

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class: *“What Will the End of the World Be Like?”*

II. New Testament Passages

D. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (*continued*)

Verses 9-10a: “coming”- This is the same Greek word as used for Christ’s return in verse 8.

The “man of lawlessness” is not simply a man with evil ideas. The lawless one comes with the “energy” (which is literally the Greek word) of Satan to deceive people into thinking the Antichrist is actually a servant of God.

“counterfeit”- These works are false, a lie, not because they don’t actually happen, but because they will not be from God as the “man of lawlessness” will portray. They will be an imitation, a deception to trick people into following the Antichrist.

What is the difference in the three words? “Miracles” emphasize supernatural power at work. “Signs” have meaning that points people to something beyond the acts themselves. “Wonders” describe the effect of amazement that these deeds have on the people who see them. All three of these words are used in the gospels of the works of Jesus. These are the miracles that come from one who seeks to deceive people, as Christ’s miracles are from the One who came to save people.

Matthew 7:22-23 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evil doers!’”

“Scripture warns we must not be swept away by a religious teacher who does miracles. Rather, we must use God’s Word to examine what he teaches. Then we will know whether his power comes from God or whether Satan is doing miracles for him in order to deceive people into believing his false doctrine” (David Kuske, Thessalonians, PBC, Northwestern, 1984, page 97).

What Christian church bodies emphasize the doing of miracles?

As proof of one’s faith: _____

(They strongly would reject being paired with this next group.)

As a requirement for special status in the church: _____

(In order to be declared a “saint” by the pope at least three miracles must be attributed to this person, either directly or through his/her prayers.)

The purpose of these false works is to deceive, trick, fool those who aren’t really following Christ and thus are perishing in their sin. Satan works in every evil way possible to blind people to the fact that following the Antichrist is a way of unrighteousness rather than a way of righteousness. Paul writes in the present tense as though he sees the process going on right before his eyes. In his writings John says that the spirit of antichrist already was in the world. “The primary emphasis is on the fate of those who are deceived. The Man of

Lawlessness will gain a following and be welcomed by many. But his dupes will find in the end that they have followed him to their own irreparable loss” (Leon Morris, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, NICNT, Eerdmans, 1991, page 233).

Verses 10b-12: Paul turns his attention now to those who are so misguided as to follow this deceiver. “refused”- Their unbelief is willing and it is intentional. “truth”- This is not some abstract moral quality, but it is who Jesus is (John 14:6) and what He gives to us in the gospel (Ephesians 1:13).

“the love of truth” (love is a noun in the Greek)- This phrase is found only here in the Greek New Testament. Its placement before the verb is emphatic, stressing that it is important for us. “Paul is thus giving strong expression to the idea that these people received some knowledge of God’s way, but they would have none of it. They gave it no welcome. They gave it no love. And this in spite of the fact that the truth was the only way whereby they might have been saved” (Leon Morris, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Tyndale NT, Eerdmans, 1983, page 133).

God uses the evil consequences of sin as part of the punishment of the sinner. This was the way He worked with Pharaoh in the account of the ten plagues in the book of Exodus. This is an example of God’s *opus alienum*, His alien work that He does not want to do.

Romans 1:24 and 26 Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another...Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

Because they rejected the truth God sends them a powerful delusion (literally, “a work of error”). Two results come from this. 1) “they will _____ the lie”; and

2) “all will be _____”

What is the lie that they believe? _____

Their condemnation is not predestined by God, but is a result of their rejecting the truth and instead delighting in wickedness. For them evil has become good.

What examples do we see of this in the world today? _____

The picture we get is of men who have rejected the light that God has given them and turned their back on the love of the truth. This cannot be done without consequences, and the particular result which claims attention is that they become immersed in their lower pursuits and come to the position where they take delight in them (Morris, Tyndale, op cit., page 135).

We need constantly to guard against their error. We need constantly to warn one another against the Antichrist and all other antichrists who teach a way of salvation other than through Christ alone. We need to pray for one another, as Paul does for the Thessalonians in the next verses, that God would preserve us from self-righteousness and keep us in our Savior (Kuske, op cit., page 100).