7. The Crisis Continues (4Q 2015—Jeremiah)


**Quotes**
- I’m not upset that you lied to me, I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe you. *Friedrich Nietzsche*
- Anything is better than lies and deceit! *Leo Tolstoy*
- Where the questions of religion are concerned people are guilty of every possible kind of insincerity and intellectual misdemeanor. *Sigmund Freud*
- For every good reason there is to lie, there is a better reason to tell the truth. *Bo Bennett*
- The essence of lying is in deception, not in words. *John Ruskin*
- Deception is everywhere. *James Sanborn*

**Questions**
What lies at the heart of deception? What are the inevitable results? What can we do about self-deception? What if the whole nation is deceived? How does this illustrate the issues in the great controversy? If you were Jeremiah, what would you have done? What do the king’s actions reveal about the state of God’s people?

**Bible summary**
Jeremiah 9 makes it clear that one of the great sins of the time was deception. People were lying to one another, and such dishonesty broke the prophet’s heart. Jeremiah 10 tells the people not to follow the ways of other nations, for their practices and beliefs are worthless. Paul says this: “They exchanged God’s truth for a lie, worshiping and serving creatures instead of the Creator.” (Rom. 1:25 FBV). In the past God overlooked some of these issues, but now he commands all people to repent (Acts 17:30). It is unwise to end up fighting against God! (Acts 5:34–41). The desperate situation that Jeremiah faced is made clear in chapter 26, where just about everyone wants him put to death. In fact another prophet, Uriah, does indeed pay with his life.

**Comment**
Lies and deceptive practices are so destructive because they deny reality and promote false perspectives. Yet lying has become commonplace—we even (or especially!) lie to ourselves! This damaging of life’s basic operating system means that we consign ourselves to frustrated lives and pointless deaths.

Religion is not immune to this—in fact many deceptions are practiced in the name of religious beliefs. The result? Many reject religion altogether as a sham, because they have become so disillusioned by all the deceit.

In our day-to-day experiences with one another, we play out the great controversy in miniature—the conflict and the fights, the love and admiration, the demonstration of whether we follow truth, honesty, right and so on. Read some of the material related to Lucifer’s fall, and you begin to see how insidious sin really is, how by believing a lie you can come to a position where right is wrong and wrong is right. In this process of self-
deception, Lucifer came to believe his own propaganda, it seems. What are the lessons for us here?

Lucifer had ended up not only deceiving others, but deluding himself into exchanging falsehood for truth. The tragedy is that Lucifer ended up believing his own propaganda. He came to believe the misrepresentations of God he’d invented, and was reluctant to accept any inhibitions to his freedom to act. Lucifer’s sin began not in the breaking of rules but “in his heart.” As we look at the issues at the heart of this great controversy, as we see the choices Lucifer made, they lead us to confront the same need for making decisions ourselves, all over again.

Right from the beginning, Satan has been lying to humankind about the kind of person God is. First to Eve and then Adam (Genesis 3). Then to Cain, convincing him to rebel against the “arbitrary” requirements of God, leading him to murder his brother (Genesis 4). Then to all the inhabitants of the earth, when “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5). And so on…

God chose to deal with Lucifer’s rebellion as He always does—with love and compassion, working to win the war not by force of arms (“not by might nor power,” Zechariah 4:6), but by spiritual “right.” But restoring trust and demonstrating truth and right takes time. The ongoing battle shows that lies, deceptions, innuendoes, gossip, misrepresentations all require much time to refute. And to refute the charges against His character, God could not simply say, “They’re not true!” To prove the charges false, God has to show His true nature in practice over time, to reveal to everyone that the Devil is wrong in his accusations.

**Ellen White Comments**

Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action.—Letter 12, 1890. {2SM 56}

I am afraid of anything that would have a tendency to turn the mind away from the solid evidences of the truth as revealed in God’s Word. I am afraid of it; I am afraid of it. We must bring our minds within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come in as to set everything in a disorderly way. {2SM 43}

Impressions alone are not a safe guide to duty. The enemy often persuades men to believe that it is God who is guiding them, when in reality they are following only human impulse. But if we watch carefully, and take counsel with our brethren, we shall be given an understanding of the Lord’s will... {RH, August 24, 1911}.