

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 4TH - 5TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

BY THE ACTIVITY OF SATAN (2 THESSALONIANS 2:9-10)

Paul is in the middle of a section of teaching on the "day of the Lord" and believers being, "caught up together to be with" Jesus (1 Thess. 4:5; 2 Thess. 1-8).

- The Thessalonian church had received a false report that, "the day of the Lord has come" (vs. 2), so Paul corrects their error through reminding them that certain things must happen first before Christ returns (vs. 3)

First, the "rebellion" (apostasia) must come (vs. 3a) - a large scale turning away by those who profess to belong to Christ.

- Then, "the man of lawlessness" will appear (vs. 3b) - the end times false messiah whom the Bible also refers to as "antichrist" or the "beast."
- This figure will claim to be God, demand worship from all the earth, and desecrate God's holy temple (vs. 4).

Even though this figure will be the embodiment of pure evil, people will worship him as a divine being (Rev. 13:4, 14-15). But why?

- His coming will be marked by, "...power, false signs, and wonders" (vs. 9b).
- However, his power will not be his own but in accordance with the, "activity of Satan" (vs. 9a).
- Satan has real supernatural power to perform signs and wonders (Ex. 7:10-12).

The word, "false" modifies all three terms: power, signs, and wonders.

- "False" doesn't necessarily indicate that these things will be fake, but rather that they will lead people to false conclusions about who he is.
- People will believe that he is a divine being and worship him as God!
- Just because someone has spiritual power, signs, or wonders doesn't mean they're from God.

Who will believe antichrist's deception? "...those who are perishing" (vs. 10a).

- Those who are truly the Lord's will demonstrate their salvation by not believing these lies, but those who have rejected God will gladly receive this deception as true.
- They will believe this deception because, "...they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (vs. 10b).

Those who have rejected God, His Word, and His authority are ripe and ready for the deception of the antichrist because they want a lie to be true.

- The great lie that many want to be true is that God is not God, but we are or we can be gods. This great lie is what has enthralled humanity since the very beginning and is what fuels atheism, immorality/lawlessness, and any and all worldview that is opposed to the idea of God being God.

A STRONG DELUSION (2 THESSALONIANS 2:11-12)

Because those who are perishing refused to love the truth and so be saved, God will send them a "strong delusion", so that they may believe what is false (vs. 10-11).

- For their refusal to accept the truth of who God is, God will sentence them to accept evil as if it were good and lies as if they were the truth.
- Essentially, God will give them over to the consequences of their choice to reject truth!

A "delusion" is defined as a false belief about external reality, held despite indisputable evidence to the contrary.

- Even now, there is indisputable evidence present in all of reality that points to the presence of God.
- God is revealed in our world, in our universe, and in our consciences; and the miracle of Jesus' resurrection provides incredibly compelling evidence to His identity.

But it's not that there is insufficient evidence to convince most people that there is a God, and that Jesus is who He says He is.

- It is that if God does exist and Jesus is King, He'll probably have a say in how we are to live our lives.
- So instead of acknowledging God as our Creator and Jesus as King, we have developed a modern "enlightened" scientific delusion that states that no-one + nothing = everything

Our modern "enlightened" delusion, also states that Jesus' identity is either unknowable or can be completely twisted to fit whatever we want.

- Many believe this delusion not because it's rational, reasonable, or even coherent - but simply because they refuse to, "love the truth and so be saved".
- Many will believe the delusion of the antichrist's lies for the same reasons.

Many will also be handed over to the deception of the antichrist because they, "...had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vs. 12).

- For some, their reasons for unbelief are simply because they love their sin and don't want to give it up.
- It's a lot easier to deny the truth of the gospel than it is to accept what it says about us, our sin nature, and our need for repentance.

The theological term for what is described is "judicial abandonment," and it's what Paul speaks of in Romans 1 when he states that God, "gave them [the unrepentant] over" to the consequences of their own sinful choices (Rom. 1:24,26,28).

- There comes a day when those who have persistently rejected the truth will be unable to believe it.

