

2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 — The Slaying Of Satan's Superman — Part 2

October 13, 2024

This morning, we are back in 2 Thessalonians 2. We are continuing our study of the Antichrist that we began last week.

We know Jesus is coming back. We do not know when, but we know he will return. In Matthew 24:36, Jesus tells us nobody knows the day or the hour of Christ's return except for God the Father. This is why we shake our heads at the self-proclaimed end-times prophecy people who think they can predict the day and hour of Jesus' return. If Jesus doesn't know the hour of his return, I am sure they don't.

When Jesus returns, it will be a great day for Christians. He will resurrect dead Christians and transform the bodies of living and dead Christians to be like His resurrection body. Those bodies will live forever. They will be known for strength, not weakness. They will be known for health, not sickness. We will live in our resurrection bodies forever, just as Jesus will live in his resurrection body forever.

We will also see Jesus in all of His glory. As Christians, we will even be given some of Jesus' glory. As we learned a few weeks ago, the more glory we bring to Christ in this life, the more of Jesus' glory we will possess in the next life. When Jesus returns, for Christians, there is no sin to be paid for. Jesus suffered for our sins. He died for our sins. Jesus is so good; when he returns, he plans to reward us for how we lived. As Christians, we are saved by grace through Jesus, but we will be rewarded by our works for Jesus. Jesus doesn't have to reward us, but he is so good he wants to reward us.

Look how Paul describes the time of Jesus' return.

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8 (ESV)

The crown of righteousness is not just for Paul, but it is for you and me. It is for all who look forward to Jesus' appearing.

Background

The Crisis

While the return of Christ is the great hope we look forward to, that was not the case for the Christians in Thessalonica. They had a crisis. We read about it last week in verses 1 and 2.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2 (ESV)

Someone had come to the church and led them astray with bogus teaching. The false teaching came to the church either through a false teacher who claimed he taught what Paul taught or a false letter that claimed it was written by Paul. It was a forgery. This teaching or letter claimed Paul had a new revelation from the Lord, contradicting everything he told them about Jesus' return. Supposedly, Jesus had already returned. They missed it. They were left behind! All that was left for them was not joy, rewards, and forgiveness by Jesus but only the wrath of Jesus. That sounds terrible!

Why did they believe this false teaching? The answer is simple. It has Paul's name attached to it, even though Paul had nothing to do with it. Since

Paul did not have an account on Facebook, Instagram, or X, they had no way of checking to see if Paul posted about this; they just believed it.

When Paul heard about this bogus teaching that led them astray, he did the only thing he could. He wrote the letter of 2 Thessalonians to correct it. In verses 3 to 12 of this chapter, he moved from talking about the crisis they faced because of false teaching to the correction they needed to know.

The Correction

Jesus' return did not take place. They didn't miss it. Jesus' return will not take place next week. Paul said there are things that must take place before Jesus returns.

This is very helpful to us. Last week, I told you about a friend in college who dropped out of school because he was convinced Jesus would return in 1988. Jesus didn't return. He was led astray by a false teacher. I told you about Harold Camping, who predicted the return of Jesus multiple times and was wrong every time. I told you about an email sent to me last week telling me Jesus would return no later than Saturday night, yet we had service Sunday morning. Here was another person who had it wrong.

In your life, you will hear hundreds of bogus claims people make about the day and time of Jesus' return. All you need to do to know if they are trying to lead you astray is read 2 Thessalonians 2. In this chapter, Paul tells the Thessalonians why they shouldn't have been deceived by this false teaching, and how to keep themselves from being deceived about Jesus' return by other false teachers in the future. Paul told the Thessalonians there are things that

must take place before Jesus will return. If those things haven't taken place, Jesus' return is not imminent.

Let's read 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5 to see what are the events that need to take place before Jesus' return.

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 (ESV)

The two big things that need to occur are: 1. The Rebellion. 2. The appearance of the man of lawlessness, also known as the Antichrist.

The Rebellion must take place before Jesus' return.

"The rebellion" means a meltdown of law and order in society. The Greek word Paul uses is not common in the New Testament. It is used in secular Greek literature to describe rebellion against law, order, the government, and God.

This is not a moderate rebellion. It is a serious rebellion. It is not called "a rebellion" but "the rebellion" because its nature is unprecedented.

