

The Coming of the False Christs

by David A. Huston

This paper is presented to help God's people identify the false anointed ones who are currently operating in the church.

*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs
and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*

See, I have told you beforehand.

Matthew 24:24-25

AS THE ISRAELITES WERE PREPARING TO BUILD the tabernacle in the wilderness, the Lord gave them this instruction, "And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer" (Exodus 30:25). He then told them to "anoint the tabernacle of meeting" along with all the various articles and furnishing that were to be used in the tabernacle service (vv.26-28). They were to do this, He explained, "that they may be most holy" (v.29). The word "holy" means to be set apart for God's use. There are things that exist for common use, but there are also things that have been set apart for God's use. And what differentiated the things of God from the common things was the holy anointing oil.

Whatever the oil was poured upon was no longer available for common usage; it was set apart to be used exclusively for the purposes of God. The holy oil not only consecrated the man-made vessels and objects of the tabernacle; it also set apart men, for the Lord instructed, "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests" (v.30). Without the anointing of the holy oil, no man could serve as a priest of God in the holy environs of the tabernacle.

Today we know that all believers are considered to be priests of God, set apart for God's holy service (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6). But we are not priests because we have been anointed by a special blend of olive oil, for the things of the tabernacle were only shadows of better things to come. Today, we become priests by the anointing of God's Holy Spirit, for Jesus said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to

Me...” (Acts 1:8). In the current era, God Himself does the anointing with His own Spirit, not the holy anointing oil used by Moses. This means that everyone who is given the gift of the Holy Spirit is set apart by that Spirit to serve in the priesthood as a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Problem of Misused Vessels

Today, some who have been set apart to serve God are misusing their anointing. The ministry of a witness is to declare what he has seen and heard. For example, after they were arrested for preaching in the name of Jesus, Peter and John declared, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Today we have among us some who have been anointed into the priesthood but are declaring something other than what they have seen and heard from God. Jesus acknowledged that this would happen when He warned, “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).

The word “christ” is the anglicized version of the Greek word *christos*. W. E. Vine says of this word, “anointed, translates...the word Messiah, a term applied to the priests who were anointed with the holy oil.” Jesus of Nazareth is called the Christ because He was anointed, not with holy oil but with the Holy Spirit. And so is every other man and woman who receives the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Head and the Spirit-filled believers form His body—the body of the Anointed.

But just as it was possible in Moses’ day to take a holy vessel that had been set apart for God’s service and use it for a common purpose, it is likewise possible today for one of God’s holy human vessels to be misused for an ungodly purpose. This is the reason for Jesus’ stark warning about false christs. A false christ is a false anointed one. It is not the anointing that is false but the anointed one.

The Greek word Jesus used is *pseudochristos*. Vine says that the term *pseudo* is used in the New Testament in connection with false witnesses. In other words, just because a person is anointed does not guarantee he is telling the truth.

As Spirit-filled people, we like the feel of the Spirit. We like the emotion, the power, the exuberance that comes when the Spirit moves. But we err when we accept the ministry of the Word from someone on the sole basis that “he is really anointed.” Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be given to those who ask for it, irrespective of the integrity of their hearts (Luke 11:13). We must understand that just because no one can be saved without the Spirit, we cannot conclude that everyone with the Spirit is saved. God sends the rain of the Spirit on the just and the unjust alike (Matthew 5:45).

The Character of a True Witness

Jesus taught that we should discern whether prophets are true or false, not by their gifts, which come out of the anointing, but by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-16). Vine says that in this context, the fruit is “the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly, the character of the fruit being evidence of the character of the power producing it. As the visible expressions of hidden lusts are the works of the flesh, so the invisible power of the Holy Spirit in those who are brought into living union with Christ produces ‘the fruit of the Spirit.’”

Rather than considering fervency or volume or clever oratory as the evidences of spiritual authenticity, we should be looking for love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, we should be looking to see if each holy vessel, set apart by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is being correctly used for the purpose for which it was set apart. And ultimately, we have all been set apart to be witnesses of Jesus.

This means more than simply saying the right words. For example, Paul was told by Ananias, “The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:14-15). But when he wrote about his mission, Paul described his apostolic appointment by saying that “it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles” (Galatians 1:15-16). Having Jesus revealed in us means showing the visible expressions of the invisible presence of His Spirit. In other words, it means exhibiting Christlike character in all situations. It is, after all, the quality of our character that gives credibility to our message, not the mere appearance of spiritual power. But we cannot really know the quality of a man’s character when the only time we see him is behind a pulpit or on a TV screen.

A true witness of Jesus is one in whom the fulness of the character of Christ is revealed. Paul also described what it is to be a witness this way: “With all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body” (Philippians 1:20). The word “magnified” means to be made great or to increase. We frequently repeat the words of John the Baptist when he said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). But do we realize what he was saying, or what Paul meant by Christ being magnified in his body?

