



Counterfeit Spirits in the Church | KIB 526

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I. Jesus Warning

Matthew 24:5 (ESV)

5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

Matthew 24:5 (AMP)

5 For many will come in (on the strength of) My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying, I am the Christ (the Messiah), and they will lead many astray.

I find it interesting how many commentaries and references will skip over verse 5, including Dake's and Scofield's Reference Bibles!

Whenever someone in ministry changes their focus from glorifying Christ and making disciples to desiring a large ministry, following, and misguided revivalists, it grieves the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit backs off, and another spirit that accommodates fleshly motivations will take root.

The results can be spectacular at first, drawing large crowds eager to be entertained. But slowly, the bad fruit begins to show up.

This is what we are experiencing across the Charismatic Movement today.

II. The Holy Spirit Vs. Counterfeit Spirits

Category	Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Operation of Counterfeit Spirits	Key Scriptures
Source	Sent from the Father through Christ	Originates in the kingdom of darkness	John 14:26; Eph 2:2
Primary Purpose	Glorifies Christ	Draws attention to self, experience, or deception	John 16:14
Truth	Leads into truth	Promotes mixture, distortion, or partial truth	John 16:13; 1 Tim 4:1
Doctrine	Produces sound doctrine	Promotes doctrines of demons	1 Tim 4:1
Relationship to Jesus	Confesses Jesus as Lord	Denies or diminishes Christ's identity	1 John 4:2–3
Authority	Submits to Scripture	Adds to or subtracts from Scripture	Isa 8:20
Fruit Produced	Love, holiness, obedience	Confusion, pride, sensuality, rebellion	Gal 5:22–23; Jude 8

Category	Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Operation of Counterfeit Spirits	Key Scriptures
Conviction	Convicts of sin unto repentance	Produces condemnation or denial of sin	John 16:8; Rev 12:10
Effect on Flesh	Crucifies flesh	Feeds flesh	Gal 5:16–17
Attitude toward Holiness	Promotes sanctification	Promotes compromise	1 Pet 1:2
View of Truth	Anchored in God's Word	Promotes experience above Scripture	2 Cor 11:3–4
Spiritual Gifts	Edify the body	Create spectacle or confusion	1 Cor 14:26,33
Guidance	Leads with peace and righteousness	Leads with pressure, fear, or compulsion	Rom 8:14
Freedom	Produces liberty from sin	Produces bondage	2 Cor 3:17
Focus	Christ-centered	self-centered or man-centered	Col 1:18
Humility	Produces humility	Produces pride	James 4:6
Unity	Produces unity in truth	Produces division and factions	Eph 4:3

Category	Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Operation of Counterfeit Spirits	Key Scriptures
Worship	Leads to reverence and awe	Leads to emotionalism or empty ritual	John 4:24
Love	Produces sacrificial love	Produces manipulation or control	Rom 5:5
Wisdom	Produces wisdom from above	Produces sensual or demonic wisdom	James 3:15–17
Spiritual Warfare	Applies Christ's victory	distracts from real warfare	Eph 6:12
End Result	Conformity to Christ	deception and apostasy	Rom 8:29; Matt 24:24

III. Biblical Categories of Counterfeit Spirits

Scripture identifies several categories of deceptive spiritual influence.

Type	Description	Scripture
seducing spirits	lead believers away from truth	1 Tim 4:1
spirit of antichrist	denies incarnation and authority of Christ	1 John 4:3

Type	Description	Scripture
lying spirits	promote false revelation	1 Kings 22:22
familiar spirits	occult sources of knowledge	Lev 19:31
spirit of error	opposes apostolic doctrine	1 John 4:6
spirit of bondage	produces fear-based religion	Rom 8:15
religious spirit	substitutes tradition for obedience	Mark 7:13

III. Diagnostic Test from Scripture

a. Test of Christology

1 John 4:1–3 (ESV)

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

The primary biblical test is what a spirit says about Christ.

b. Test the Fruit

Matthew 7:15–20 (ESV)

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **18** A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Spiritual manifestation alone is not proof of divine origin.

c. Test the Doctrine

Isaiah 8:19–20 (ESV)

19 And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? **20** To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

Any spiritual influence contradicting Scripture is counterfeit.

d. Warfare Insight

Counterfeit spiritual influence often attempts to:

- bypass sanctification
- promote hyper-spiritual elitism
- redefine sin
- create dependency on personalities
- distort the character of God
- detach believers from biblical authority
- replace holiness with experience

Paul warned:

2 Corinthians 11:12–15 (ESV)

12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. **13** For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. **15** So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Deception often appears spiritual.

e. Integrated Discernment Framework

The Holy Spirit always produces:

- Christlikeness
- Holiness

- Truth
- Love
- Obedience
- Humility
- Spiritual clarity

Counterfeit spirits often produce:

- Confusion
- Pride
- Lawlessness
- Sensuality
- Rebellion
- doctrinal compromise
- spiritual instability