After the rebellion, as an answer to the rebellion, the man of lawlessness appears. He will put himself forward as the solution to the world's problems at its greatest crisis moment. The world will follow him. He will gain power not just in a country but across the world until he is leading the globe. When he is firm in command, he will move from leading the planet to wanting to be the sole object of worship on the planet.

When we see that taking place, the time is ripe for Jesus' return. This is how we know that the people telling us that Jesus is coming back next week are

wrong. The things Paul told us must occur before Jesus returns haven't happened. The great rebellion hasn't happened, and the appearance of the man of lawlessness, also known as the Antichrist, has not happened. That is a recap of what we learned last week.

This morning, as we pick up our study in 2 Thessalonians 2:6, we take a deep dive into the career of the AntiChrist.

The Antichrist

I call him Satan's Superman because that is what he is. He is a man, but he has superpowers from Satan. Paul calls him the man of lawlessness because he acts as if he is above the laws of man and God. The apostle John calls him the Antichrist.

The Antichrist is a good term because it describes who this man is trying to be and what he is trying to do.

Satan wants to overthrow God. He wants to be worshipped in place of God. Satan also wants to overthrow Jesus and have a replacement for Jesus. That is Satan's driving passion. In Satan's final effort to overthrow Jesus, he will bring a false Jesus, a false Christ, into the world. That is why John calls him the Antichrist. His goal is to be a counterfeit Christ, but in his heart, he is the exact opposite of Christ. Just as there is counterfeit money that looks like the real thing, and when people are deceived by it, they realize it is worth nothing. The same is true about the Antichrist. He will try to look like Jesus and act like Jesus. He will deceive people into thinking he is Jesus, but he is nothing more than a cheap counterfeit who is worth nothing.

Just as Jesus was God in the flesh, this man will be as close as possible to Satan in the flesh. There will be no man on the planet who will be more fully possessed by, controlled by, and empowered by Satan than the Antichrist. He will be very skillful. He will be powerful. He will be an excellent leader and a consummate politician. He will have at his disposal all of the supernatural power Satan can muster to counterfeit his credentials and make him appear to be Jesus. As we saw last week, in his attempt to dethrone God, he will set himself up as the only God in the universe and forbid anyone to worship anything on the planet but him.

Let me remind you of another thing we learned last week.

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18 (ESV)

There will be one great and final Antichrist at the end of history, but before we get there, there will be multiple smaller Antichrists who will appear on the timeline of history. Right now, Satan is trying to raise a man upon whom he will have complete control, a man he can use as his false Christ in this world, a fake savior of the world.

Last week, we said that Hitler is an example of one of these lesser Antichrists. Look at his history. He took advantage of the devastation in Germany after World War I. The chaos at that time in German society was akin to a great rebellion and societal collapse. Those conditions made it a ripe for an Antichrist figure to seize power. Hitler offered himself as Germany's savior. He rebuilt the country. He made peace treaties but broke all of them because true to form; he was a man of lawlessness. He set out to conquer the world. He attempted to

genocide the Jews. He corrupted the church in Germany. The Nuremberg trials revealed that he was deeply involved in the occult and tried to tap the power of Satan to achieve his goals. That is an Antichrist figure. Thankfully, God shut Hitler down before he could become the final Antichrist.

How did God shut him down? How did God use the Allies to shut Hitler down? These are some of the questions we will examine this morning as we consider 2 Thessalonians 2:6.

The Revealing of The Man of Lawlessness (and the Riddle of the Restrainer)

And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7 (ESV)

The rebellion of the man of lawlessness is already at work in this world, but up to this point in history, it has never been allowed to express itself fully. Right now, Satan is not allowed to grow lawlessness in this world to its logical conclusion. What keeps Satan from achieving his goals? Paul says Satan is being restrained by a thing in verse 6. He says what restrains him is a person in verse 7. What restrains Satan is both a thing and a person. Before we unravel the riddle of the restrainer, you need to know that these two verses are considered the hardest verses in all of Paul's letters to understand. If they are confusing for you, they are confusing for everyone. Let's take a crack at them.

Who/what is the restrainer?

