *"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: **(Remnant, or Bride Church)***

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. [9] I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. [10] Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. [11] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Characteristics:

- Jesus had nothing negative to say about this church. How they were Pursuing him was fine.

[12] *"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:*

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. [13] I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. [14] Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. [15] Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. [16] Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. [17] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Characteristics:

Let's look at Balaam first. The entire story of Balaam is found in Num. 22:1–24:25.

Balaam is referred to three times in the New Testament. (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14) Each of the New Testament references are giving some insight into the mindset of Balaam. So we'll look at all three of them to see if we can find what the 'teaching of Balaam' would have been.

A. 2 Pet. 2:15

2 Pet. 2:15-16 (NIV)

[15] They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. [16] But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

- The word 'wages' here is referring to silver and gold (money). God had already told Balaam what he should do, but when he was promised the honor of wealth — he had problems resisting. He was lured by the 'wages'.
- So the problem here was putting more importance on money than what God had told him to do.

B. Jude 11

Jude 11 (AMP)

[11] Woe to them! For they have run riotously in the way of Cain, and have abandoned themselves for the sake of gain [it offers them, following] the error of Balaam, and have perished in rebellion [like that] of Korah! [Gen. 4:3-8; Num. 16, 22-24.]

- Again, I believe it's telling us the same thing as 2 Pet. 2:15. There is too much importance being placed on money or financial wealth.

C. Rev. 2:14. (See above)

Here it specifically mentions 2 things:

- (#1) Eating food sacrificed to idols.
- (#2) Committing Sexual Immorality.

(#1) Food Sacrificed to Idols

Let's look at food being sacrificed to idols. Paul talks about this subject quite a bit. His conclusion for New Testament people is that the physical eating of food that had been sacrificed to idols wasn't a big deal. However there are two things he points out that are a big deal. First of all, don't get involved with things that are intentionally designed to further demonic purposes. When we do, Paul says we are 'participants with demons'. And as Christians we shouldn't be 'drinking of the Lord's cup, and the cup of demons too'. So even though the thing we are doing (in their case — it was eating food...) may not harm us or not be a problem, (v. 23 — in that case it's permissible, but because of the spiritual context — it's not beneficial) the problem is we are submitting to and embracing the wrong spiritual force / kingdom. (demons) In Paul's mind, this

was something very serious. He compared it to taking communion. (The blood and body of Jesus) He's saying, don't take communion with demons by getting involved with what they do.

And secondly, everything we do is not about us, but it needs to be about the purpose of getting other people saved.

1 Cor. 10:14-11:1 (NIV)

[14] Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. [15] I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. [18] Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? [19] Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? [20] No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. [21] You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. [22] Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? [23] "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive. [24] Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. [25] Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, [26] for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." [27] If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. [28] But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake— [29] the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? [30] If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? [31] So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. [32] Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— [33] even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. [1] Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

What's the application for us? We are living in a society that is enamored with things that lead people into sin. They don't point us toward Jesus, but rather they pull us away from him. Jesus said anything that is not for him is against him. (Matt. 12:30) There are only two sides to this war. We must pay close attention to what we allow ourselves to be involved with. Many things in this world do not produce Godly fruit. We shouldn't be involved with them. However like in Rev. 2:14, Christians will be involved in all kinds of things that do not promote God's kingdom but the devil's kingdom. That is how we are participating with demons. (1 Cor. 10:14-33) This will be a trait of the end times.

Money and finances are a huge driving force in this. Jesus said you can't serve both God and money. (Matt. 6:24) The lure of money and finances can draw a person into numerous pursuits that God does not agree with. That's how I think the principles of 2 Pet. 2:15 and Jude 11 play into this picture. Balaam was drawn into Pursuits he

shouldn't have been involved in. He did it, and we can follow suit because of a desire for more money. It becomes more about what we want than what God wants. This will also be an end-times trait. (2 Tim. 3)

(#2) Committing Sexual Immorality

Balaam taught Balak to offer his women into the Israelite men. Balaam knew if the Israelites did this God would get angry with them and possibly curse them himself. (Num. 31:14-16) The result would be the Israelites would come under a curse, and Balaam would not have done it. And that's exactly what happened. God became angry and many were killed for their sin. (Num. 25:1-9)

Here's the application for us. An ever increasing trait of our time is sexual immorality. It is common for Christians to have sex outside of marriage. As well as, to live together before they're married. It is sin. It does not bring the Blessing, but opens us to a Curse. This is a trait that is becoming prevalent. Why?? It is being pushed by the Spirit of Anti-Christ.

