

Insidious Philosophy - Part 1

(Sermon Notes)

By Warren Zehrung – 6/1/2013

Jesus prophesied that in the last days an insidious philosophy would sweep through His Church causing many to be deceived.

What subtle system of beliefs within God's Church could possibly bring about the destructive result described by Jesus when He said:

Mark 13:

5 Take heed lest any man **deceive** you:

Jesus issues a stern warning – saying many are going to be deceived! Do you believe this statement?

Mark 13:

6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall **deceive many**.

Think on this brethren, Somewhere, sometime, some place – there are MANY deceivers – and there are MANY being deceived.

Matthew 24 We will see here that the **time setting** of which Jesus warned us is NOW.

Jesus Christ warns us of a widespread false religious system **within** the Church of God – we are not talking about the Pope or Rome, or Muslims, but a false religious system within the Church of God in these last days that claims to submit to His authority, while in fact their preachers mislead many into accepting counterfeit doctrinal changes.

This is Jesus' warning for the last days:

Matthew 24:

3 And as [Jesus] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

OK, we see that the time setting is these last days – which we are in. This is serious.

Matthew 24:

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man **deceive you.**

BRETHREN, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT IT CAN HAPPEN? These are dangerous days in the Church of God. It is happening.

We are not speaking of Jimmy Swaggart, Billy Graham or Joel Osteen here.

Those Protestant preachers aren't going to deceive anyone in God's Church – are they?

Jesus is telling us straight out - in this last day, not only to LOOK OUT – but to look out **among** yourselves!

Matthew 24:

5 For **many shall come** in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall **deceive many**.

It is not just one or two deceitful ministers - **many shall come!** That is a scary and fearful situation! And we're just a small flock.

Luke 12:

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

"In my name" – that means that they will claim to come in the AUTHORITY of Jesus Christ.

Deceive many – they deceive the true brethren through subtle doctrinal change. It will not be overt and blatant untruth to a casual listener, but subtle and sly.

Matthew 24:

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many **false prophets shall rise**, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

This battle goes on till the very end. What is it that we hold on to? We'll see the answer to what we hold on to in a minute.

Brethren, seriously, do you believe that this could possibly happen in our well informed era?

That evil men could sneak into positions of power and authority in our nation – or worse yet – as Jesus says, into church administration.

Look at the apostle Paul's day: Paul has convened a Council Meeting of all the elders in the area – and he says to them...

Acts 20:

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

This is a ministerial council meeting – convened by Paul.

Take heed: Paul uses the same warning words that we just heard from Jesus:

Acts 20:

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock [the Church brethren], over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.

“To feed the Church of God” – shows that the ministry has the responsible to feed the brethren good spiritual nourishment.

Acts 20:

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves enter in among you**, not sparing the flock.

Paul realizes that the brethren will be harmed. Notice where those wolves in sheep's clothes come from: Right **inside** the Church of God ministry!

Acts 20:

30 Also **of your own selves** shall men arise, speaking **perverse** things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

There were wolves in the Church then – 2000 years ago – and Jesus tells us to “Take heed” because they are in the Church now – today!

How can we possibly spot the wolves who are masquerading as sheep – they look just like us?

Matthew 7:

15 Beware of **false prophets**, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly [heart, attitude, spirit] they are ravening wolves. They are out to destroy the sheep [brethren.]

How can we possibly spot these charlatan ministers? Jesus tells us to go by their track records – their past history.

Matthew 7:

16 Ye shall know them by their **fruits**.

I'll try not to use evolving terms and titles like Pastor General, President, Apostle, Evangelist, or CEO – and just speak frankly of what is going on in the church – like who is the **Head Guy** and **what is being taught**.

People today – when they see all of Christ’s warning signs – say, What are we to do – where else can we go – there is nowhere to go to church.

Jesus answers that question for us in Luke’s parallel rendition of the same Olivet warning that we’ve been looking at.

Luke 21:

8 And he said, **Take heed that ye be not deceived**: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: **go ye not therefore after them.**

“That ye be not deceived” – most of us think, “I won’t be deceived, I can’t be deceived,” – and there is a danger in that kind of thinking.

Jesus says, “Don’t follow the false ministers who claim to be representing me – when they are not.”

Go ye not therefore after them.

Jesus said that whatever we do; do not follow those men.

Should we be concerned about Christ’s warnings today?

