

## 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 – “Truth, Lies, and Eternal Consequences”

### Summary Statement:

This passage addresses the coming of the lawless one, the deception that will accompany his arrival, and the ultimate judgment that befalls those who reject the truth.

### 1. A Powerful Deception – 2:9-10

**2:9-10 - *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,<sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.***

Last week we looked at what is holding back or restraining the Antichrist from coming onto the scene and being revealed as this man of sin (2:3). The restrainer is the Holy Spirit at work in the church. Since the Holy Spirit is God and carries the attributes of God, He is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere, and He's everywhere at all times. So the Holy Spirit is not gone or removed from the world during the tribulation, but His influence and work through the church will be gone and then wickedness and evil will be ramped up. Then the Antichrist will be revealed.

Now the word antichrist is only used in the Bible in John's epistles:

- **1 John 2:18**, "*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.*"
- **1 John 2:22**, "*Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.*"
- **1 John 4:3**, "*and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*"
- **2 John 7**, "*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*"

John said that there have been many antichrists who have come. There have been agents throughout history that Satan has been ready to work through for this end times event. Paul said in 2:7 that the ***mystery of lawlessness is already at work***... Remember, Satan has no idea of God's timeline, he doesn't know when the tribulation is going to happen. So Satan is always at work trying

to defeat God's plans and as John says, there will be at that time one final Antichrist – *THE* Antichrist, who will rise to a position of power as world leader.

The Bible refers to him elsewhere by different names. He's not going to come on the scene announcing himself as the Antichrist. He's going to be slick, charismatic, people will be excited to follow him. But he will not be as he appears. As we see in 2 Thessalonians 2:8+9 he's known as the **lawless one**. That begins to give you some good idea as to his character and nature.

- To be lawless means you have no boundaries. The law implements the line by which you know you are transgressing when you go over it. To be lawless means you're overstepping that line with flagrant defiance of it.
- It could be that Paul has in mind the law of Moses, at least the moral law, the 10 commandments. And this Antichrist will have no problem breaking these laws. He will seek to oppose God anyway he can (2:4).

Now one of the ways he's going to seek to oppose God is through counterfeiting the work of God. Again, this Antichrist's coming is in accordance to ***the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders***.

Satan is going to be the driving force behind this Antichrist.

- Though Satan has supernatural powers, he is not an equal, or opposite of God. He is a created being; he is limited. He does not possess the attributes of God – omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, etc. Satan is lesser than, and is responsible to, God. We saw that in the beginning of the book of Job.

And so in these end times he is going to look to work through an agent that he will raise up to carry out his plans. And those plans will be to setup a counterfeit kingdom.

Satan's fall happened because he wanted to be worshipped as God (Isaiah 14:12-15). Pride filled his heart. And so much of sin and Satan's temptations are rooted in this same pride that has filled his heart. Think about it, sin is always about the glorification of self. That's pride. This is why God says He hates pride. Because pride exalts self in place of God. Remember, *anti* means in place of.

- **Proverbs 8:13**, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.*"

So getting back to my point, the Antichrist (through the power of Satan) will counterfeit the work of God. He will come with ***power, signs...***

He'll do miracles. That's why miracles don't always prove God. Satan can counterfeit those things.

- The magicians in Egypt counterfeited the signs that God did through Moses. They made their rods turn into a serpent like Aaron's rod. They counterfeited the first two plagues (water to blood and frogs). In so doing they only made things worse. But the third plague, lice, they couldn't replicate and the magicians said, this is the finger of God (Exodus 8:19).

You see, the enemy is not original. He wanted to be like God and all he can do is try and act like God. But it's limited and it's deceptive.

This description of **power, signs and lying wonders** is similar to what they said of Jesus. **Acts 2:22**, "*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—*"

The Antichrist is going to have a supernatural power attached to him and it's going to come from Satan, but his purpose is to deceive.

Throughout history, and into the end days, we see the counterfeiting work of Satan.

- He gives a counterfeit/false gospel.
- He sends counterfeit/false prophets.
- He performs counterfeit/false miracles.
- He has a counterfeit/false trinity: Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet.
- God marks 144,000 for salvation, the Antichrist marks those who pledge allegiance to him.
- He counterfeits a resurrection.

"In view of such mimicking, one theologian has concluded that "Satan's plan and purposes have been, are, and always will be to seek to establish a rival rule to God's kingdom. He is promoting a system of which he is the head and which stands in opposition to God and His rule in the universe."<sup>1</sup>

In this following passage we see how Satan is the one empowering him and we see one of the ways people will marvel (wonder) at this Antichrist's power.

- **Revelation 13:2–4**, "*Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The*

<sup>1</sup> Ryrie, Charles C. (1978). *Balancing the Christian Life* (p. 124). Moody Press. Chicago, IL

dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.<sup>3</sup> And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.<sup>4</sup> So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

So Satan's work through the Antichrist will cause a lot of people to be wowed and follow after him. They'll see things that will look convincing, but it's lying wonders. It's **unrighteous deception**. I hate unrighteous deception, I much prefer righteous deception. It's so much nicer.