In verse 6, Paul reminds the Thessalonians they know what is restraining Satan until the proper time. When Paul was with them in person, he told them the identity of Satan's restrainer. Paul told the Thessalonians who or what God is

using to keep Satan and his Antichrist from rising to full power. While Paul told the Thessalonians the identity of the restrainer when he was with them in person, he does not tell us in the letter. We are left guessing.

Who or what is this? There are many guesses. Some say it is the Jewish State, some say it is the church, some say it is the government, and some say it is the Roman Empire. There is a long list.

I said in this chapter last week that many times, we need to be humble. We need to whisper our opinions rather than shout them as if they are biblical truth. This is one answer where everyone should be humble and whisper. We simply do not know the identity of the restrainer.

Nevertheless, I will give you my opinion on the identity of the restrainer. I am only whispering it because I may be wrong. First, I do not think the restrainer is the government or any other human institution. Humans can not effectively thwart Satan's plans and power. The restrainer needs to be a powerful spiritual being to deal with another powerful spiritual being.

I think the restrainer is Michael the Archangel. In this world, he is ruining Satan's effectiveness and consistently thwarting the Antichrists of every generation from rising to worldwide power. Why do I say this? Paul builds much of what he says in 2 Thessalonians 2 from Daniel 10-12. In those chapters, Michael, the archangel, is mentioned three times. He is seen as standing against an evil force in the world protecting the people of God. Here is one verse from Daniel to show you what I mean.

But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. Daniel 10:21 (ESV)

Satan and the man he desires to leverage into the ultimate AntiChrist of our generation are in the world right now. Satan finds his plans for the Antichrist's rise to power frustrated. He is constantly undermined in achieving his goal because God has a spiritual thing or a spiritual person restraining Satan and his Antichrist so they can not successfully carry out their evil plans. The force or the person who is most likely restraining them is Michael, the archangel.

But there will come a time when God takes the restrainer out of the way. When he does, Satan, evil, and his Antichrist will be wildly successful. If you think the world is bad now, just wait until God says it is time to take the restrainer out of the way.

Why are Satan and his Antichrist being restrained?

Why will God remove the restrainer to allow Satan and his Antichrist to have their way finally?

...so that he may be revealed in his time. 2 Thessalonians 2:6 (ESV)

God has an appointed season for the AntiChrist to appear. No matter how hard Satan tries, he can not make his planned Antichrist rise to power any faster than God allows. Satan is like a dog on a leash. He can bark and bite and pull. But he can only go as far as God allows him to go. He is on a chain. God is using the restrainer as the chain that holds him back.

When will the restrainer be taken away? When all those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world have responded to Jesus. The Bible tells us there are a specified number of people

who are chosen by Jesus to be saved. They were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Satan wants to hurry the takeover of the world through his Antichrist as fast as he can. Satan would do it this week if God allowed him. The problem is that once the Antichrist rises to full power, Jesus will return. The opportunity to respond to Jesus is over. Jesus can't return until all those chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be saved by Jesus have had their chance to hear the gospel and respond to Jesus so they are saved. Until the full number has come in, the restrainer is in place.

God restrains Satan and his Antichrist until the full number of people who were chosen to be saved before the foundation of the world have heard the gospel and responded to it. When that is complete, God will remove the restrainer, and the rebellion will come. The AntiChrist will rise to power. If God didn't employ the restrainer on Satan, some who are destined for salvation would never receive salvation because Satan and his Antichrist would take over the world before all those destined to be saved had a chance to hear about Jesus and be saved.

One great comfort of this passage is that while Satan has his plans to destroy us, Satan and his plans are never allowed to pass beyond the limits God has chosen and the timing God ordained. No matter how difficult life becomes, Satan is not in charge. Jesus is in charge. Jesus has a good plan and the right timing for everything.

What is the mystery of lawlessness?

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)

Let's look at this term: the mystery of lawlessness. In the Bible, when you see the term "mystery," it does not refer to an Agatha Christie novel. In the Bible, a mystery is something unknown to us, and it is incapable of being known by us unless God reveals it to us. A mystery is the reality of some great truth we could never know unless God told us.

This particular mystery is called the mystery of lawlessness. It means that we would not know the true character and source of lawlessness in the world apart from God telling us.

Today, on the news, there are reports of wars, shootings, and murders. People say if we had a different person in the White House or more funding for government programs, that would solve the problem. That is not true. It is far more complex.

