

I decided to follow our study in Revelation with the letters to the Thessalonians because of the connecting theme to what we are studying in both letters. We can see that the Apostle Paul was preaching and teaching on the things that John would later write about in Revelation. In fact, it was so important a subject to Paul that he taught on it during his short three-week stay in Thessalonica. In his letters he clarifies some of their misunderstandings of what he had taught when he was present with them.

In the preceding passage we are told that before our gathering together in the clouds and the day of the Lord there must first be both a falling away and the revealing of the Antichrist (2:1-3ⁱ). The spirit of antichrist has been at work in the world (1 John 4:3ⁱⁱ). That is why Christians, who are the best of citizens (Romans 13:1ⁱⁱⁱ), are persecuted by their own governments. And that spirit is also at work distorting the gospel with false teaching and compromises that distort the truth. Those false teachings appeal to our old nature and make it easier for us to fit in with the world (Romans 12:2^{iv}).

We also read that there is something that restrains that spirit from bringing forth the Antichrist, who is the very embodiment of the spirit of lawlessness (2:6^v). Lawlessness to the Hebrews and in the Greek language suggests it is against the good boundaries of God's laws. Once that restraining power is removed the Antichrist will take his seat in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God. That will be the definitive sign that he is the one (Matthew 24:4,5^{vi}; 23,24^{vii}).

Revelation 13 refers to him as a beast. ⁵ *And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.* ⁶ *It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.* ⁷ *Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,* ⁸ *and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.* Revelation 13:5-8

Daniel described this event in Daniel 9:27 ²⁷ *And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.* From this verse many interpreters believe the last seven years begins with a deal the Antichrist makes for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple. That is because that is the only place the Bible allows for Jewish sacrifices and offerings to be made. It is in the middle of that seven-year period that the Antichrist stops the sacrifices and declares himself to be God and makes war on those who oppose him, including the saints, which is a New Testament term applied to all followers of Jesus (Acts 9:13^{viii}; Romans 1:7^{ix}). But in God's timing he will be destroyed by the brightness of Jesus coming.

⁹ *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,* 2 Thessalonians 2:9 Our passage for today tells us how he will gain power, but also some principles of good and evil. This evil person comes by the activity of Satan. Satan is a real being. Isaiah 14:13,14^x tells how Lucifer fell from being one of

the most glorious angels to being an opponent of God. His pride in his might and power led to a rebellion against God in an attempt to take over the spiritual realm. In our present chapter he again tries to play God. He makes a final attempt to gain the worship of mankind by possessing the Antichrist. Revelation 13:4^{xi} tells us that the world will worship Satan/the dragon for giving his authority to the Antichrist. All who oppose him will be slain. Only those who worship him will be able to buy or sell anything (Revelation 13:16,17^{xii}). We see how this is now possible in our day with the ascendance of facial recognition and digital currency.

He convinces people to believe in him through the power he wields to perform false signs and wonders. The miraculous is not always from God. Satan has power. It is nothing like the power of God but nevertheless he can express that power. We read in Revelation that he has a deadly wound that is somehow healed (Revelation 13:3^{xiii}). His false prophet will make fire come down from heaven (Revelation 13:13^{xiv}). The signs he is allowed to perform may be like the signs Jesus performed proving He was the Messiah. Perhaps the Antichrist will perform signs and then point to prophecies about the messiah to verify his false claims. Many people will fall for his lies. Others will know it is a lie but worship him anyway for the freedom to buy and sell. **The desire for comfort can cause people to justify what they know is wrong.** The power of Satan is almost always used in destructive ways. It only seems constructive in preparation for more destruction and delusion. To compromise with evil is to enable more destruction and death.

¹⁰ *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 The Antichrist's false signs and wonders are wicked deceptions to convince those who refuse to love the truth that he is the real God. Romans 1:21 declares ²¹ *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* In their refusing the love of the truth and so be saved, they readily accept an alternative that fits what their foolish hearts' desire. He will demand their allegiance but encourage their worldly pursuits. We are called out of the world to worship and serve our Savior in holiness and righteousness (John 15:19^{xv}). Those who are perishing will worship and serve the Antichrist in debauchery and unrighteousness.

I am amazed at seeing people refuse to love the truth. Faced with clear facts, they reject them to believe a lie. They will intentionally listen to what supports what they desire to believe knowing they have been lied to time and time again. Evolution is good example of this. We now know there is no such thing as a simple cell. That is where the evolutionists start their whole theory. They say the right chemicals were in the right conditions, and BING, life happens. Now we know that is impossible. The simplest cell has a genetic code that can instruct machines to take chemicals to build proteins which only exist because of living organisms making them. They are three dimensional and fit together with other proteins to serve certain functions necessary for life. Other machines in that "simple" cell check for accuracy in the process. Micro barges take the protein to the place it needs to be. We still do not understand the many complexities in what Darwin imagined was a simple cell. Nor have we ever found the many fossils Darwin predicted we would find of a species on their evolutionary journey to become another species. They refuse to love the truth that we are fearfully and wonderfully made by our Creator (Psalm

139:14^{xvi}). That truth would cause them to consider their obligation to God, so they refuse to love the truth and will accept a lie, no matter how illogical or absurd.

