

How Christians Will Be Tempted to Betray Jesus

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | July 20, 2023



Loyalty to or betrayal of Jesus is not primarily about doctrine, public attestations, denominational affiliation, or religious observances—it is about the methods we practice in how we live and treat others. Whose character, methods, principles, and law are the basis for our actions and conduct: God's or Satan's? Jesus said,

The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20, 21 NIV84).

As we approach the second coming of Christ, many Christians are focusing on doctrinal purity, knowing the right facts of Scripture, and are worried about being deceived. It is certainly true that Satan deceives with false doctrines, and much of the history of Christianity is a fight over which sect has the truth, who has the right explanation for various Bible texts. But this has resulted in the fragmentation of the body of Christ; currently, there are over 41,000 different groups.[\[1\]](#)

I am suggesting that Satan's greater deception is getting Christians to adopt his false methods and

principles, regardless of doctrinal purity. Consider those religious leaders who crucified Christ; their primary issue wasn't that they had a different Sabbath, Bible, feast days, or dress code than Jesus. What was different was their methods and principles. They were driven by fear and survival drives and, thus, accepted the methods and principles of this fallen world, which is might makes right, survival of the fittest, the strongest survive, those with power win. For them, right governing is those having the most power forcing others to comply; for them, justice is found through law and order enforced by judicial oversight. And what did those religious leaders do? Their fear of losing their power, position, reputation, and station led them to hold a tribunal in which they bribed witnesses to lie in order to convict Jesus through their legal system and then kill Him. Because by their methods and motives, "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50 NIV84). The ends justify the means.

This Bible account contains a powerful lesson for us today. The Jewish leaders who rejected Christ did not do so because of a disagreement over a list of doctrines. They did so because they hated His methods of truth, love, and freedom. They hated Jesus' compassion, His grace, His forgiving of sinners, His healing of the unclean, His method of Sabbath observance, and His treating women and foreigners as having equal value as human beings. They hated His shift away from behavioral and doctrinal rules to character development based upon godly methods and principles.

As we approach the second coming of Christ, Satan will not limit his attacks upon the saints to false doctrines. It will not simply be a question of whether one claims faith in Jesus, observes a day of worship, or practices a certain method of religious ceremony. The final test will be about whether we maintain loyalty to Jesus by being *like Jesus* in the methods we practice in how we live and treat others! When at the second coming the King separates the sheep (saved) from the goats (lost), He specifically tells us what makes the difference. He says to the saved:

Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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, 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. Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

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" (Matthew 25:34-40 NIV84).

The final question will not be over some doctrinal issue or religious observance but over loyalty to Jesus Christ and His design law of love. The questions will be: Has God's law been written upon our hearts (Hebrews 8:10)—or has the law of sin and death (survival of the fittest) been solidified into our characters? Are we like Jesus in character, method, motive, and principle such that we uplift His name, His character in how we live—or are we like Satan in character, that despite what doctrines we proclaim, we practice his methods of coercion and force and prefer his principles of power over others?

Are we the type of people who, while claiming to be followers of Jesus, would use the power of our position to intimidate, coerce, or pressure people to violate their consciences? What if it were to "save

lives”—perhaps even an entire nation? Isn't it better for one man to die for the people than for the nation to be destroyed? Isn't it better for a few healthy, symptom-free employees to be forced to take a medicine they don't want than for the business to be fined, closed, or for people to die?

Satan's final deception will be along these lines: Attacking the saints with a false allegation that threatens our reputations, livelihoods, status, or income—all designed to incite fear and our desire to survive, to protect ourselves, to protect our reputations, to lash back, to attack and destroy the enemy who is falsely accusing us. We will be tempted with anger, resentment, and a desire to take revenge, to “punish” our enemies. However, if we do that—even when the other party is in the wrong—whose methods are we practicing, whose kingdom are we advancing, whose character are we forming? Thus, Paul advised:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ... If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14, 20, 21 NIV84).

And Jesus said:

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:43-48 NIV84).

The war between Christ and Satan, good and evil, isn't primarily about the right list of doctrines; it is about methods, motives, and principles. Do we have the love of God in our hearts and minds? Are the design-law principles of God the basis of our actions so that we love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us? Or do we retaliate and seek to enforce human “justice” upon our enemies and only use God's methods when dealing with issues that arise within the church?

When we are wronged, what happens in our hearts and minds if we retain resentment, bitterness, anger, or a desire for payback against those who have wronged us? And what happens if we justify those desires by seeking payback through human law and human justice? Have you seen the various groups fighting around the world for greater political power in order to enforce their version of what is right upon others? And what is happening to the people who do this? What is happening in such communities? Do you see the destruction that comes when we seek to achieve our understanding of righteousness through the methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement?

But what happens to our characters if we choose to accept Jesus, choose to reject fear and survival drives, and, instead, choose to bless those who persecute us and to love our enemies?

The final deceptions will certainly include doctrinal falsehood, but avoiding those falsehoods will not be

sufficient to avoid joining Satan's camp. The final issue will be centered upon who we love and choose to identify with—Jesus or the false messiah, Satan impersonating Christ. And we make that choice when we choose the methods and principles that we practice in how we live and treat others. Do we choose Jesus and experience God's design law of truth, love, and freedom written into our inmost being so that we choose to love and trust God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourself—or do we choose Satan by loving self the most and allowing the fear of losing what "self" values (money, power, station, reputation, etc.) to cause us to use the methods of this world, imposed laws, with coercive enforcement upon others to ensure "justice" is done?

As the events leading to the second coming of Christ continue to unfold, many will be deceived because they are looking only for doctrinal falsehood or religious persecution; they fail to recognize that the real issue is the methods we choose to apply in how we live and treat others.

Don't be deceived, choose Jesus, keep your eyes fixed upon Him, and live His methods in all you do.

[1] <https://www.learnreligions.com/christianity-statistics-700533>