Satan is ultimately behind much of the evil in this world. He promotes it. We wouldn't know Satan is trying to raise miniature Antichrists in this world that he can control to promote lawlessness, killing, death, and destruction in this world if God hadn't told us. This is why it is called the mystery of lawlessness. It is a mystery to the rest of the world, but because of what God tells us in the Bible, it is not a mystery for us.

The mystery of lawlessness is not just that Satan is trying to promote lawlessness by finding people he can influence in that direction. We also wouldn't know that God has a restraining force holding us back if God didn't tell us. We also wouldn't know that one day, the restrainer will be removed, and all hell will break loose.

Let me summarize. While Satan is aware he cannot become God in the flesh, he wants to imitate the coming of Jesus as much as possible. He longs for a man over whom he will have complete control and perform his will as thoroughly as Jesus performed the will of his Father. The Antichrist will have to be a man of outstanding talents, but as yet, the devil is frustrated in his attempt to put his plans into operation. Someone or something is always holding him back (the restrainer). For the time being, the worst Satan can do is promote the spirit of lawlessness, but this does not satisfy him. He is biding his time, waiting for the divinely decreed moment when what holds him back is removed. Then Satan will carry out his plans to the fullest, and the lawless one will be revealed.

The destruction of the man of lawlessness.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV)

The man of lawlessness is revealed when the restrainer is taken out of the way. At the height of his operation, when with the full unrestrained power of Satan, the Antichrist has become the ruler of the world and set himself as the only one who can be worshipped in the world, at that moment, Jesus shows up.

How will Jesus destroy the Antichrist?

How will Jesus kill him? By his breath. This doesn't mean Jesus has bad breath. This is not divine halitosis. Paul's point is a contrast. The Antichrist has all the nuclear arsenals of the world at his disposal. He has every fighter jet and every atomic weapon he can use. He has all the armies of the world serving him. He has all the people of the world (except for Christians) deceived into worshipping him. He has all the power Satan can give him. He seems

undefeatable. When Jesus shows up, he doesn't bring an army. He doesn't need an army. He doesn't even need to lift a finger against the Antichrist. All he has to do is breathe on him, and he is killed.

This is a quote from Isaiah 11:4. Paul quotes from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was commonly used at that time. For the fun of it, let me give you this verse from an English translation of the Septuagint.

...he shall smite the earth with the word of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he destroy the ungodly one. Isaiah 11:4 (Brenton LXX En)

How will Jesus dismantle the Antichrist's worldwide empire?

It also says he will bring him to nothing with the appearance of his coming. In Greek, appearance means shining. When Jesus returns in all of his might, brightness, radiance, and glory, his presence will be a blinding light. A few weeks ago, we saw that His presence is a consuming fire. Jesus' appearance reveals the man of lawlessness to be a fraud, an imposter, a counterfeit. The radiance of Jesus' appearance is so bright and glorious that crumbled the worldwide enterprise of the Antichrist in an instant.

Where will the Antichrist go?

and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10 (ESV)

In Revelation, the beast is the Antichrist. He ends up in the lake of fire.

The deception of the man of lawlessness.

When we think of the Antichrist and the position of power he can obtain on earth, if you are like me, you wonder how he will accomplish it. After all, he is just

a man. He is a man possessed and controlled by Satan, but just a man. How will he get so many people to follow him and blindly commit their allegiance to him?

That is the question Paul answers next.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, 2 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)

As we saw before, Satan will possess the man of lawlessness and give him all power. He will perform false signs and wonders, having genuine supernatural power. These are not magic tricks. It is not a David Copperfield show in Las Vegas where you can watch how the tricks are done on YouTube. This is actual supernatural power, actual miracles, by the power of Satan. They will be very convincing.

Remember that Satan's power is limited. It is nothing compared to God's power, which is unlimited. Whatever power Satan has for miracles and signs, he will bring to the table and give it to the man of lawlessness.

What these false signs and wonders are designed to do is lead people astray. They are to lead people to the wrong conclusion about the identity of the Antichrist. People will think he is God in the flesh. People will think he is divine. They will see him as a brilliant leader who can solve the world's problems. The Jews will conclude he is their Messiah. The false miracles will be so convincing that they will enable him to deceive all the world's religions to abandon their previous beliefs and follow him. They will be so convincing that he can create one world government and religion. Anybody who will not bow down to him will be destroyed by him. It will be like what happened in Daniel 3 when Nebuchadnezzar built a gold idol and made everyone in his kingdom bow down

and worship it. If you didn't worship the idol, you were thrown into the fiery furnace. Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image, and they were thrown into the fiery furnace. I suspect that scene will repeat many times when the Antichrist comes to power.