The ultimate truth is a person. He said something that would sound like insanity in any other person's mouth. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life!"* John 14:6a He is truth embodied! How do we know that is true? Not only did He fulfill hundreds of prophecies about His life, death, and resurrection, but his resurrected body was seen by hundreds of people (1 Corinthians 15:5-8^{xvii}). His life in people transforms killers and thieves into saints. There may be others who have made the claim to be *the* truth, but was their life remotely near the holiness of the life of Jesus?

The Antichrist will claim he is truth and show signs and wonders, but set his life beside that of Jesus and you will see the difference. I trust all of you listening to this message love the truth. If by chance you have not accepted the truth of who Jesus is and what He did for you, I invite you right now, the Holy Spirit invites you to receive the love of the truth so that you might be saved. The justice of God must condemn those who reject the love of the truth and intentionally choose a lie. He allows us to freely choose truth or a lie, but He must judge the lie and those who embrace it. To refuse something means it has been offered to you. It is offered to you right now. You probably know of other times in your life the Spirit of God has offered you the truth (John 6:44^{xviii}). You felt that tug on your heart and you knew it was an invitation from heaven. Do not continue to refuse the love of the truth, the love of Jesus who gave His life that you might know Him.

¹¹ *Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,* 2 Thessalonians 2:11 Delusion is often translated as error. It is translated as delusion here because the previous verse said there was the wicked deception of Satan at work. God gives them an error or delusion that their hearts crave because they refuse to love the truth. The division will be so stark, Christ or Antichrist, truth or lie, love or hate, saved or perishing. We have seen previews of this in history. Hitler claimed the German white Anglo-Saxon were the evolutionary superior race and all others should be eliminated to keep the gene pool pure. The Pharaohs and the Caesars claimed to be gods. To resist them or their policies was seen as resisting god. The time will come when all are either subservient to the Antichrist wishes or are eliminated.

We read those verses Revelation 13:5,6 that told us *the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name ...* Declaring oneself to be god is about as haughty and blasphemous as one can be. If you have seen videos of Hitler speaking to a large crowd or ranks of soldiers you get an idea of what this will look like. He shouts with such conviction and intensity that it captures your attention. How different from the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit!

He breaks the seven-year agreement halfway through the seven-year covenant and stops the temple sacrifices. That is why I believe his reign of 42 months is the last half of the tribulation.

The true believer will be easy to spot in that day. You can feel the division widening even now. It is stoked by the media and the way things are presented. We see it in the totally different way in which each side reads statistics. **The stark contrast is because there are two completely different worldviews.** We read history differently. We

see world events differently. When the Antichrist makes war on the saints as described in Revelation 13:7, he will overcome us in the physical realm. What those who carry out his orders do not realize is that they are preparing the way for the wrath of God to be poured out on the world. When all believers are killed or raptured, the justice of God will pour out as vials of wrath on the whole earth. This is what the next verse is pointing to.

¹² *in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* 2 Thessalonians 2:12 We either love the truth and find our pleasure in God or believe what is false and find pleasure in unrighteousness. God gives those who reject the love of the truth over to their own desires, but then the coming bowls of wrath take away all the temporal things they found pleasure in. And that is only the beginning. To be condemned for finding one's pleasure in what is wicked is followed by eternal punishment. I wondered if anyone will turn to the truth during those horrible days. After all, they will clearly see they made the wrong choice. But Revelation 16:9-11 tells us, ⁹ *They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.* ¹⁰ *The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish* ¹¹ *and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.* Not only do they not repent, but they curse God. Their hearts are forever set against the truth.

If that were the end of the judgment one could at least hope judgement was over, but we are eternal beings. Those who survive God's wrath will join the Antichrist in a battle to defeat Christ who is returning to reign on the earth, and they are slain. The fact that they would try to resist the God who had power to pour out those vials of wrath on the earth and destroy all that they worshiped shows how firmly their hearts are opposed to the truth. The final destination of those who refuse the love of the truth is revealed at the end of Jesus' thousand-year reign over the earth. Even after a thousand years of being under the perfect and just government of Jesus, those who are outside the city of God will join in another attempt to conquer Jesus. They will then stand before the Great White Throne judgment. Revelation 20:14,15 ¹⁴ *Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.* ¹⁵ *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

The Apostle Paul and John the Beloved's warnings could not be any clearer. But what if the Antichrist is not revealed in our day. It certainly looks like it could happen in our lifetime, but many generations have said the same. Yet, the teaching is applicable to every age. Living for the transient things the world has to offer, making pleasures of the world more important to you than God, refusing the love of the truth, will have us facing judgment (1 John 2:15-17^{xix}). **The deception is not just that the Antichrist is god, but that living for anything other than the love of our Creator is the wrong path and will only end in misery.** What God tells us is for our good. We must take it by faith while we are in this plane, but when we see him it will be worth it all. One thing nearly every person who has had a near death experience and seen Jesus says is that they never wanted to leave the warmth and the love they felt as they were enveloped in His light. They were disappointed they had to return to the mere pleasures of this world.