Jesus says that these false ministers are recognizable by their **fruits**. We are not left totally in the dark – we can know who they are. Ask these questions: What have they represented and stood for in the past? What actions have they taken? How have they treated the brethren?

We will see some ministers who have led lives of giving and sacrificing for the brethren and the Gospel work.

Do they uphold the doctrine of Jesus Christ as a sacred thing, or do they cunningly dismiss **sound doctrine** in favor of captivating fables.

2 Timothy 4:

- 2** Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and **doctrine**.
- 3** For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- 4** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

“Fruits” means, what is their track record?

When the Church was going through the Worldwide Church of God apostasy about 20 years ago, did those ministers repudiate false doctrine of the Trinity, or did they say, “**We are not** going to repudiate anything - we are going forward from here.”

Did they defend those who taught that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, or did they support the Tkach regime which was teaching that "**Jesus raised Himself?**"

Did they stand **against adultery**, and for morality in the congregations – or did they have a policy of "getting along with everyone?"

Did they support and champion those of the apostasy who **renounced the Sabbath** and abandoned the **Commandments** of God?

Did they turn over entire Church of God congregations to other false ministers, of their same ilk and kind, who were eating Possum Pâté, shrimp and pork chops?

Did they cast out and disfellowship the faithful brethren – or did they support and defend them?

Has the Head Guy they ever repented of their abominable conduct?

Did the Head Guy follow the **appellate process** that upheld those who taught true doctrine, or did he unilaterally override the due appellate process – thereby destroying the life's work of faithful servants for his own political purposes?

The man who is now the Head Guy has always been a church politician and a long time power broker - back slapping - slick flatterer – feigning humbleness while being ruthless – and above the Law:

What are their fruits? We are told to consider these things.

Matthew 10:

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Jesus told us to: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."

Brethren, are we heeding the words of Jesus Christ?

We are being deceived by ministers who claim the mantle of authority of being in God's Church and representing Christ.

We must be very suspect because we are told that:

2 Corinthians 11:

15 "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if **his ministers** also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Satan's ministers look like ministers of righteous.

That means that these false ministers are slicker than butter when it comes to spewing out their decadent heresies:

Psalm 55:

21 The words of his mouth were **smoother than butter**, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Brethren, if we find ourselves being lulled to sleep, how can we become undeceived?

The answer is to return wholeheartedly to **True Doctrine**.

Dismiss those who treat doctrine as an insignificant or petty inconvenience.

It is flat-out heresy to write-off **true doctrine** for the sake of "getting along" with those who have gone off base doctrinally.

Getting along with people of different doctrinal persuasions is not Unity of the Spirit, but far from it.

"Unity of the Spirit" is a very important thing – when we understand it as God meant it to be – we'll come to the Biblical definition of Unity of the Spirit in a few minutes.

Unity among believers is not something we have to pursue directly; rather, it will be there, it is a by-product of our efforts to be **unified with God**.

If Unity with God is not our top priority, we may be able to attain a measure of "getting along," but a **compromised unity** will always bear bitter fruit because God and His standards are not the foundation of the relationship.

We are told to separate ourselves entirely from those who do not hold the **doctrine of Jesus Christ**.

2 Corinthians 6:

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

2 John 1:

10 If there come any unto you, and bring **not this doctrine**, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

There is an active, widespread campaign to fundamentally change the **doctrine of the Church of God** by those men that Christ warned us to beware of.

The Head Guy asked one of his Local Men to prepare a presentation for the last Regional Conference – so that it could go to all the congregations.

It was a presentation which emphasized “**getting along** with everyone in your local congregations”... when their doctrine is different from your own.

– not by building a oneness and Unity with God (John 17)...but a Unity at the expense of **compromised** doctrine.

So, at the behest of the Head Guy, the Local man gave a message of “Can’t we just get along with everyone” while relegating **doctrine** to the realm of insignificance.

Deceitfully, the biblical phrase, “spirit of unity,” is being employed to mean hold the congregations together **no matter what** they believe.

The trial balloons have been floated to test congregational reaction, and the movement is underway coast to coast.

Be on the lookout for **statements** like these: And these are direct quotes from the new policy:

“The Lord **weighs the heart** which I believe is more important than being doctrinally correct.”

Now, the Local Man said a lot of things both ways – just like Joe Tkach did.

He was careful to maintain deniability on almost every comment he made but the Local Man went way too far when he added, “**and this applies to all doctrine.**”

“...And this applies to all doctrine,” includes the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Paul said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any **other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Hebrews 6 – these are **Salvational** Doctrines – without them there is no salvation.

