

Bible Commentary on 2 Thessalonians

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Bible Commentary on 2 Thessalonians

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Introduction

This is not your typical commentary, so I'd like to give a few words of explanation before you begin. As a child I was taught to read the Word of God on a daily basis. Our goal as a family was to read through the Bible once a year, and that is what we did. When I became an adult I kept reading the Bible from cover to cover.

One day, however, I realized that I wanted something more. Reading the Bible was good, but I wanted to actually *study* it. Could I explain what each verse meant? Did I really understand what each chapter was saying? I decided to start writing daily commentary instead of just reading the Word.

This commentary was put together to help me study the Bible. I have no plans to release it, for there are far better commentaries out there that were written by much wiser men. This document is simply a tool to help me understand what the Word of God has to say.

Jon Cooper
4/14/2019

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Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

Scholars believe that the book of 2 Thessalonians was written around 52 AD (see Resource 2, "Timeline"). This means Paul wrote it about 22 years after the resurrection, and 18 years after the apostle encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. It was the 3rd book that Paul wrote and the 4th book of the New Testament to come into existence.

1/27/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/22/2019

II Thessalonians 1

"1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thessalonians 1)

If you read the epistles you will see that they often start out with the grace of God and end with the grace of God, and during the letter they discuss the grace of God. This is not an accident! We may live in a culture that says "Believe in yourself" and "You can do it!", but the truth is we rely completely on the grace of God for everything. This is a topic that probably needs to be brought up more in our "do-it-yourself" culture.

Notice that this letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy – not just Paul. It was written to the church, which means it was specifically addressed to believers.

"3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;" (II Thessalonians 1)

Paul told this church that "your faith groweth exceedingly"; in other words, their faith was *growing*! If our faith is not growing then it's probably dead. We are either growing or we have died; there's no acceptable medium where we can remain stagnant. We *must* continue to grow. We have to learn to trust God – to accept His Word and believe in Him, even when we don't understand what is going on. He knows more and sees more than we do, and we must trust that. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and without faith it is *definitely* impossible to grow in Him.

"4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:" (II Thessalonians 1)

As we saw in the first letter to the Thessalonians, this church was suffering intense persecution. Things were very difficult for them, but in spite of that they refused to abandon the gospel and compromise with the world. They remained grounded in the faith even though it cost them dearly to do so. They patiently endured the afflictions, and Paul rejoiced in their godly attitude and example.

Since this is a persecuted church, Paul spends a lot of time teaching them the doctrines of *end-times prophecy*. That isn't something many modern churches would do, but I think the apostles knew what they were doing!

"5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:" (II Thessalonians 1)

This doesn't mean that in order to be a Christian you have to earn your salvation through righteous works, good deeds, or suffering and torture. It's not saying that if you haven't "paid your dues" and been martyred for the faith then you can't be saved. Instead this goes back to something Christ said in Luke 9:62: if you turn back and leave the faith then you are unworthy of it and aren't a Christian at all. Genuine Christians will persevere in spite of persecution (1 John 2:19). This perseverance does *not* save them; instead, the reason they persevere is *because* they are saved! Jesus said that those who were persecuted for righteousness sake would be given an exceedingly great reward in Heaven (Matthew 5:10-12). They may be suffering now, but they will be glorified later.

How is this a token of the righteous judgment of God? We will get to that in the next verse.

"6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;" (II Thessalonians 1)

This is where end-times prophecy comes in (and we will see more of this in the next chapter). The church was being persecuted, but one day God would pour out His wrath upon a wicked and ungodly world. When that day came God would indeed recompense trouble upon those who troubled the church (Revelation 16:1-6). The righteous are persecuted now, but that

will not always be the case! God will bring all of the unrepentant wicked into judgment, and He will judge them for every wicked thing they have done (Matthew 12:36).

"7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."
(II Thessalonians 1)

This is talking about the Second Coming, which happens at the very end of the seven-year tribulation period. (For more information about this event see Revelation 19.) The Lord's first coming as a baby in Bethlehem was about the salvation of the world – He came to seek and save them which were lost (Luke 19:10). The Second Coming is all about judgment. As this passage explains, He will come a second time to judge the world.

Some people claim that damnation is not eternal and after a while everyone will eventually be redeemed. There are others who say that eventually damnation will consume the wicked and they will cease to exist. Both of these are incorrect, as we can see in verse 9. Notice how clearly it mentions "everlasting destruction". It doesn't say "temporary destruction" or "momentary destruction"; instead it uses the word "everlasting". There are only two possible outcomes of this life: everlasting life and joy, and everlasting damnation and torment.

