**Faith in Uncertain Times - Part 11**

**Concerning the Second Coming – 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 18th, 2021

**Intro:**

* The primary aim of this message is to bring hope, provide encouragement and strengthen you in every good word and deed. We will see this exact aim spelled out at the end of our passage.
* This will be accomplished through the grace of God through the empowering of the Spirit from the illumination of the word to our hearts and minds.
* Our passage today focuses on the second coming of Christ, instructing us not to be deceived, to know the truth and to stand firm and hold fast to it.
* As we have discussed in the past, the second coming has been a subject of fascination and speculation throughout the centuries. We are curious and concerned about it, as we should be, because it is not a made-up story but a proclaimed historical future event and will impact everything and everybody; this is how it is presented in the Bible.
* We don't know all the details, and not everything is as clear as we would like it to be, but we can rest assured that God's "**divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness**" (2 Peter 1:3-4 NIV). That what we have is enough.
* Let's take a look at our passage for today, 2 Thessalonians chapter two, where the first thing we are told is not to be deceived.

**Do not be deceived about the second coming**

**2 Thess 2:1-3a NIV**

**Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us – whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter - asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way,**

* Concerning the second coming, you have the primary responsibility to make sure that you are not deceived. It is my job to equip you with the truth of what is written in scripture, and it is your job to know, believe and live the truth. I can't do that for you, so both you and I have a responsibility so that you will not be deceived, unsettled, or alarmed.
* And many people are deceived, unsettled, and alarmed about the second coming because they don't know the truth or believe the truth presented in the Bible. They hear a YouTube video, or read a book, or a pamphlet or have a conversation that unsettles them about these things.
* Know the truth will bring perspective, which will give you peace and help you to continue to persevere and be productive. Knowing the truth about the second coming will save you from joining a cult, and it can literally save your life.
* If people had known the truth about the second coming, they would not have followed Jim Jones, the founder of the People's Temple, who in 1978 in Jonestown, Guyana convinced more than 900 of his followers (300 of them children) to drink cyanide-laced Flavor Aid. It was the greatest loss of American civilian life in a deliberate act until the 9/11 attacks.
* Knowing the truth about the second coming would keep people from joining cults like the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Charles Russell, taught that the world would end in 1874. When that did not happen, he revised his calculations and changed the date to 1914. And when that did not occur, his successor, J. F. Rutherford, asserted that Christ did, in fact, come in 1914—but invisibly, and millions of people have fallen for this lie.
* Do not believe or hold onto anything that is not found in or supported by God's authoritative word. Paul was warning the church in his day of this, and he is warning the church in our day of this. Do not be deceived about the second coming, and to do this, we must know the truth, which brings us to our next point as we follow the text. I am going to bullet point for us what we can learn about the second coming from this text.

**Know what is true about the second coming**

**2 Thess 2:3b-c NIV**

**for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.**

* According to just this passage, two things must happen before Jesus comes back: "The rebellion" will take place, and the "man of lawlessness" will be revealed.
* *"The rebellion" will take place* – this is not "a rebellion" but "the rebellion" in context; this is primarily a rebellion against God Himself and His Kingdom (this is not against a political, national, or global government). A complete rebellion against what is taught in scripture, especially when it comes to the identity of Jesus Christ (see I John 2:18-25, 1 John 4:1-7, 2 John 7-11).
* *"The man of lawlessness" will be revealed* – this is not "a man of lawlessness"; this is "the man of lawlessness." This man will be physically present on the earth. This man will be revealed, that is "unveiled" (like pulling a cloth off a statue). Many people have wrongly identified who this person is. The list includes "various Roman emperors, the leader of the Vandal invaders who sacked Rome, Mohammed, various popes, the papacy itself, Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX, Marin Luther, King George II of England, Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III, each side in the American Civil War, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, the League of Nations, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the United Nations, Khruschev, the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, King Juan Carlos of Span, Pope John Paul II, Anwar Sadat, Ayatollah Khomeini, Yasser Arafat, Saddam Hussein, the New Age Movement, Henry Kissenger, and former presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan" and Barack Obama, just to name a few (The NIV Application Commentary).
* All of these people were misidentified as the "Antichrist" because they ignored the scriptural descriptions of this man. From our passage for today, we know Christ will not come back until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, this man "doomed to destruction." Thankfully, Paul gives us more information about this person, so we can better identify who this person is.