John explained the increase or magnification of Jesus by saying, “He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies” (v.31-32). We have not been set apart to expound on our own opinions or assert our own “special insights and unique interpretations.” This decreases Jesus and

increases us. We have been anointed to testify only as to what we have seen and heard. This is the ministry of a true witness.

John went on to say, “For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure” (v.34). This statement makes a connection between the anointing and speaking the words of God. Let us recognize that our anointing brings with it a responsibility to speak only the words of God, only the truth as expressly stated in the Scriptures.

John affirmed, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you” (1 John 1:3). This is the ministry of a true apostolic witness of Jesus. We tend to search for ideas that are new and revolutionary and unusual. But John simply stays within the parameters of God’s truth.

Perhaps none among us can claim to know all truth perfectly and completely, but Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide us into all truth (John 16:13). John affirmed that “the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie” (1 John 2:27). We must be careful to stay within the realms of truth that we have been guided into by the Spirit and avoid the areas where we must resort to speculation or invention. As we learn greater truth, we will speak with greater power. For when an anointed man declares the Word of God in truth, the words that he speaks, like the words of Jesus, are Spirit and they are life (John 6:63).

The Need for Discernment

Anointing does not guarantee we will always speak the truth. God anoints people, but people can twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). The false christs that Jesus warned of will come close to deceiving even God’s elect. This is not because their anointing is false, but because they are false. It is not judgmental to insist on seeing fruit. Paul was certainly an anointed man of God; yet when he wrote to God’s people, he said nothing about how anointed he was but instead reminded them of His Christlike character, writing, “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

There are plenty of people who speak in tongues and demonstrate great spiritual giftings, but the people of Berean are commended, not because they recognized Paul’s anointing, but because they were skeptical of it. For even though they received Paul’s preaching with all readiness, they nevertheless “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

In His instructions to Israel concerning the holy anointing oil, the Lord warned, “It shall not be poured on man’s flesh” (Exodus 30:32). The purpose of God’s Spirit is never the exaltation of man. It is never to make the preacher seem great. It is rather to set God’s people apart from the world for His exclusive use, which is to exalt Jesus Christ and manifest His presence in the earth.

In addition to the warning of Jesus Himself concerning the coming of false anointed ones in the end-times, Jude wrote that certain men had crept in unnoticed, who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4). Paul warned that in the last days, “evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). Peter stated flatly, “There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” He warned that “many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.” He explained that “by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Peter 2:1-3). These are all descriptions of the false anointed ones.

We are dangerously naive to think that such men are not among us today and that everyone who preaches or teaches the Word of God is a true witness of Jesus Christ. When preachers of the gospel exaggerate, distort, or embellish the truth, they are lying and making themselves false christs. When they are consumed with lust for material possessions, they are deceiving themselves and making themselves false christs. When they deride and condemn God’s people with harsh words and a bitter spirit, they are accusing the brethren and making themselves false christs. They may be anointed, but they are false and their anointing is being misused.

Paul explained that “in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor” (2 Timothy 2:20). All Spirit-filled believers have been brought into the Lord’s house as anointed vessels set apart for His exclusive use. But some do not live up to the responsibilities that their anointing brings with it. Paul therefore wrote, “If anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (v.21). This shows that it is up to each one of us to determine which kind of vessel we will be. Will we be true and honest anointed ones, or the kind of false and deceptive anointed ones Jesus warned about?

Paul concluded by telling Timothy, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (v.22). Those who allow themselves to be dominated by lust are destined

to fall into error, but those who pursue the things of God and associate themselves with others who call on the Lord out of a pure heart are destined for eternal glory.

Today the emphasis is often on power and the operation of gifts rather than a man's character. May our discernment be sharp and clear. And may we not be fooled by those who can move us emotionally but whose character is manifestly deficient. Paul not only allowed himself to be observed up close, he encouraged such observation, knowing that in the end it would not be his anointing that gave him credibility as much as his devotion and godly character. He did not keep himself aloof from the people, because he was not trying to hide his character but was rather doing his best to display it, that he might show forth the fruit of the Spirit. This was the apostolic way of the first century where we read of Paul mingling with the people and forming close relationships (Acts 20:7-9; 20:36-38; 28:23; 28:30-31). Let us imitate Paul as he imitated Christ.

In connection with the days surrounding the coming of the Lord, Malachi the prophet declared, "Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3:18). Oh, that God would grant His people this power of discernment today.

Note to the reader:

If you would like to comment on the contents of this paper, please contact us through our website at www.GloriousChurch.com. We welcome and appreciate all honest comments, questions, and criticisms.

Copyright © 2005 David Huston and Jim McKinley

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this article may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher or author; **EXCEPT THAT PERMISSION IS GRANTED** to reprint all or part of this document for personal study and research provided that reprints are not offered for sale.

All Scripture references are from the New King James Version of the Bible, copyright 1990 by Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, TN, unless otherwise indicated.

Published by

Rosh Pinnah Publications

PO Box 337, Carlisle, PA 17013 717-249-2059

www.RoshPinnah.com RoshPinnah@aol.com

Rosh Pinnah means 'Chief Cornerstone' in Hebrew.