Those are your only choices – which is why it's so important to repent and be saved now, while it is still possible!

This day of wrath is coming. It's still a while off yet, because there are certain things that must happen before the tribulation can begin, and once it starts it must last for 7 years. But it is coming. One day the Lord Jesus Christ will come and take vengeance upon the world and punish the wicked with everlasting pain. When that day comes it will be *very* important for you to be in the camp of the saints. Repent now so you can be saved from the wrath to come!

"11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thessalonians 1)

Paul wanted to make sure the church stood firm in the faith and continued to endure in spite of persecution, so what did he do? He wrote to them and prayed for them. He knew they needed the grace of God in order to keep going, so he prayed. Grace, faith, perseverance, and love are all things that God gives to us, and things that His Spirit bears in our life as fruit. Christianity is not something we do; instead it is something God does in us and through us.

Is God glorified when people stand fast in the faith in spite of persecution? Absolutely! Is God glorified when people abandon the faith, compromise doctrine, and refuse to believe? I don't think so.

1/28/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/22/2019, 7/23/2022

II Thessalonians 2

"1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him," (II Thessalonians 2)

This is speaking of the rapture – the day when the Lord Jesus will return for His church. In that day He will raise the righteous dead and transform the living members of the church. We will all be given immortal bodies and will be incorruptible from that day forward (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). That is the day when we will all be gathered together unto Him and will remain with Him forever.

Notice that Paul doesn't think this topic is irrelevant or not worth discussing! He doesn't see it as a waste of time or a distraction. Instead it's something he actively teaches to the churches. He wants them to understand it and to be longing for it.

This isn't a fairy tale or myth; it really is going to happen! When it does happen I suspect a great many people who *thought* they were Christians will be left behind because they weren't actually saved at all. Jesus warned that this would happen (Matthew 7:21-23) but many have chosen to trust in themselves instead of Him.

"2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a

falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (II Thessalonians 2)

This needs a little explaining. It seems that someone had told these people that the tribulation had already started. This worried the church because it meant they had missed the rapture and therefore weren't saved! Paul told them that there was no need to worry and explained that a number of important events must take place before the tribulation can begin.

The "day of Christ" is the same thing as the "day of the Lord" in the Old Testament, and is a reference to the seven-year tribulation. Paul is saying that before the tribulation can begin there must be a great "falling away". Some people believe this is a reference to a time of great apostasy while others believe it's a mistranslation and actually refers to the rapture. It's hard to know which group is right because both of those statements are true: Revelation 3:14-22 tells us that the end of the Church Age will be characterized by apostasy and wickedness, and 1 Thessalonians 5:9 tells us that the rapture will occur before the tribulation begins (because we are not appointed to suffer through that period of God's wrath).

After the apostasy and the rapture, the church will be gone and the "man of sin" (otherwise known as the antichrist) must be revealed. The tribulation can only begin after all of these things have taken place. That means if the church is still here and the antichrist has not appeared, the tribulation has *definitely* not started. However, once the church is gone the tribulation is near, and once the antichrist has appeared it is very near indeed.

Verse 4 is interesting. The antichrist is going to oppose anything that is called God and will claim to *be* God. In other

words, *he will oppose all religions except himself!* He will sit in the temple in Jerusalem (which hasn't been rebuilt yet but will be rebuilt one day) and claim to be God. This person isn't going to ally with any other religion, but instead will claim to be the one and only God and will demand that the whole world worship him and take his mark – on pain of death. (Revelation 14:9-11 makes it *very* clear that taking the mark is an *unforgivable sin*: whoever takes the mark and worships the antichrist will be tormented *forever*. Those who live through the tribulation must not take the mark *at all costs!*)

"5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (II Thessalonians 2)

When Paul visited this church he not only talked about end-times prophecy and the rapture, but he expected them to remember what he told them! He didn't say "This prophecy stuff is unimportant and doesn't matter". Prophecy is something Paul taught to the churches – and our churches ought to teach it as well.

"6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."
(II Thessalonians 2)

In other words, the antichrist is being restrained from appearing until the proper time. Once his time comes this restraint will vanish and he will be allowed to take over the world until the Lord returns and puts an end to his reign, but until then

he is powerless. He has to wait.

This brings up an important question: just who is this restrainer? Traditionally scholars have taught that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, and that He is the one who is actively keeping the antichrist from appearing. This seems plausible, but if you go back and read the verses you'll notice that the passage never mentions the Holy Spirit. In fact, none of the verses identify the restrainer or offer any hints as to who it might be! This means that if we want to determine his identity we'll have to go about it in a slightly different way.