Now let's look at the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

"These were the followers of Nicolaus. They are supposed to have been a sect of gnostics who practiced and taught purely immoral doctrines, such as the community of wives; this was similar to the doctrines of Balaam and Jezebel of Thyatira." (Rev. 2:6, 14-15, 20) Source: Dake's Annotated Bible.

Gnosticism is also going to be a problem among Christians. It is the backdrop to what the apostle John was dealing with in the book of First John when he was addressing the issues surrounding the power of Anti-Christ. Gnosticism can be summed up with one word: "KNOWLEDGE". Since Gnosticism is tied to the word gnosis, which means: "knowledge of spiritual mysteries", it is all about knowing things of God or true Spirituality that other people don't know. Gnostics feel they have a revelation or knowledge about God that the average Christian does not have. The sect began in the second century. It continues to rear its ugly head about various doctrines and issues in Christianity. One of the most recent issues we have been dealing with in our time is Hyper-Grace. But it is touching and will touch many other areas. It is an ongoing problem. There is always someone who feels they've been shown something and have a knowledge that the average Christian does not have. This is also a characteristic of the last days.

[18] *"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:*

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. [19] I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. [20] Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. [21] I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. [22] So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. [23] I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. [24] Now I say

to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): [25] Only hold on to what you have until I come. [26] To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— [27] 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. [28] I will also give him the morning star. [29] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Characteristics:

- See the notes on Nicolaitans (above).
- Again, notice the same three things as with the Church of Pergamum:
- Sexual Immorality.
- Food Sacrificed to Idols.
- Gnosticism: (1) her teaching, and (2) Satan's so-called deep secrets.

[1] "To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. [2] Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. [3] Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. [4] Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. [5] He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. [6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Characteristics:

- By their works / deeds Jesus can tell they are not spiritually alive.

*[7] "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: **(Remnant, or Bride Church)***

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. [8] I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. [9] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. [10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of

trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. [11] I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. [12] Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. [13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Characteristics:

- Jesus had nothing negative to say.

[14] "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. [15] I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! [16] So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. [17] You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. [18] I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. [19] Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. [20] Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. [21] To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. [22] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Characteristics:

- In Jesus' opinion they are lukewarm spiritually. They are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.
- Yet in their opinion, because of their money and finances they feel they are doing very well.
- Jesus is looking at their spiritual condition and it is very bleak. (v. 17b)
- They are looking at their physical condition, (Finances and wealth) and are using it as the standard of how well they are doing.

2 Tim. 4:3-4 (NIV)

[3] For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. [4] They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

This is happening in the church right now. And it will continue to grow in momentum. “Sound Doctrine” or what the Bible has to say, is no longer the final authority or basis for what we believe and teach in many churches and denominations. Why? Because people don’t like what the Bible says. So as a result, they look for churches and ministers who will say what they want to hear. Even though, it’s not what the scripture is saying.

Just like it says in v. 4, believers will turn away from the truth and start believing myths. (Beliefs, reasonings, doctrines, teaching, principles, etc.)

Summary

How I would summarize everything we’ve been looking at:

Because of the increase of wickedness, and the pressure of the ungodly spirit realm around us, believers will be deceived into Pursuing the wrong Pursuits. (All the scriptures listed on the preceding pages) However, they won’t be recognized as the wrong pursuits. (Matt. 24:37-39; 2 Tim. 3:1-4; Rev. 2 & 3) Christians and the Christian church will rationalize and excuse them away as being normal. ‘It’s just the way it is’. (2 Tim. 3:5)

As wickedness increases around us and the love for God and the things of God grows cold, we will find ourselves being pulled into a deception, and lose faith. (Matt. 24:4, 10-12; Luke 18:8)

We will watch Believers become very Selfish. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) What God considers to be merely pleasures and amusements will become the main focus of our lives, and we will plan our lives around these things more than we are planning around God and what he desires. (2 Tim. 3:4)

In our opinions, we’re still Christians, but the proof that we have fallen into the deception will be the attitude of Spiritual Powerlessness. (2 Tim. 3:5) The ‘power’ is not active in our lives.

- That word for ‘power’ is *dunamis*. That’s the power of Acts 1:8. So if that power is not active in believers’ lives, that means the Holy Spirit is also not active in their lives. Because that ‘power’ flows from the Spirit.

So the power will not be active, but more than that — believers will take a definite stand against it. Since the Holy Spirit ALWAYS points to Jesus, this will again be an attack on Jesus. Another form of denying him.

God help us that we and our lineages do not become that type of Christian.