There is obviously no good deception. It's all unrighteous. But notice, this deception is focussed on **those who perish**. These are the ones who are actively (this is written in the present tense) moving away from God. These aren't innocent bystanders that Satan just picked off in their ignorance. They have refused to accept the truth and are willingly walking on the road to destruction.

- **John 3:19–20**, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.<sup>20</sup> For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

This is made clear in the next part of this verse.

**...because they did not receive the love of the truth...**

Notice the emphasis on the individual. The responsibility is on the one to receive what Jesus has freely given. Nobody is withheld salvation, nor is salvation ever rejected from them. There is a popular doctrine that says God chooses who will be saved. That they're the elect. But I do not see in the Bible a predestination to salvation or a predestination to damnation. God's desire is always **that they might be saved**.

**1 Timothy 2:4**, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

**2 Peter 3:9**, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

But sadly, there are many that refuse to open their hearts to this amazing gift of salvation and eternal life. In this Age of Grace we are in, it's never been easier. The gospel goes out unfettered. And yet many would rather hold on to their life

and choose to go their way rather than God's way. They're unwilling to surrender. Unwilling to be saved.

## 2.A Persistent Rejection – 2:11

**2:11 - *And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,***

Now this sounds almost contradictory to what we just looked at, especially in light of those cross-references where God desires all men to be saved. You can read this and almost think that God was making it so they can't be saved.

But again, this is being done to those who don't want to be saved. They have not been rejected, rather they have rejected the truth.

You see, there comes a time where God will give people over to what they have already determined in their heart.

- This happened with Pharaoh. You can jump to **Exodus 9:12** and read, "*But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh,*" and think, how could you God? That's not fair. But then you read in context and see in Exodus 8:12 and 8:15 that Pharaoh hardened his heart. God was simply confirming what Pharaoh had already determined.

If you reject the truth, there will come a time where God will eventually give you over to the very things you are desiring.

- We see this in **Romans 1:24–25**, "*Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,<sup>25</sup> who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*"

So in these last days, those that have followed their own desires and have rejected the truth will be sent ***strong delusion.***

- Again, it's not that God is deceiving them, because God cannot lie or deceive. But rather in His judgment and condemnation of those who have rejected Him, He gives them over to what they have decided in their heart. This is the just judgment of God and the right outcome of man's choices.

After the Rapture people will have an opportunity to be saved, but it will be increasingly harder. If you're not willing to stand for Jesus now, will you be ready to die for Him then?

There will be greater deception in these last days and eventually God will allow the ultimate delusion – the Antichrist, to rise to power and prominence. And he will lead many in the continued deception of Satan that will cause them to **believe the lie**. This is not **a** lie, but **the** lie. What lie is this?

- Many ideas have been given. Some believe the lie is simply the Antichrist and his deception that he is God.
- Some see the lie generally as the rejection of truth, and more importantly the rejection that God is God.
- Satan's lie in the beginning which started this whole downward sinful trajectory in the garden, was that no harm would come Eve's way if she ate of the forbidden fruit, and instead would become like God.
- The Antichrist will lead people into great rebellion against God and cause them to **believe the lie**.

Again, Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and he's got many lies up his sleeve. This arsenal will be at the Antichrist's disposal.

### 3. A Predicted Judgment – 2:12

**2:12 - *that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

A person has the freedom to choose what they believe. But remember, there is a deceiver who will do everything he can to make you think your joy and pleasure in life will come from choosing your own path.

Notice, it doesn't say they had displeasure in unrighteousness, but pleasure. It's true, sin may be fun for a season, but it's a very, very short season. Shorter than our summer seasons here.

- The pleasure of sin is a fleeting pleasure. The writer of Ecclesiastes said that living for this world was vanity, it was like chasing the wind.

There is no joy in sin. God is faithful to spell out for us what is coming for those who do not receive His truth – **that they all may be condemned**. This does not have to be the conclusion for your life.

- Jesus was condemned in our place when He died on the cross for our sins. He took the judgment we deserved. But the truth of the matter is you need to put your trust in Him to be saved.

We're living in an Age of Grace right now. But when this age closes, and the next one unfolds (the Tribulation) many will not turn to the Lord. If they didn't believe the truth now, why would they when they're in an increased time of deception and delusion?

It's not impossible, people will be saved in the tribulation. But please don't think this is a backup plan. That if you don't make it up in the rapture, you can just surrender to Jesus afterwards. Because it will be difficult and many will be condemned.

What is Satan's greatest lie today? That you don't need to get serious about Jesus. That there's always time. Or he'll allow you to think your salvation is dependent on your good works. Being a good person is what gets you into heaven. After all, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

It's important that we're not being deceived or following a lie rather than the truth. The truth is that Jesus is the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus and faith in Jesus to forgive you of your sins. Have you received that truth today?

### Points to Ponder:

1. Am I grounded solidly in truth to recognize deception when it comes?
  - Not everything supernatural is from God.
2. Are there areas in my life where I'm resisting God's way for my way?
  - Persistent rejections of truth leads to deeper deception.
3. What am I finding pleasure in today – righteousness or unrighteousness?
  - What we pursue often determines where we land.