Based on what we know about the Holy Spirit, is it possible or likely that He is the restrainer? Well, in order to answer that we'll need to know what work the Holy Spirit performs. Are there good, Biblical reasons for thinking that He is an ideal candidate for this role?

As it turns out, the Bible actually tells us quite a lot about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example, He teaches us:

John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

He leads us:

Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

He intercedes for us:

Romans 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself

maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

He gives specific council and guidance in situations:

Acts 8:29: "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."

He reveals things to mankind, and knows the deep things of God:

1 Corinthians 2:10: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

He sanctifies:

2 Thessalonians 2:13: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

He rebukes the world:

John 16:7: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:"

There are also the gifts of the Spirit, which is another conversation entirely. However, notice that in this entire list there is one thing missing: there is no record of the Holy Spirit restraining evil! There are many amazing and wonderful things that the Holy Spirit does, but that activity is simply not mentioned. Now, it may be that the Spirit *does* restrain evil and God just hasn't told us, but that is a very weak argument. When looking at what the Bible actually has to say about the Holy Spirit I simply don't see anything that would support the idea that He is restraining the antichrist. That doesn't seem to fit into His ministry.

However, there is another candidate. As it turns out, there *is* a group that is actively involved in restraining evil and battling the forces of darkness. That group is known as the angels, and they are led by Michael the archangel.

First, the Bible tells us that angels watch over believers and protect them:

Psalm 91:9: "Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Second, Daniel records a time when demonic forces

attempted to keep an angel from visiting Daniel and answering his prayer. The demons were forced to retreat when Michael came and provided additional support:

Daniel 10:12: "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

The demons were successful in keeping the angel at bay, but when Michael came they were forced to yield. This should come as no surprise, as the Bible describes Michael as a tremendously powerful being who is highly effective in resisting the powers of darkness:

Daniel 10:20: "Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.

21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."

There is even one case where Michael resisted Satan himself:

Jude 1:9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when

contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

In fact, the Bible also tells us that during the Tribulation Michael will lead a charge of angels to evict Satan from Heaven once and for all:

Revelation 12:7: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Based on all of this, I think it's quite possible that the *angels* are actually the ones who are charged with restraining evil in this world. Daniel 10 gives us a fascinating glimpse at spiritual warfare, where angels of light battle demonic forces. The angel who seems to have the most power is Michael, which Daniel 10:21 refers to as "your prince" and Jude 1:9 calls "the archangel." In my opinion I think that the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:7 is not the Holy Spirit but is Michael. As you can see, the Bible contains numerous accounts of Michael restraining evil (up to and including resisting the devil himself!), whereas there don't seem to be any accounts of the Holy Spirit doing the same thing. In fact, Michael's entire ministry seems to be focused on that very point!

If this is the case, then for the past two thousand years Michael has been battling to keep the antichrist from appearing.

One day God will remove him from the battlefield, and when that day comes the entire world will be plunged into a terrible time. The antichrist will rise to power and kill billions, but in the end he will be slain by the triumphant and returning Son of God:

"8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:" (II Thessalonians 2)

This is how the antichrist will meet his doom: Jesus will destroy him in His Second Coming, which takes place at the end of the tribulation. As Revelation 19 explains, Jesus will bring the armies of Heaven with Him when He returns but He will defeat the antichrist *personally* and cast him into the lake of fire.

"9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 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. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (II Thessalonians 2)

We know from the book of Revelation that God will send out 144,000 Jews to preach the gospel to every single person in the entire world (Revelation 7:4-8). At the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation these people will all be killed, but their preaching will save hundreds of millions of people (Revelation 7:9-10). That means it *will* be possible to be saved during the tribulation, and in fact many will be saved (although as Revelation 13:15 explains,

the antichrist will hunt them down and kill them).

However, there will be others who will refuse to hear the gospel that is preached by the ministers that God will send all over the world. These people hate the truth and would rather trust in a lie. As a judgment against them God is going to send them a strong delusion. The antichrist is going to have miraculous powers and will be so convincing that the only reason he will not deceive the elect is because God will protect them (Matthew 24:24). Since these people rejected the truth God is going to give them a convincing lie, and they are going to believe that lie and go on to eternal damnation. God is saying "Since you would not believe in Me, I will make you believe in the antichrist."

Can the devil perform miracles? Verse 9 says that the answer is yes. The devil is a fallen angel, and angels have tremendous power and might. Revelation 16:14 tells us that demons can even do miracles. They can do miraculous things, which means we must be very careful. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 13, "Demons".)