STAND FIRM (2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16)

When we think about just how lost we were before Jesus opened our eyes to the truth, it should cause us to, "give thanks to God."

- Paul thanks God for these believers that are, "beloved by the Lord", that God "chose" them, and that are being sanctified in the Spirit and that have believed the truth (vs. 13).
- Because of these things, they don't have any reason to be afraid of the events that will unfold.

It is to, "sanctification by the Spirit" and "belief in the truth" that we were called through the gospel (vs. 14a).

- Sanctification by the Spirit is the lifelong process of being separated from the world and separated unto God by the Holy Spirit.
- As we grow in Christ, we also grow in our understanding and belief of what is true.
- It's this call to salvation that enables us to someday obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 14b).

The call for us as believers is to "stand firm" and "hold to the traditions that we have been taught" (vs. 15).

- To "stand firm" implies a location, and then we're told what we are to stand firm upon - God's Word ("the traditions").
- The word, "traditions" doesn't refer to extra-biblical, religious customs, but rather the authoritative teachings and letters of the apostles (Scripture).

We live in a day and age where we bend and change what's right or wrong to fit what we want to believe and how we want to live.

- Our culture has embraced delusions and falsehoods that go against basic human anatomy, and we've said that feelings and perceptions matter more than objective facts.
- There's an abundance of misinformation from every angle and persuasion peddled to us that many of us accept just because we want them to be true.

When the world is drunk on falsehood and calls what is true, "false," and what is false, "true"- you and I are to stand firm God's Word and hold to its teachings.

- Paul's prayer to close this section petitions Father God and the Lord Jesus, "who loved and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace" to comfort their hearts and establish them in every good work and word (vs. 16-17).

"Comfort your hearts" - it's of great comfort to know that God is able to protect, provide, and care for His children regardless of whatever cultural pressure, tribulation, or persecution they may face in the last days.

- "Establish you" - it's going to get harder to speak the Christian message and live the Christian life. But it's God who "establishes" (strengthens) us when we feel like we have no strength.

The Antichrist will perform false signs, wonders, and have false power that will **convince those who are perishing** that he is a god (vs. 9-10).

- **God will allow** those who have rejected truth to be handed over to the deception and delusion of the antichrist (vs. 11-12).
- But **those who belong to the Lord** and believe the truth will be comforted, strengthened, and will stand firm in the Word of God, and **so we have nothing to fear (vs. 13-16)**.

"HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT'S TRUE RIGHT NOW?"

What truth is not...

- Truth is **not** what the majority says is true.
- Truth is **not** whatever I want to be true.
- Truth is **not** whatever works for me.
- Truth is **not** whatever makes me feel good.
- Truth is **not** whatever makes me feel special because I know something others don't.
- **John 14:6**

Jesus...is the truth.

- Jesus is an **actual person** who lived, died, and rose again and wants to live in a daily relationship with you.
- Jesus has the power in the here and now to **change** you from the inside out and He will speak truth to **every** area of your life.
- Jesus gives you **access to the Holy Spirit** (the Spirit of Truth) who make His Word come alive and give you **discernment and wisdom**.

The **identity of Jesus**, the truth of God's Word, our relationship with the Holy Spirit, and our calling as believers should be the filters we use to live by truth in a **world full of falsehood**.

- Our **enemy is crafty** - so often His deceptive tactics against the people of God are getting us to focus on rumors, ideologies or topics that lead to **fear, dissension, and distraction** from our true calling.

FOUR TRUTH FILTERS (PASTOR CHRIS WILLIAMS)

1. "Does what I am saying, writing, reading, or posting **agree with Scripture?**"
2. "Does what I am hearing, reading, posting, or saying **honor my Lord and Savior?**"
3. "Does what I am hearing, posting, reading or saying **help me look more like Jesus?**"
- "Does what I am hearing, reading, posting, or saying cause me to **think more highly of other believers?**"
- **Philippians 4:8**

Those who belong to the Lord and believe the truth will be comforted, strengthened, and will stand firm in the Word of God, and so we have nothing to fear!