The Antichrist will try to copy the miracles of Jesus.

Here is an interesting observation: The man of lawlessness will display powers, signs, and wonders. These could be translated as miracles, signs, and wonders. Guess who the Antichrist is trying to imitate with his miraculous powers? Jesus! He is tries to convince Christians to follow him and worship him.

So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."
John 4:48 (ESV)

We should not be surprised at counterfeit miracles.

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. Mark 13:22 (ESV)

The Bible tells us Satan will empower false Christs and false prophets to perform deceptive miracles to lead people astray. They will lead many astray. The only ones they will not be able to lead astray are the elect.

When our students went to Haiti. they learned about witch doctors. The Haitian people know that witch doctors have real power, power that can make people sick and even kill them. That power was nothing compared to Jesus' power, that is real power. Jesus' power always trumps Satan's power in witch doctors. This is the same thing for the Antichrist.

The first reason why people will be deceived by the AntiChrist is because of his power and his miracles. Let's look at the second reason they are deceived by the Antichrist.

The influence of the man of lawlessness.

and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 (ESV)

Now we see the extent of the Antichrist's influence. He will lead astray all who are perishing. They are those who reject the truth and do not love the truth. If you do not love Jesus, you will be caught up in the Antichrist's deception. You will believe the lie.

The Antichrist's miracles will be so convincing that only the elect will not be fooled.

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24 (ESV)

False Christs and false prophets will perform great signs and miracles by the power of Satan to lead people astray. They will be quite convincing. The only people they will not be able to lead astray are the elect. Those chosen by God from eternity past to be saved by Jesus.

When we say the people who won't be deceived are those who love the truth. Know that is shorthand for Jesus.

The only way to avoid being deceived by the Antichrist is to love Jesus, who is the truth.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (ESV)

Those who will be deceived are deceived not because they don't know about Jesus but because they don't love Jesus. Unbelief is not a matter of the mind. It is not a matter of intellect. It is a matter of the affections of the heart. There are plenty of people to whom you can present the intellectual truths of the Christian faith. Do you believe Jesus lived and died? Yes. Do you believe Jesus

died for your sin and rose to give you new life? Yes. They check all the intellectual boxes, but they will not be saved by Jesus. They will be deceived by the Antichrist because while they intellectually know the truth of what Jesus did, and they may even think it is true, they do not love Jesus, who is the truth.

They love their sins more than they love Jesus.

Remember, demons have good theology. They know more biblical truth than we know. They can recall more Bible verses than AWANA students with their Timothy award. They have the right intellectual beliefs about Jesus, but they do hate Jesus. They don't love him. That is why they can never be saved.

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! James 2:19 (ESV)

Those who only have good Bible knowledge about Jesus will be deceived when the Antichrist comes. It is not the right information about Jesus that saves you. It is not winning a game of Bible trivia that makes you right with God. It is genuine love for Jesus. It is only genuine love for the true Jesus that will keep you from being deceived by the Antichrist who is a cheap counterfeit imitation of Jesus.

The Antichrist's influence on the people this world will be so deceptive and slick and so convincing that only those who genuinely love Jesus be kept from being deceived by the Antichrist who is a counterfeit imitation of Jesus.

The consequences of following the man of lawlessness.

...because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12 (ESV)

Why do people go to hell? Why do people perish? Why are they punished eternally? Here it is.

People go to hell not because they don't know about Jesus but because they refuse to love Him.

...because they refused to love the truth and so be saved 2 Thessalonians 2:10b (ESV)

It is a human choice—an unwillingness to accept the truth. People perish not because God ordained them to hell. They perish because of their own choice to reject the truth.