Revelation 12 tells us that right before the rapture takes place, the devil will invade this world with his army of demons. The reason he's going to do that is so he can be in position to attack the church the moment after the resurrection. Jesus is going to snatch us out of this world "in the twinkling of an eye" in order to protect us from him. (That's the reason for the quickness of the rapture.) When the devil invades this world in a very visible way, I don't think he's going to be honest about who he is or what he's come to do. After all, Jesus called him the father of lies. I think it's much more likely that he's going to lie about his origin and mission.

What lie could he tell that would be such a strong delusion that it would deceive the whole world? Well, one simple lie would be claiming that he was an alien who was coming to bring enlightenment. It would be easy for a supernatural being

like the devil to pretend to be an alien. I believe that the UFO phenomenon is actually demonic, and has already been used by the devil to deceive many people. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 14, "The Truth Behind The UFO Phenomenon".)

"13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thessalonians 2)

Verse 13 says that God *chose* them "from the beginning". This is a theme we see all throughout the New Testament (especially in Romans 9). Paul speaks extensively of God choosing people and clearly says that we are chosen. Verse 13 is very straightforward: *from the very beginning of the world* we were chosen to salvation. This doesn't mean that God looked into the future and saw that one day we would be saved; instead it means that when God created the world *He decided to save us*. We did *not* choose God (for we were dead in our sins and completely incapable of doing that); instead God chose us! We are *not* saved because we chose God; we are saved because *God chose us*. (For more information on this topic see Appendix C, "Divine Choice".)

The reason so many people dislike predestination is because it means that *God chose them*. They would much rather believe that they chose God, but that isn't what the Bible teaches. One common objection to predestination is that it means God created people just to go to Hell. The problem with

this objection is that *everyone* is guilty and worthy of eternal damnation. God isn't obligated to save anyone; if He sent all of us to Hell it would be what we deserve. The fact that God chooses to save anyone is an amazing act of mercy and grace! Attacking God for not saving everyone is really saying that God is obligated to save the wicked and have mercy on them – which is not true. (Romans 9 is very clear about this.) Many people don't want this doctrine to be true, and yet the Bible is very clear about this topic.

Where are the people who say "This is what the Bible says and I will believe it whether I like it or not"? How did the church get to the point where it says "I will only believe the Bible if I find its teachings agreeable"? Isn't that a terrible thing for a believer to say?

"15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (II Thessalonians 2)

Hold to the doctrines of the Scriptures! They are solid and must be believed. Do not compromise them, or add to them, or take away from them. They are not open for negotiation but must be defended and guarded.

As you can see, the teachings of the apostles (as recorded in their letters) were put on the same level as the text of the Old Testament. God was speaking through them, which is why the New Testament is as authoritative as the Old. God wrote both of them through the men He chose. The canon is now closed, however, so no one today can claim the authority to speak for God and add to the Scriptures.

The traditions Paul is speaking of are not random teachings that the church adds to or modifies over time; instead they are the divine words that we find written in the text of the

New Testament. You must not add to them or take away from them, and Paul is not giving license to the church to make up new doctrines, teachings, or traditions as time goes on. The church had been taught a fixed collection of doctrines and Paul commanded them to hold onto those things and not let go of them, and not change them or trade them for something else.

"16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (II Thessalonians 2)

What is our everlasting consolation and good hope? It is the grace of God. It is by His grace we are saved (Ephesians 2:8), made new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and given everlasting life (John 3:16). This grace is what consoles us, comforts us, and gives us hope in dark times. When things are going terribly in our lives we don't need a box of donuts or a shopping trip to the mall; what we need is grace!

What good works do we need to be pursuing? Verse 17 says *all of them!* Not just *some* good works, or the popular ones, or the ones we can all agree on; no, we are called to believe *everything* God says ("every good word") and do *everything* He commands. The apostles were not pragmatists who did whatever was convenient at the time! That brings up a question: are we established in every word that God has given to us in the Scriptures, or do we reject the parts we don't like (or don't believe) and accept only a highly edited and modified Bible?

1/30/2011, 9/9/2018, 6/22/2019

II Thessalonians 3

"1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." (II Thessalonians 3)

That is also my heartfelt prayer. I long for deliverance from this wicked and evil world that is so full of darkness and unbelief. I long to be "delivered from unreasonable and wicked men" and move to a better country (that is, a Heavenly one). I have no desire to linger here but would rather be in a place where the Lord's will is done.

There is much that "unreasonable and wicked men" can do to hinder the spread of the gospel. We should pray so that we can have opportunities to continue to work in spite of the opposition that we face.

