

The  
Masterful  
Deception

D E N N I S   S M I T H

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## Introduction

**E**vents in the world are moving rapidly and could lead to great economic upheaval and drastic changes in the balance of power globally. As believers in Jesus, we recognize this upheaval as yet another sign that we are in the middle of a war with Satan for our souls (Ephesians 6:12). Christ's followers must heed His warning, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). We need to become fortified against Satan's attacks and deceptions by being Spirit-filled and understanding God's Word. It is for this purpose that this book is written.

Uncertainty and unrest are nothing new. In fact, they are present throughout earth's history. The core issue of the Old Testament war prophecies is Satan attacking

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God's people, seeking to destroy them. In the New Testament times in which we live, the core issue has not changed—Satan still seeks to destroy God's people. The difference today is that God's people is the church—not the literal nation of Israel. Hence, the New Testament is the inspired commentary on how to apply the Old Testament war prophecies to the church, which is God's people and the very body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

As you study the Bible and current events in order to respond with a biblical worldview, I encourage you to read this book prayerfully. Reread any sections that you do not clearly understand. Only by the Holy Spirit's guidance will God's Word be understood. A whole-hearted desire is essential when searching for truth—a desire that only God's Spirit can give: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Perhaps you, like me, have noticed that preaching and teaching about prophecy is very popular today, which should be expected by the generation living just before the second coming of Christ, the greatest prophetic event of all history. Large sections of the Scriptures are given to prophetic messages. Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is entirely dedicated to prophecy. Prophecy has been a major foundation of numerous religious movements.

However, the keen interest in prophecy is not new, from the very beginning of the Christian church, believers looked forward to the soon coming of Christ. Paul certainly believed this when he wrote concerning Christ's return: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be

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caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). It appears Paul expected to be among those living when Christ returned since he used the term *we* in this prophetic text.

Prophetic teaching was one of the chief emphases of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers clearly taught that the religious powers dominating their world were foretold in God’s prophetic Word.

In these last days, the Advent movement began and continues as one called to give a prophetic message to the world. This message, the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, is intended to prepare those who receive it for Christ’s second coming.

### **Many voices proclaiming Christ’s return**

At one time, Seventh-day Adventists were the primary proponents and teachers of the imminent return of Christ. In fact, in the 1800s and early 1900s, those who believed Christ was coming soon were considered fanatics. Today, things have changed in a very dramatic way. In our present day, Seventh-day Adventists are only one of many voices proclaiming the nearness of Christ’s return.

At first, one might think that this change would be cause for rejoicing. However, a close look at what the vast majority of the Christian world is teaching about Christ’s second coming reveals that the popular teaching is very different from what the Bible teaches about that event. As will be explained in the coming chapters, they are preaching a

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counterfeit coming. Satan is rapidly setting the stage for his last great deception of impersonating Christ. The great tragedy is that most Christians will be led astray by these false teachers in a way very similar to how the majority of Old Testament Israel was led astray at Christ's first advent. The results will be the same—eternal loss.

With prophecy being so central and essential to God's work on earth, is it any wonder that Satan has skillfully worked to create confusion in the Christian world over prophetic interpretation? This book is dedicated to uncovering Satan's prophetic deceptions and the false prophetic interpretations he has set forth to deceive the greater part of those living on earth when Christ returns.

### **Getting the most from this book**

This book is a study aid to be read together with the Bible. While it refers to many Bible texts, not all of them are actually quoted. So, I encourage you to read each Bible verse mentioned to better understand how it supports and fits into the context of the application being made.

In this book, I write very openly about the Israel of Christ's day. The Jewish leaders and the majority of the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah. Their rebellion cut deeply into the heart of God. Yet God had no choice. Their rejection of Christ and the covenant led to their rejection by God. I believe God has His faithful among the Jewish people, and they, too, will respond to God's last-day warning and be prepared for their Messiah's return—the second coming of Jesus.

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This is important to understand because today, Satan is using false teachings about the modern state of Israel to lead multitudes away from understanding the three angels' messages. Why is this so important? The three angels' messages are the prophetic teachings that unmask the final issue in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. One must understand these three prophetic messages, given in Revelation 14, to be found on God's side in the end. False teachings about the state of Israel today are a direct counterfeit of these three essential prophetic teachings. This prophetic deception will be unmasked in the following chapters.

### **Three essential ingredients**

The teachings in this book are especially for the Christians living when Jesus comes. To avoid being deceived by Satan's final deception, they must have three essential ingredients in their Christian life. First, they must have a living connection with Jesus through daily experiencing the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Without this, simply understanding facts about the Bible and even grasping prophetic interpretations will not save them. Jesus said that "knowing" Him and the Father is essential to eternal life (John 17:3). This happens only by understanding and experiencing the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Concerning this, Ellen White wrote: "We must have a living connection with God. We must be clothed with power from on high by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that we may reach a higher standard; for there is help for us in no other way."<sup>1</sup>



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Remember that those who crucified Jesus knew many facts about the Bible. Some even had memorized much, or all, of the Old Testament. But such knowledge did not keep them from being deceived and rejecting their Messiah. Why? They rejected Him because they did not know the Jesus of those biblical truths.

Second, the gospel of a sin-pardoning, sin-delivering Savior will be preached as a witness to the world (Matthew 24:14). Those who preach the gospel in power in the end must also experience its power in their own lives. They must understand and experience righteousness by faith in Christ alone as their sin-pardoning and sin-delivering Savior. Therefore, the message of righteousness by faith will play a major role in preparing God's people for Christ's second coming and will be incorporated into God's last prophetic warning to the world.

Since the three angels' messages are prophetic messages and include the "everlasting gospel" being preached in all the world (Revelation 14:6), righteousness by faith must be an integral part of preaching these three last-day warning messages. Through A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner at the 1888 General Conference Session and during the years that followed, the Lord sought to "wed" the three angels' messages with the gospel of righteousness by faith in Christ alone. Ellen White understood this when she wrote: "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour,

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the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God.”<sup>2</sup> And, “this is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”<sup>3</sup>

In another place, she wrote: “God gave to His servants [Jones and Waggoner] a testimony that presented the truth as it is in Jesus, which is the third angel’s message in clear, distinct lines.”<sup>4</sup>

In these statements, Ellen White clearly associated the message of righteousness by faith with the third angel’s message. She also stated that this was the message that was to be “attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure,”<sup>5</sup> which refers to the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Third, God’s “truth” is our “shield” against Satan’s efforts to deceive (Psalm 91:4). The teachings in this book are essential for Christians in these last days to understand in the context of “knowing” Jesus through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and experiencing righteousness by faith in Christ. God’s truth will enable us to understand how Satan is cleverly leading the Christian, Jewish, and even the Muslim worlds to accept as truth his appearance as Christ in Jerusalem.

After describing the last-day work of Satan just prior to Christ’s second coming, Paul wrote: “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;

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because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12).

Those not deceived have the love of the truth in their hearts. How do we get that love? We receive this love only by Jesus living in us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God’s love is placed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). The Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth” (John 16:13). Hence, we can receive the love of the truth only by being filled with the Spirit of truth.

My prayer is that the readers of this book will daily experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit through a prayerful study of the Bible, experience righteousness by faith in Christ alone, and become so firmly grounded in God’s prophetic Word that Satan’s prophetic deceptions will have no effect on them. When God’s Spirit fills our hearts with love and enlightens our eyes with truth, we will have a firm spiritual foundation.

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1. Ellen G. White, “ ‘It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons,’ ” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 5, 1892, 2.

2. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1962), 91, 92.

3. White, 92.

4. White, 93.

5. White, 92.