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. John 5:39–40 (ESV)

Their resistance to the truth was not intellectual. They had the information. It was moral. People go to hell because of an unwillingness to believe in Jesus.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. John 3:19 (ESV)

If you go to someone and tell them, there is a God who loves them. There is a God who sent his own son to die for them to pay the penalty for their sins. He wants to forgive them. He wants them to be free of guilt and shame. He wants you to spend eternity in joy with him, people will say, “That sounds good. Sign me up.” As soon as you tell them that to join team Jesus, you have to abandon your sin, repent of it, and turn to a path of pleasing Jesus with your life because you love Jesus more than your sin, many people will turn away because they love their sin more than they love Jesus.

If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed... 1 Corinthians 16:22 (ESV)

It reminds me of conversations I have had with people over the years. Some people ask me, “Do you have to read your Bible to be a Christian?” Technically, you don’t. If you don’t read your Bible, it means you don’t love Jesus and want to spend time with Jesus. Others have asked me, “Do you have to attend church to be a Christian?” No, you technically don’t. If you don’t see it as important to worship Jesus, spend time with your brothers and sisters in Jesus, and grow in Jesus, chances are you do not love Jesus. When you love something, you always find time to do what you love.

God deludes those who don’t believe the truth, so they are hardened in unbelief.

There are consequences for refusing to believe the truth and be saved.

Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, 2 Thessalonians 2:11 (ESV)

Since they refuse to believe and love the truth, God sends divine judgment. God sends them a strong delusion, so they believe what is false. They will be convinced that what is false is true. They will be convinced that the Antichrist is the real Christ. While genuine Christians who love Jesus will be able to sniff out his deception, those who don’t love Jesus will be taken in by his deception. God will seal them in their fate.

Earlier, we saw the world will believe the Antichrist and worship the Antichrist partially because of his satanically empowered miracles and partially because he will at first appear to be the savior of a troubled world, but the bottom line reason people will follow him because God will send them a delusion to believe his lies. God judicially says you chose to reject my son, who is the truth.

As judgment, I will send you a delusion so you can only believe the Antichrist's lies. This is not new in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, you may remember Pharaoh during the Exodus. God sent Moses to Pharaoh and told him to say, "Let my people go!" Yet, it says Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let God's people go.

But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go. Exodus 8:32 (ESV)

God sent numerous plagues on Egypt, such as turning the Nile River into blood and covering the nation with frogs. The plagues were all designed to get Pharaoh to repent. Instead of repenting, he hardened his heart.

Partway through the plagues, after Pharaoh refuses to repent, the text changes. Instead of Pharaoh hardening his heart, it says God hardened Pharaoh's heart so he could not repent. The plagues were designed to lead him to repentance because of judgment he could not avoid because he refused to repent.

But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses. Exodus 9:12 (ESV)

This is what God does in the end times. Those who refuse to believe the truth of Jesus will become hardened in their unbelief against Jesus. At that point, they can only believe the Antichrist's lies. As the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was intended to bring suffering for his sin, in a similar way, the hardening of the heart of those who don't love Jesus will bring suffering for their sins.

There are only two options in this world. We either love the truth, which means we love Jesus, or we will be deceived by lies, especially by the lies of the Antichrist. Those who reject the truth of Jesus will become hardened in unbelief,

so they can only believe the Antichrist's lies. People will lose their opportunity to repent.

Here is an important point. Years ago, evangelists would say, "Do not continue in your sin past the point of grace." Those who refuse to believe the truth will eventually reach a point where God judicially hardens them, like Pharaoh, so they no longer have the ability to believe the truth. They are hardened in unbelief and will be deceived by the lies of the Antichrist.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." Hebrews 4:7b (ESV)

The condemnation of the man of lawlessness

in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:12 (ESV)

What happens to the Antichrist?

The Antichrist will end up in the lake of fire.

and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10 (ESV)

In Revelation, the Antichrist is called the Beast. He ends up in the lake of fire. Paul describes what will happen to those who do not love Jesus and reject the truth this way.

What will happen to all those who refused to believe the truth so they were deceived by his lies?

Those who are deceived by him will join him.

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 2 Thessalonians 1:9 (ESV)

Conclusion

As we close, I have a question for you and a promise of hope. Let's start with the question.

- If God removed the restrainer, so Satan and his Antichrist rose to full power, would you be deceived into following them, or would your love for Jesus keep you from being lured away?

Here is my promise.

- When the Antichrist is at the apex of his power, Jesus will return and defeat him. No matter how overwhelming evil appears, Jesus only needs to breathe on it to destroy it.



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