"3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." (II Thessalonians 3)

Have you noticed that the apostles never said "You just need to try harder" or "Have you considered this 12-step plan"? Instead they always point people back to Jesus and back to the grace of God. Yes, we need to strive and study and pray and love and help one another, but God is the one who establishes us and who will keep us from evil! That is why we pray things like "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). God is the one who has all of the power and it is God's grace that we need. We need grace in order to believe His word, grace in order to proclaim it, grace in order to obey it, and grace in order

to remain steadfast in it. We can depend upon God because God is faithful and always keeps His promises.

"4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you." (II Thessalonians 3)

The commands of the apostles, as recorded in the Scriptures, are binding. They are not optional! You *cannot* say "Well, the apostles were just wrong". There is no room for disagreement because God is the one who was speaking through them. When you refuse to obey the writings in the New Testament (or the Old, for that matter), you are really rebelling against God – and God will hold you accountable for it (Revelation 20:12).

"5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."
(II Thessalonians 3)

That is the hard part – patiently waiting. I long for the Lord to return! I know He will come at the right time and I know He has delayed so that all of His elect can be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Still, waiting on Jesus is hard. Each day brings new problems, new sorrows, and new pains. Yet I must be patient, just like those who came before me.

"6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he

received of us." (II Thessalonians 3)

This is something we really need to start taking a lot more seriously. Church discipline and separation is not popular in our day but it is *vital* to the health and well-being of the church. If you spend your time around bad apples, you aren't going to help them – instead they will corrupt you. It's high time for churches to find people living in unrepentant sin and preaching a false gospel, and remove them from their midst so that they might be ashamed and repent (1 Corinthians 5:5).

We need to remember that individuals should also practice this separation. 2 John 1:10-11 tells us that if we encounter someone who is preaching a false gospel we should not even invite him into our home. Instead we should completely separate ourselves from him, for he is leading people to Hell and we must not have any part of that! Christians should separate from those who oppose the gospel, but instead the modern church insists on forming alliances with them. That is a very wicked decision that will not end well. (For more information on this topic see Appendix D, "The Principle of Separation".)

"7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." (II Thessalonians 3)

If anyone had a right to be supported by the church it was the apostles, but Paul did not take advantage of that. He worked "night and day" to pay his own bills with his own money so that

he wouldn't be a financial burden on the church. Imagine how different things would be if other pastors had this same attitude! So many churches struggle to pay their bills because of the expense of their full-time staff. (What pastor can claim that they are more deserving than Paul?) The apostle put the well-being of the church ahead of his own needs. He didn't just *tell* them he loved them; he showed it by his actions. Paul was setting an example (unlike some modern pastors, who demand that their congregations buy them a new private jet to replace their old private jet).

"10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." (II Thessalonians 3)

This is a common problem in life, isn't it? Sometimes it seems that we are surrounded with people who take a great deal but give nothing back. God is clear: we must not be parasites! The Lord requires us to work so that we might have something to give to those who are in need (Ephesians 4:28). It's good to help those who are truly poor and the needy; in fact, God has commanded us to do exactly that (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

I realize there are some people who are unable to work due to illness or old age. That is not what this verse is talking about. This verse addresses people who are perfectly capable of working but have decided they can't be bothered. Since they don't work they have no money, so in order to survive they go around and demand that other people give them money and pay their bills. God is *not* impressed with these people and has a simple message for them: since you can't be bothered to work, you can starve. Maybe going hungry will motivate you to get up and get a job!

It is a noble thing to help widows and orphans in their

hour of need. However, it is a terrible idea to give money to lazy sluggards. That doesn't help them at all; instead it just reinforces their lazy behavior! If you truly want to help them then step back and let them suffer the consequences of their life choices. That will inflict pain upon them and might force them to make different decisions.

"11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." (II Thessalonians 3)

What did Paul want the congregation to be doing? Working! He wanted them to work with their hands and eat bread that belonged to them. He did *not* want them to sit at home and do nothing, while demanding that other people pay their bills and give them food and entertain them. He also did not want people getting involved in things that didn't pertain to them. Live quietly, work hard, and don't take things that belong to others. That is what Christians ought to be doing! If you are able to work and you have the opportunity to do so, and yet you refuse to because you think you deserve to get all the best things in life for free (meaning you want other people to pay for it), then you are living in sin.

"13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." (II Thessalonians 3)

This is our calling: to keep doing well, and pray to the Lord for deliverance. It's not easy to continue doing good in a world

that hates good. It's not easy to continue to preach the truth in a world that hates the truth and in churches that have no stomach for it or interest in it. Yet we are called to preach the Word when it's in season, and when it's out of season and no one wants to hear it (2 Timothy 4:2). Instead of giving up and saying "This isn't working; I'm wasting my time", we need to press on. In due season we will reap if we do not faint and give up (Galatians 6:9).