**2 Thess 2:4 NIV**

**He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**

* *He will oppose* *everything that is called God or worshiped* – he is not just against Christ and Christianity, but he will be against all religions, everything called God or worshiped. John Lennon may have even written the theme song. "Imagine" - "Imagine there's no heaven. It's easy if you try. No hell below us above us only sky. Imagine all the people living for today... Aha-ah...Imagine there's no countries. It isn't hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for. And no religion, too. Imagine all the people living life in peace... You...You may say I'm a dreamer but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one. Imagine no possessions. I wonder if you can. No need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man. Imagine all the people Sharing all the world... You... You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one." He will oppose everything that is called God or worshiped.
* *He will exalt himself over everything that is called God or worshiped* – He is not just against it, he is "over it." That is, he will place himself over everything – above, like the creator or the king of all kings and the lord of all lords.
* *He will set himself up in God's temple –* most biblical scholars conclude that this is a literal Jewish temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem in the future (see Daniel 9:26, 27; 11:31, 36,37; 12:11, Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14). This makes sense in the original context of the passage and the people living at that time. If they are right, and I believe they are, pay careful attention if you see the temple being rebuilt in Jerusalem.
* *He will proclaim himself to be God* – this will be someone who not just claims to be God, but proclaims they are God (above all other Gods).

**2 Thess 2:5-8a NIV**

**Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed,**

* *He is being held back* – they were told what or who this is, we don't know for sure. There has been much speculation about it, from the church to the gospel, to the Holy Spirit, to the Angel. We can know for sure that the "man of lawlessness" is being held back, which means of course that he is not the greatest or highest power.
* *He will be revealed at the "proper time"* – he will be revealed when God says it is the "proper time" to do so. God is the one who is ultimately in charge.
* *He has a "secret power" of lawlessness that is already at work* – lawlessness is sin (I John 3:4). Sin is the power that is working in the world. Sin deceives, sin hardens, sin progresses, sin distorts, and sin transforms.

**2 Thess 2:8 NIV**

**whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.**

* *He will be overthrown and destroyed by Jesus* – which means within the normal lifespan of the "man of lawlessness," Jesus will return. And when He returns, he will overthrow him with "the breath of His mouth" – which could be the HS – His breath gives life, and His breath can take it away. The man of lawlessness will be destroyed by the splendor of his coming (which all will see and none will be able to deny).

**2 Thess 2:9-10a NIV**

**The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders to serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing.**

* *He will perform signs and wonders* -Satan is and has been working this way in the world – Egyptian magicians – to modern-day fortune-tellers and voodoo doctors. There is some supernatural power there, but it is demonic. These are genuine miracles fueled by a supernatural satanic power, and because of them, people will believe that this person is God. They are all used to serve the lie that this person is God. And this wickedness will deceive those who are perishing, which also means that those who are not perishing will see the truth of the power.

**2 Thess 2:10b-12 NIV**

**They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.**

* Why do people perish? Because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. This is a willful choice. Because people made this choice, God sends them a powerful delusion so they will believe a lie. God sets them up to expose who they truly are. He sets the stage for people to show who they really are. God's action does not cause people to reject the truth but is a consequence of their previous rejection.

**Stand firm and hold fast to the truth**

**2 Thess 2:13-15 NIV**

**But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.**

* God is the one who saves; God is the one who sanctifies through the Spirit through belief in the truth. We believe, and He works. He calls us to Himself through the gospel, with the end result being that we share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
* Knowing all these things, we are to "stand firm" in the middle of difficulty and hardship. Don't give up on your faith, and don't give in to believing things that are not true according to what is written. We are told to "hold fast" to them, like a sailor in a storm.
* And then he leaves us with a final prayer.

**Conclusion**

**2 Thess 2:16-17 NIV**

**May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.**

* By His grace, may He give you eternal encouragement and good hope that you will be strengthened in every good deed and word. The end result of knowing all these things is that we will be encouraged and have hope so that we will have renewed strength to continue to do good with the time that we have been given. Not to slow down, or hide away, but to continue to be involved in what the Lord is doing in the world.
* The end result is not to get our "ticket punched" and then wait to go to heaven, but to be a force of good in the world. We can do this by His grace working in us and among us.
* Closing prayer.