That is why the Head Guy’s policy of minimizing doctrine for unity’s sake is such an Insidious Philosophy.

Hebrews 6:

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the **doctrine of Christ**, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of **repentance** from dead works, and of **faith** toward God,

- 2** Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of **laying on of hands**, [to receive God's Holy Spirit and become children of God] and of **resurrection** of the dead, and of eternal **judgment**. [and then go on unto perfection.]
- 3** And this will we do, if God permit.

Let's consider what the Scriptures say about **holding on to** all the Word of God – the doctrine of Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 6:

- 4** For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit,
- 5** And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
- 6** If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;

Brethren, if you were to listen to the presentation by the Local Man you would be greatly perplexed and confused.

It was utterly amazing how many Biblical terms take on a different definition in this new presentation.

Authority: Church Authority is not the same as God's Authority. Biblical authority and administrative authority are not the same.

They claim God's authority – but do not define how they received it and how it resides in the Head Guy. WCG had it – it passed through the splits and divisions to ->...

Church Unity: He uses the term "Unity of the Spirit" to mean keeping your local congregation intact.

The Biblical definition of "Unity of the Spirit" is found in Ephesians 4 and it is ALL the Body of Christ not just each local congregation to the exclusion of many.

Here is where we find the Biblical definition for "**Unity of the Spirit.**"

Ephesians 4:

- 3-6** "Endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. There is One Body, and One Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Nothing in the New Head Guy's policy, or the Local Man's presentation, **even remotely** sought to include **all** the Body of Christ who have been scattered, lost and separated, in his definition of "Unity of the Spirit."

Doctrine: He purposely blurs the line between trivial matters and Salvational doctrine. There are some issues called doctrine or beliefs – that do not rise to the level of salvation.

But the Local Man makes it clear that he considers “**all doctrine**” to be an impediment of getting along with everyone in the unity of the spirit.

As we just saw, Salvational doctrine is Repentance [Keeping God’s Law], Faith in Jesus Christ, Receiving Holy Spirit...etc.

Define ‘Church:’ According to the Bible, the church is the ‘ekklesia’ the called out ones. But in this presentation “church” means the Head Guy’s administration at their headquarters office.

Define ‘Love:’ according to the Bible. Romans 13:10 Love is the fulfilling of the Law of God. In the Local Man’s presentation “love” is used for attitude, feelings, and emotional sentiments.

There are so many concepts that are backward in this policy:

The relationship of members to ministry is reversed with members being relegated to a secondary, lesser or subordinate status.

They forget that Jesus came in the role of a servant – and that is largely lost on this Local Man.

Brethren, the minister does not get to do what he wants just because he is the pastor – it does not work that way. God says that the minister is to be the first to make a sacrifice for the sake of righteousness.

If you listened to this Local Man’s presentation to the Regional Conference – you would come away with this understanding:

You can **forget about doctrine** for the sake of **getting along**.

2 Thessalonians 2:

10 ...because they received not the **love of the truth**, [That is **doctrine!**] that they might be saved.

Brethren, ask yourself, “Why do people leave the Truth of God and go off into strange doctrine?

Here is the reason that Sound Doctrine is rejected:

2 Thessalonians 2:

11 And **for this cause** God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

Now, the Head Guy is asking the people of God to wink at doctrine for the sake of what he feels is most important – “just getting along.”

What is the result if we accept that Insidious Philosophy? Here is the answer:

2 Thessalonians 2:

12 That they all might be damned who believed **not the truth**, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

“Unrighteousness” is the violation of the first Doctrine of Jesus Christ – repentance.

The Local Man said, “[Speaking of Doctrine, it...] is not **that big of deal.**”

God’s Word says differently:

Titus 1:

9 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

10 For there are **many** unruly and vain talkers and deceivers.”

Our faith is more than good intentions.

Herbert W. Armstrong used to say of **well meaning** people in the World. “They are sincere... but they are sincerely wrong!”

The Head Guy and the Local Man are saying that it is “good intentions” and “attitude” **that matter to God** – not doctrine.

The new teaching by the new Head Guy says that to “Err doctrinally is better than [having a bad] attitude.”

He says, “It is not just a matter of being right – but a matter of having a right attitude - the Intent of the heart” [is what matters].

Let’s look at the case of Uzzah in the Scriptures – and this piece of history is in the Bible for the very sake of **showing God’s will** when it comes to distinguishing between “good intentions of the heart” and the “word of God” – which is our doctrine.