"14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (II Thessalonians 3)

Isn't it interesting how many people rejected Paul's authority, writings, and his teachings? It happened in ancient times and it continues to happen today as well. I'm amazed at how common it is for people within the church to tell me that they disagree with Paul – that the apostle (whom God used to raise the dead in Acts 20:9-12) was simply wrong, and they know better than he did! People hate what Paul has to say but they cannot argue that he said it, so they just reject him entirely.

Do you know what the Bible tells us to do when we encounter such people? It's right there: "have no company with him". Since these people are wicked, God commands us to give them the same treatment we would give a person who claims to be a Christian but who is living a life of incest (see 1 Corinthians 5). We must remove that wicked person from our midst and have no fellowship with him. The Bible puts rejecting Paul on the same level as the most gross and wicked sexual sins imaginable (because it really is that bad).

"15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but

admonish him as a brother." (II Thessalonians 3)

There comes a time when you should remove the heretic from the church and treat him as an unbeliever, but that only comes after everything else has failed. Treat one another with love, not derision.

"16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all." (II Thessalonians 3)

If you want peace then go to the Lord, for He can give peace. He doesn't promise to fix your problems and make your life fun and happy and easy, but He does promise to give grace and peace to those who ask.

"17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." (II Thessalonians 3)

Paul often signed his letters as proof that he was the one who wrote them (for example, see Colossians 4:18). This is one example of this, but it's not the only one.

Some people think that the Thessalonian church might have received a forged letter that made them believe the tribulation period had already started, and that's why Paul is taking pains to identify himself and show the church how they could spot other frauds in the future. It is a plausible theory.

"18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (II Thessalonians 3)

Amen!

Appendix C: Divine Choice

It's so easy to breeze right by a Bible verse without stopping to consider its implications. One rather striking example of this can be found in a remark that Jesus made about Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord said something about these two cities that is extremely shocking – and yet for years I read right over the statement without stopping to consider its staggering implications.

In order to give a little context to the passage let's back up a bit. As most people know, Sodom and Gomorrah were two ancient cities that were so wicked that God decided to investigate them *in person*:

Genesis 18:20: "And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;
21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

Now, there were many times when God sent down judgments upon a person or a nation. In nearly all cases, though, God acted through an intermediary. Throughout the Old Testament God meted out judgment through angels, prophets, storms, plagues, and natural disasters. However, it is *very rare* for God to go down to Earth and do it *Himself*, in person. Aside from the Tower of Babel, the only other example of this that I can think of is the Second Coming, when the Lord will return to put an end to *the entire world itself*. What this means is that this kind of personal visit by God Himself is a Very Serious Matter. It is a sign that someone has crossed the line in a *big* way. If you are in so much trouble that God is coming to *personally* execute judgment against you, then that means your world is about to

end. It is simply not possible to get into more trouble than that.

As an aside, there are some commentators who claim that God didn't actually go Himself; instead He sent angels to investigate. However, that's not what Genesis 18:21 says. As best I can tell, at least one of the three men who visited Abraham on that fateful day was actually God Himself. If you read through Genesis 18 and pay close attention, you will notice that when one of the men speaks the Bible says that it was actually the Lord who was doing the talking. For example:

Genesis 18:9: "And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. ...

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

13 And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

Do you see what happened? In verse 10 the man said "I will certainly return unto thee", and then in verse 14 we are told that it was "the LORD" who said "I will return." The man, then, must be the Lord! It's as simple as that.

But to continue the story: as we know, the Lord told Abraham that He was going to judge Sodom. When Abraham heard this he interceded on the city's behalf, and after a round of negotiations the Lord said that He would not destroy the city if He found 10 righteous people there:

Genesis 18:32: "And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

As it turned out, though, Sodom didn't have 10 righteous people, so the Lord destroyed it:

Genesis 19:24: "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;
25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

When it was all over the cities were utterly destroyed and everyone who lived in them perished. The cities were full of utterly wicked people and the Lord judged them, giving them exactly what they deserved.

This is all well-known and there is nothing new here. However, what *is* startling is what Jesus had to say about it. When Jesus was on Earth He performed a great many notable miracles. Some cities repented when they saw His works, but others did not. The cities that refused to repent, *even after seeing miracles performed by Jesus in person*, were singled out by Him for special condemnation:

Matthew 11:23: "And thou, Capernaum, which

art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

Do you see what this verse says? Jesus said that if the miracles that He performed in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, then the people in Sodom would have repented and the city would not have been destroyed. Stop and think about that for a minute! Do you see how shocking that is? It means that God knew exactly what the people of Sodom needed to see in order to repent, *and yet God did not save them*. God could have raised up a prophet, sent him to Sodom, and used him to do mighty works and save the city, but He didn't. God actually *knew* they would repent if "mighty works" were done in the city, *but yet He didn't send anyone to do those mighty works*. Instead of saving them He wiped them all out. God could have saved them, but instead God chose to kill them.

