

20. Helping Our Children Learn to Explain the Man of Sin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to bring glory to Christ even when there are going through times of persecution and suffering. That will happen as they learn to leave all judgment to the Lord and choose to walk in a way that is pleasing to Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul answered some questions that the Christians in Thessalonica had asked. False teachers had come saying that the persecution the Thessalonians were suffering was because they had missed the return of Christ to take the church to heaven. They said they were now in the period of time known as the Day of the Lord, which begins with the tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 says, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” In 1 Thessalonians, Paul had answered the question of the Thessalonian Christians about those who died before Christ came to take the Christians to heaven at the rapture of the church. Now false teachers were troubling the Christians by saying that they had missed the Rapture and the Day of the Lord had come. Here, we see that Paul did not want the Christians to be upset.

Paul did not want the Christians to be shaken in mind or troubled. The word that is translated “shaken” is used of an earthquake or is used in Matthew, Mark and Luke to talk about the time of future judgment. Matthew 24:29 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Here, we see that the heavens will be shaken in the tribulation. Apparently false teachers had come who claimed to be speaking for Paul and even had a false letter saying that the persecution that the Christians were suffering meant that the Day of the Lord had come and that was why they were experiencing persecution. Paul did not want to see these Christians upset and worried because of this false teaching.

As a result, Paul told the Christians not to let anyone deceive them. Paul said that two particular things had to happen before the Day of the Lord would come. First, there had to be the falling away. Second, the man of sin had to be revealed. Since these two things are mentioned together, we see that it is talking about the falling away that will come at the time that the man of sin (the antichrist) will be revealed. The man of sin is also called the son of perdition (destruction). We also see the character of the man of sin described. The antichrist will set himself against God. He will exalt himself instead. He will claim to be God. He will require all to worship him. He will sit as God in the temple of God (which will happen at the middle of the tribulation). Mathew 24:15 says, “‘Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation, ” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand).” He will try to prove by arguments that he is God.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-8 says, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” Paul had given the new Christians in Thessalonica instructions about the coming antichrist so he reminded them of that fact.

However, he also reminded them that there is One who is restraining or holding back the antichrist so that he may be revealed at the time when Christ allows the antichrist to come and deceive the nations. The One who restrains is mentioned in both verse six and verse seven. Since the antichrist will be given power by Satan, the One who is restraining the antichrist has to have greater power than Satan. In 1 John 4:1-4, we are told to test the spirits. 1 John 4:3-4 says, “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. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” In the time that John wrote the book of 1 John, there were already many antichrists so the spirit of antichrist was already in the world. That is why we are promised that the One who is in us (the Holy Spirit) is greater than the one who is in the world.

There are many antichrists present today also but these verses talk about the final antichrist that will oppose God and exalt himself above God. Since the Holy Spirit indwells each believer, the final antichrist cannot be revealed until the Holy Spirit who indwells each Christian is taken out of the way. The word that is translated “taken out of the way” means in *the middle of or among*. As long as the Christians are here on this earth, the Holy Spirit who indwells each believer is in the middle of the people of the world. Once we are taken to heaven, the Holy Spirit will no longer be in the middle or among the people of the world. As a result, Paul assured the Christians in Thessalonica that the antichrist had not come because he could not be revealed until the Christians are taken to heaven and the Holy Spirit is out of the way.

Once the One who restrains is taken out of the way, then the wicked one will be revealed. Once we as Christians are taken to heaven, then the antichrist will be free to exercise his power in the world and work to deceive the people of the world. As a result, the antichrist will soon begin to work to gain world power once the Christians are taken to heaven. The antichrist will reveal his true character at the middle of the tribulation. Revelation 13:4-5 says, “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?’ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.” Here, we see that once the antichrist has full control in the world that he will exercise that power for forty-two months.

However, at the end of the forty-two months, the power of the antichrist will come to a sudden end. As a result, the antichrist is going to do everything that he can to fight against God because he knows that his time is short. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 says, “The coming of the *lawless one* is

according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” We see that Satan is going to give the antichrist power to deceive the world. The way that Satan will help the antichrist to deceive the world is giving him power to deceive with all power, signs and lying wonders. Here, we see that Satan will try to imitate the work of the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrews 2:3-4, we see the work of the Holy Spirit. Those verses say, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” The Holy Spirit confirmed the ministry of the apostles by signs, wonders and various miracles. Here, we see that Satan will imitate the work of the Holy Spirit by giving the antichrist power to deceive the world with all power, signs and lying wonders.

The Lord will allow Satan to give this power to the antichrist to deceive those who rejected the truth. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Today, many false teachers are already trying to deceive people with works of power, signs and lying wonders in an effort to gain followers for themselves. Such false teachers are working hard to get people to make the choice to reject the truth of the Gospel and follow their teachings instead. These false teachers are preparing people to reject the truth in that day when the antichrist will be given power to deceive people throughout the world. In that day, such people will not turn to Christ for salvation.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 says, “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Here, we see that people who continue to reject Christ, until Christ comes to take the Christians to heaven, actually will receive strong delusion. “Strong delusion” means these people will continue *to believe what is false*. The result will be that they will choose to believe the lies of the antichrist and choose to follow him.

God will allow this to happen so that those who rejected the truth of the Gospel will not have a second chance during the tribulation to believe the Gospel. Only those who have not heard and rejected will have the opportunity to believe the message of the Gospel that will be preached by the two witnesses that God will send to bring that message. John 3:18 says, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Here, we see that those who choose to reject the truth will continue to be condemned with the result that they will experience eternal judgment. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how the antichrist will be able to deceive during the tribulation those who have heard and rejected. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn warn to people of the results of rejection of Christ.