2 Samuel 6:

6 And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

They were transporting the Ark of the Covenant over this uneven surface – incorrectly on a new cart – and it was about to topple over.

Uzzah – with **all good intentions** – was trying to prevent the Ark of the Covenant from crashing to the ground. But:

2 Samuel 6:

7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. [WHY?]

Because God said that the Levites were to carry the Ark of the Covenant on staves over their shoulders.

What is more important?... Good intentions or the Word of God?

2 Samuel 6:

8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah.

But this incident caused David to get back right with God by going back to the Word of God to find God's will in the matter.

1 Chronicles 15:

2 Then David said, None ought to carry the Ark [of the Covenant] of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever.

3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark [of the Covenant] of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.

Those who are diminishing the importance of **doctrine** in favor of unity - by any and all means – do not understand that this policy also kindles the anger of the Lord as we saw in 2 Samuel 6:7.

They are finding many ways to make the doctrine of God of no importance.

Mark 7:

13 [Jesus said, you are] Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Also Matthew 15:6)

Brethren, we are supposed to be a people who are obedient to God, and not to our feelings.

True unity of the spirit encompasses so much more than individual congregations – it encompasses the entire Body of Christ across the entire spectrum of Church of God groups.

Brethren, God never violates His doctrine.

We are never permitted or asked by Jesus Christ to infringe on any of His doctrines in order to achieve "getting along with each other." God's Word is truth (John 17:17).

And, men who violate the slightest rule or doctrine of God to attain their purposes are not listening to the voice of Christ.

John 10:

27 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

The Local Man applied this Scripture to the brethren listening to the Local ministers, and he said, "That's NOT true." Brethren, Christ's statement is true!

We have been warned. Do not get caught up in it.

Romans 16:

18 "They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches **deceive** the hearts of the simple."

Our primary duty is to love God and our fellow man according to **Godly doctrine** – not to compromise the high standards of Jesus Christ for the sake **getting along** with those who believe strong delusion.

2 Thessalonians 2:

11 And for this cause God shall send them **strong delusion**, that they should believe a lie.

Doctrine that is not put into practice is no doctrine at all.

Here's a red flag warning: Instead of returning to the Lord and His basic Christian doctrine, the confused members are being directed back into the same wrong mind-set that does not primarily look to God and His unifying way.

God says for us to look at a man's history – and judge him by his fruits.

Has he been a servant leader to all of God's people – everywhere?

Does he possess the love of God?

Has he laid down his life for the brethren in response to Christ's command?

1 John 3:

16 "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Our relationship with God is the key to **unity of the Spirit** with the brethren, because that relationship exists for the purpose of bringing us into the same spiritual image as God.

When we **all** live up to the same spiritual standard—Jesus Christ, we will also **all** bear a resemblance to each other—and there will be **unity of the Spirit**.

The main cause of disunity among brethren is a breakdown somewhere in our relationship with God.

The solution to disunity is not to try to "get along with everybody," but rather to restore our personal relationship with God.

This can only be done on an individual basis.

While we wish that we could restore our fellowship with those who have gone astray, there is not much we can do for them if they are not right with God.

One thing we can do, is to perfect our unity with God.

Greater unity of the Spirit with others who are likewise pursuing God's spiritual image will be a result, but it can only happen in that order.

Pursuing unity among men first while leaving God and His doctrine in the background inevitably leads to compromise.

A man's ways must be pleasing to the Lord, which is a description of the man's relationship with His Creator.

Isaiah gives a description of the man whom God is going to hear when he asks for **unity of the Spirit**:

Isaiah 66:

2 "...But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

A man who is **working on** his unity with God is one whom God will help in overcoming the problems of disunity – thus bringing about a unity of the Spirit with others.

As we individually strive to become unified with God, believing in His authority and His doctrines, we will ultimately become unified, in one accord, with our brethren.

It is our individual responsibility, enabled by God's Holy Spirit, to follow those doctrines that were revealed by God.

We have been blessed over all the peoples of the earth to be the recipients of the understanding of the doctrine of God.

Revelation 3:

11 Jesus says, Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast** which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Brethren, open your eyes – check out the fruit as Jesus says – and then be loyal only to God, and follow **only those who follow Christ** and who exhibit the doctrine of God without compromise.

1 Corinthians 11:

1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am a **follower of Christ.**

This may be the most important decision you will ever make.

End: Insidious Philosophy – Part 1