What makes this even more striking is that there is another very famous case in which an equally wicked city was on the verge of judgment, but instead of destroying them the Lord *did* send someone to save the city. That wicked city was Nineveh. As we all know, the Lord treated Nineveh *very* differently from the way He treated Sodom. Instead of going down to see the wickedness of the city and then destroying it, the Lord sent Jonah to preach a message of repentance:

Jonah 1:2: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

One of the things that makes this story so famous is that *Jonah did not want to go*. He was *not* a willing participant in this missionary journey and he did everything possible to avoid going.

His reasoning was very clear:

Jonah 4:2: "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

The whole reason Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh was because he knew that if he went and the city repented, the Lord would not destroy them – and Jonah desperately wanted to make sure that God killed everyone who lived in that city and sent them all straight to Hell. But the Lord forced Jonah to go. Let me emphasize that fact: Jonah only went because *the Lord forced him to go*. God actually held Jonah hostage in the belly of a fish until Jonah finally gave in. Jonah was not a willing participant in any of this, but the Lord forced him to go anyway because God was determined to save Nineveh – and Nineveh was indeed saved:

Jonah 3:5: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

As an aside, I have heard people say that God cannot use you unless you are 100% right with God. They claim that if you are backsliding or in sin then God can't do anything with your life; you must be a paragon of holiness before God can use you. I think Jonah conclusively proves that this is not true. After all, Jonah was *not* right with God. Jonah had a deep and abiding hatred toward the people of Nineveh, and he had a heartfelt desire to see them all burn in Hell. Jonah hated them so much that when they repented he got very angry. Yet the Lord *still* used Jonah to save them! The Lord used Jonah to save people *that Jonah hated with all his heart*. This proves that the Lord is the one who works through us. Any fruit that we bear is His doing, not ours. The Ninevites weren't saved because Jonah wanted to see them saved or because Jonah was a righteous man; they were saved because God decided to save them, and He saved them *in spite* of Jonah.

I say all of that to say this: God Himself said that both Sodom and Nineveh were exceedingly wicked cities. Jesus was clear that Sodom would have repented if someone was sent to Sodom to perform great miracles – but no one was sent, so Sodom was destroyed and its inhabitants perished. Abraham desperately wanted to save the city, and if the Lord had commanded him to go he would have gone – but the Lord gave no such command. Yet in the case of Nineveh, the Lord *did* send someone (even though that person did not want to go!) and the city *did* repent and was saved. As you can see, *the Lord did not*

treat Nineveh the way He treated Sodom. He saved one city and He destroyed the other.

Now, there is nothing evil about this. Sodom really did deserve to be destroyed, and the Lord was absolutely justified in destroying it. The Lord is under no obligation to save anyone, and no one deserves mercy. Yet it is impossible to escape the fact that God chose to save Nineveh (a city that *Jesus Himself* said would have repented) and He chose to destroy Sodom. In other words, *this is a clear case of God deciding to save one person and destroy someone else.* God chose *not* to save someone who could have been saved. Both cities needed salvation, but God only helped one of them. Nineveh would have been destroyed if God hadn't sent Jonah, but God *did* send Jonah – in fact, God actually forced Jonah to go against his will. That is something He did *not* do with Sodom. There were two cities that could have been saved, but God only chose to save one of them. He let all the inhabitants of the other city go straight to Hell.

The case of Sodom vs Nineveh is a clear case of divine choice. It shows us that God actually does not save everyone. There are some people that God divinely chooses to save, and there are other people that God chooses *not* to save. Divine choice is a real thing. This idea may seem shocking to us, but it shouldn't. The apostle Paul lays out the case for it in unmistakable terms:

Romans 9:14: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

...

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Notice how clearly Paul explains that God never promised to have mercy on everyone. Verse 18 is direct and to the point: God extends mercy to some people so that they *will* be saved, and God hardens others so that they *will not* be saved. You can go back and read those verses if you don't believe me – God is quite up-front about this. God chooses to save some people and He chooses to *not* save others.

Of course, a great many people absolutely hate the idea of divine choice. I have seen some people use this verse to argue against it:

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now, let me say that I completely agree with this verse. It is absolutely true that any and all who believe in Jesus will not perish but will have everlasting life. However, it is *also* clear that the people of Sodom would have repented and believed if the Lord had sent someone to demonstrate His power – but He didn't, even though He *did* send someone in the case of Nineveh. According to Jesus Himself the people of Sodom *would have believed* but God chose not to intervene on their behalf. Instead of sending someone to save them He sent them all to Hell.

