

Let No One Deceive You

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- [0 : 0 0] Let no one deceive you. Have you been deceived in your journey thus far by somebody? In 1979, I arrived as a new curate. Green from England, off the ship, arrived at St. Stephen's Church, and shortly afterwards, a young man came, told me a sordid story, and over several weeks, we journeyed together, and I asked him if he would like to give his life to Christ, and he said he would.
- And so in the little apartment we lived in, in Calgary, my small daughter went off with Julie, and I went with him into the bedroom, and he knelt down, and he confessed his sin, and I prayed with him that God's presence and that Jesus would fill him, that he'd be filled with the Spirit.
- And I sensed that there was a genuine conversion. Now, I did know he had told me that he had a court case pending, and so several months later, I went with him to the Supreme Court, and I found myself as the chief character witness, and he got off.
- And I came rather jubilately down the steps of the Supreme Court, only to have a policeman come alongside me, one of the detectives working on the case, who said to me, and did you know of all the other cases against him?
- I did not. I confronted, we'll call him John, I confronted John, and I didn't see him again, after having confronted him.
- [2 : 0 1] About six years ago, which was 25 years later, I got a phone call in a different province in a different church, and John was on the end, and he said, I'd like to talk with you.
- I think I was somewhat reluctant. I went, he shared with me that about a year later, he'd got married to a Pentecostal pastor's daughter, and had been attending that church ever since, that he did, in fact, give his life to Christ, and wanted me to know that there'd been good fruit in his life.
- That story really epitomizes and sums up the teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2, 1-17.
- Deception takes place, but in the end, Jesus triumphs over the deceiver. That's the message of 2 Thessalonians.
- It's packaged in a complex framework, because there are all sorts of words and passages and letters and correspondence that are missing.
- [3 : 1 8] And so all we can gather is that Paul, between 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, is wanting to say to these Christians, you've been deceived by somebody, through whatever means, teaching you that the day of the Lord has already come.
- It has not. And then Paul goes on to say there are predictive signs that are going to make it clear that the day of the Lord has come, and you need to know what those are.
- Else, you'll be buffeted like a ship in a sea that gets thrown around by every rumor. And depending on which culture you live in, you will make an assumption that Idi Amin or Ceaușescu or Hitler or if you're in North America, some have suggested somebody currently in North America is the Antichrist and you will be disturbed and confused.

So you need to know, Paul says to the Thessalonians, what these predictive signs are. Now, when you're dealing with a passage that's difficult, and William Barclay says of this passage, it's one of the most difficult in the New Testament.

Thank you, Dan, for giving it to me. I must say I was greatly encouraged when I would really embark on his comments on the passage.

[4 : 46] When in doubt, you get Scripture to interpret Scripture. And so I went to Matthew 24 and 25, knowing that Jesus spoke extensively about the predictive signs for the day of the Lord or the end times or the summing up of the age, the close of the age.

Remember, Jesus, in Matthew 24, four or five warns that there will be many who will come and say, I am the Christ. Do not be deceived, Jesus says.

These Thessalonians are a living example of Jesus' words. They've been deceived. Someone has said to them the day of the Lord has come and they've believed it and they're now convinced that the end of the age is just around the corner.

Now, why do people get deceived? It's because the suffering gets unbearable. It's because the degree of difficulty one experiences in one's life is so bad that one says, it cannot get worse than this.

This has, therefore, to be signs that we're in the very last age. But remember what Jesus said. There will be earthquakes. There will be famines.

[6 : 04] There will be wars and rumours of wars. But those are not the final signs that the end of the age is taking place. They're barely, they're birth pangs which seem to suggest that lots could happen after that.

So I want to turn with you to look at the predictive signs that Paul suggests and we'll compare them to Matthew's predictive signs. And then, I want to end by comparing the man of lawlessness with the man of righteousness because we cannot let Satan have the last word in this passage because this passage doesn't allow for that.

So we'll do that comparison and I think if you're as blessed as I was when I looked at this comparison, we're in for a feast from Scripture this morning.

Well, Paul says that the first of the predictive signs is that rebellion will break out.

That is the first warning that the end of the age is now upon us. Jesus, in Matthew 24 and verse 29, doesn't use the word rebellion.

[7 : 23] He says tribulation will come. I think we might want to reflect on the fact that I think Paul is being more specific about what tribulation looks like.

Trouble is ultimate trouble in the kingdom of God has to be when there's rebellion. That is the worst type of sin.

second sign is that the man of lawlessness will be revealed, the Antichrist. Now, that man of lawlessness, Paul says, is the son of destruction.

And I want to ask the question, who's the father of destruction? So, if he is the son of destruction, I'm going to conclude that the lawless man is the son of Satan.

and hence our comparison between the son of righteousness and the son of Satan will be even more significant. Thirdly, the lawless one is going to exalt himself in the place of God.

[8 : 39] The lawless one will not be able to stand anybody having power, particularly spiritual power. So, it's not just a God, it's any God that is going to be rejected by the lawless one, by the son of Satan.

It reminds us of, well, we'll come to that in a moment. The fourth point is that the lawless one is going to oppose gods and gods, declaring himself to be God.