The fear of God's judgment is the reason that at the age of five I prayed every night for Jesus to save me from hell. One night as I prayed, the Holy Spirit asked me if I would desire Jesus because He loves me. **The Scriptures tell us that it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4^{xx})**. After thinking about it for a moment, I realized that was the love of God inviting me into a relationship with him. I said, "Yes!" and at that moment I knew I was born-again.

ESV translates the Greek in verse 10 as people perishing because they "*refused to love the truth.*" But a literal word for word translation aligns more with other translators (NASB^{xxi}, KJV^{xxii}) which is "*because the love of the truth they did not accept.*" We know that Jesus declared He is the truth (John 14:6^{xxiii}). It is the love of Jesus they refused to accept. I think that is how we should read it. This rendering implies that the love of Jesus invites us all in one form or another. His love reaches out to each of us (Acts 10:34,35^{xxiv}; Isaiah 49:6^{xxv}). The condemned are those who refuse His love and mercy. Rather than to seek God to be saved from His justice, turn to him because He is reaching out to you in love. Do not refuse the greatest love the world has ever seen (John 15:13^{xxvi}). His arms are open to you, inviting you to receive His forgiveness and love. His love is eternal. The lying promises of this world's pleasures are passing (2 Corinthians 4:17,18^{xxvii}). Do not harden your heart to his love (Hebrews 3:15^{xxviii}).

When you have accepted Jesus' love and know you are forgiven, the peace is so wonderful. It does not make life easier, but you have His presence with you through all the things you face (Matthew 28:20^{xxix}). And what is almost as wonderful is the family of God to which you belong. You have brothers and sisters in Christ who journey with you through this short life. Jesus promised the disciples they would receive a hundred times more whatever they gave up for Him in this life followed by eternal life (Matthew 19:29^{xxx}). The enemy of our souls wants us to think we are giving up the fun things of life. Those things we give up are things that enslave and destroy us; but the gifts of God bless us and free us to be who He created us to be. Do not fall for the deception. Life is in Jesus. His love is so great we cannot fathom its depth! He paid it all. His grace is enough for anyone who will come to him in faith (Ephesians 2:8,9^{xxxi}).

Questions:

- 1 Review the first part of chapter 5 and corresponding passages.
- 2 How does the Antichrist gain power?
- 3 Are miraculous signs always from God?
- 4 Why does God send strong delusion?
- 5 Why do the worldly and the godly see things so differently?
- 6 By eliminating believers what are they ushering in?
- 7 Why will the wicked refuse to repent?
- 8 What is the deception we face today?
- 9 What leads us to repentance?
- 10 What is the literal translation for verse 10?

ⁱ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,
² 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. ³ 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 destructionⁱ

ⁱⁱ **1 John 4:3 (ESV)**

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.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Romans 13:1 (ESV)**

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those
that exist have been instituted by God.

^{iv} **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may
discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

^v **2 Thessalonians 2:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

^{vi} **Matthew 24:4-5 (ESV)**

⁴ And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

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

^{vii} **Matthew 24:23-24 (ESV)**

²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.

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

^{viii} **Acts 9:13 (ESV)**

¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints
at Jerusalem.

^{ix} **Romans 1:7 (ESV)**

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

^x **Isaiah 14:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on
the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

^{xi} **Revelation 13:4 (ESV)**

⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast,
saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

^{xii} **Revelation 13:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand
or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the
number of its name.

^{xiii} **Revelation 13:3 (ESV)**

³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth
marveled as they followed the beast.

^{xiv} **Revelation 13:13 (ESV)**

¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,

^{xv} **John 15:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose
you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

^{xvi} **Psalms 139:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

^{xvii} **1 Corinthians 15:5-8 (ESV)**

⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at
one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all
the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

xviii **John 6:44 (ESV)**

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

xix **1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)**

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

xx **Romans 2:4 (ESV)**

4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

xxi **2 Thessalonians 2:10 (NASB)**

10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

xxii **2 Thessalonians 2:10 (KJV)**

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

xxiii **John 14:6 (ESV)**

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

xxiv **Acts 10:34-35 (KJV)**

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

xxv **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

6 he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

xxvi **John 15:13 (ESV)**

13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

xxvii **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

6 he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

xxviii **Hebrews 3:15 (ESV)**

15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

xxix **Matthew 28:20 (ESV)**

20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

xxx **Matthew 19:29 (NIV)**

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

xxxi **Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.