And the fifth point, the restrainer will hold him back. Now, who's the restrainer? Isn't it the Holy Spirit? He restrains evil.

He holds back the lawless one. But there comes a point at which the restrainer will make a decision to let the lawless one complete the destruction that he's capable of.

That is very important for us. It says that nothing is outside of God's control. The end of the age will be controlled by God and not by Satan.

[9 : 57] The last point in these stages of the end of the age, Paul says, is that Jesus Christ demolishes the man of lawlessness with the breath of his mouth.

nothing more than breath is sufficient to annihilate the lawless man. He also says that he will be annihilated by the manifestation of his coming.

His glory will be sufficient to send the lawless one scurrying away like a rat. Now, I want to ask you to look with me at this comparison between the son of Satan and the son of Jesus, the son of righteousness and the son of destruction.

If that is the first point, one is the son of righteousness and the other is the son of destruction, the second is, what is the aim of these two? Jesus' aim is to save the world.

Even though he rules it, as the carol tells us with truth and grace, his principal purpose is to save the world, to save us. And the principal purpose of the son of lawlessness is to rule the world.

[11 : 27] As we go through these, think about human leaders and leadership because Christian leadership clearly then takes on a whole new form than the form that we're accustomed to.

Jesus serves, Satan rules. Third point, Jesus is exalted by whom? By God.

Who is the son of lawlessness exalted by himself? He places himself above all gods. Fourthly, Jesus is seated by God at the right hand of God.

And the lawless one chooses to seat himself in the temple, in the holy place. We have echoes, of course, of the emperor Caligula trying to set up an image of himself.

Failed. He failed. You also have images here of Antiochus Epiphanes wanting to set up the abomination of desolation. But Jesus will be seated by God.

[12 : 48] Now, who is the forerunner? What is the forerunner of the man of lawlessness? What paves the way for rebellion to take place?

Sorry, I've given you the answer. Rebellion paves the way for the man of lawlessness to have a grip, to have traction on the road.

And what does Jesus get traction on the road by? Who is the forerunner of Jesus? It's John the Baptist. And what does John preach that would give Jesus grip?

Repentance. So, repentance gives Jesus the ability to preach the gospel of salvation. Because if you know that you're a sinner, you know you need a saviour.

The man of lawlessness rides on the back of rebellion. That's why rebellion is so deadly in the kingdom of God. It says somewhere, doesn't it, that it's as the sin of witchcraft.

[14 : 06] So, rebellion is like those palm branches that get strewed over the way so the man of lawlessness can slide without opposition because once he's got people rebelling it's very easy to acknowledge that there is no God and that one turns to another God.

This is a very sobering scripture. If you're rebelling against your parents you're risking a lot. Oops, sorry, I got some acknowledgement there.

If you're rebelling against authorities you need to be very, very careful. people. However, last week of course we looked at the wise men and the wise men did discern they needed to rebel against a human authority.

So, there are occasions when rebellion is God directed. In fact, it was God that led the wise men in a dream to go in a different direction not to report back to Herod.

But rebellion is a dangerous journey. The sixth point is that both the man of lawlessness and Jesus uses signs and wonders.

[15 : 41] I recall in Exodus 7-9 when God said to Aaron and Moses when the Pharaoh says perform a wonder throw down your staff.

And you know the story that when the wonder of this solid staff becoming a serpent and then the sorcerers did the same wonder. They threw down their staffs and their staffs became snakes as well.

I spent some time in the desert so I learned a bit about snakes. And if you know about the king snake, you know that the king snake doesn't fear any other snake in the desert because it's impervious to their venom.

And so they do their best to sting, to inject, to infuse with evil and they say when you've finished I'm going to eat you.

And they do. They simply eat up all the other snakes. And that's exactly what Aaron's snake did. It ate the other snakes. And they were desert dwellers and presumably they knew about the king snake and they would have thought aha, a king snake.

[17 : 06] Interesting. There will be signs and wonders but keep in mind that the wonders and the signs that the man of lawlessness will perform will be similar presumably to those of the sorcerer and the wise men of Pharaoh.

Powerful but yet quite insignificant in the face of the son of God. What is the methodology of Jesus and the man of lawlessness? The methodology is will operate using truth and grace and the man of lawlessness will operate through deception, destruction and division.

And he'll even lie about the power of his snake and frighten us. The outcome of these two, Jesus will bring peace and the man of lawlessness will bring division.

Nine, Jesus cannot be constrained. He sits at the right hand of God, he's all powerful. He will rule the earth.

And the man of lawlessness is given power for a season. He can be constrained and will be, and will be blown away.

[18 : 36] And finally, it only takes breath to send the lawless one off. God's love. So the power and the strength of Satan is insignificant.

I'd like to finish by reading to you the wonderful doxology at the end of two Thessalonians. It's the most wonderful blessing that you could receive.

And let me invite you now to receive this blessing. Just before I do, I will say there is a section in this chapter on election and predestination, but I've deferred that to David for another sermon.

It's above my pay grade. So here is the blessing. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father encourage you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.

God loves us and through his grace he gave us a good hope and encouragement that continues forever.

[20 : 02] May God richly bless you. In your new building. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.