Does God treat everyone the same? No – but then, God never promised that He would. God gives some people amazing talents while He gives others a life of disability and pain. Some people are given long lives while others die before they are even born. God moves miraculously to save some people while He hardens others and sends them to Hell. And make no mistake

about it – God *does* harden people's heart to make sure that they *will not* be saved. For example:

Exodus 4:21: "And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."

Exodus 7:3: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? The Lord did. He said this not once, *but twice*. The reason Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go is because the Lord hardened his heart – and after the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let Israel go, the Lord then destroyed him for not letting Israel go. Pharaoh's hardening led to the devastation of Egypt, the death of all the firstborn in the country, and the death of Pharaoh himself. And it all happened because *the Lord intervened and made it happen*.

People today don't like to hear this. They prefer a God that treats everyone the same. Many people say that God has given everyone a chance to be saved and it's up to us to take it. If some people aren't saved then it's their own fault because God did all He could to save them.

But that's not what the Bible says! Jesus clearly said that *Sodom would have repented*, but God chose to destroy them instead. Nineveh was on the same path to destruction but God *did* intervene to save them (over the strenuous objections of Jonah). Pharaoh might have let the Israelites go, but God hardened his heart so that he wouldn't. God chose to save some people and chose to *not* save others:

Romans 9:18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Notice that verse 18 does *not* say "God has mercy on everyone, but some people are rebellious and don't listen." No, what the verse actually says is "God has mercy on some and God hardens others." It is frighteningly clear.

Why would God do such a thing? In order to demonstrate His power:

Romans 9:22: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

What people do not realize is that God is glorified by those who are saved *and* by those who are damned, because both groups allow God to demonstrate His character. Those who are saved glorify God by giving Him an opportunity to demonstrate His mercy and love, while those who are damned demonstrate God's wrath and power – not to mention His justice.

The key to remember is that *everyone* deserves to spend an eternity in Hell. All have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Hell is the just punishment for our immense crimes against God, and there is *no one* who deserves to be forgiven. No one can stand up and say "God owes me salvation" or "God owes me

mercy." It is a gift – and that means that God has the right to give it to some people and to withhold it from others. As Paul said:

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

We are saved through faith, and that faith is *not of ourselves*. God gives us the faith we need in order to be saved. However, God does not give that faith to everyone. There is nothing unrighteous about this because no one deserves anything from God, and God has not promised to save everyone. Those who *are* saved are given a tremendous gift, because God has given them something that they did not deserve and could never earn. My salvation did not happen because I decided to accept God; it happened because God chose to bless me with saving faith. If God had decided to harden me (as He did to Pharaoh) then I would have been lost and there would have been nothing I could have done about it. My eternal fate – and the eternal fate of everyone – rests solely in the divine choice of God.

If this seems incredible to you, or if it seems like something God would never do, remember the cases of Sodom and Nineveh. One was saved and the other was lost, because God chose to have mercy on one city but withheld His mercy from the other.

Appendix D: The Principle Of Separation

These days it is common for Christian groups to join forces with non-Christian organizations in order to accomplish some social goal – be it protesting abortion, or feeding the hungry, or whatever the hot topic of the day might be. Christians will join with Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and whoever else they can find in order to accomplish their goals. The supposed justification for this is that while we may have differences we can all agree on this one area, so why not work together?

The answer is simple: it's because the Bible forbids it. Our generation has forgotten (or rejected) the principle of separation, and the consequences have been devastating. The Church desperately needs to relearn that ecumenicism – the idea that we should all get along and work together no matter what we believe – does not come from God. In fact, God is so opposed to it that He promises to curse those who are involved in such things.

I realize that's a strong statement, so let's look at the evidence. In 2 Chronicles 18 we find the story of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a wise and godly king who the Lord gave great riches and honor. Ahab was an incredibly evil king who was married to the even-more-evil Jezebel. Despite their differences, Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea to join with Ahab and attack their common enemy:

2 Chronicles 18:1: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

2 And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for

him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramothgilead.

3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war."

This is exactly the sort of thing that the modern Church does. Jehoshaphat was good and Ahab was evil; Jehoshaphat worshiped the true God while Ahab worshiped pagan gods. Since they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat thought it made sense for them to team up and work together. After all, the Syrians were evil and posed a threat to both kings. As the modern Church would say, this is the Lord's battle, and if we can get unbelievers to join us in our fight then so much the better!

Except the battle did not go well. If you read chapter 18 you will see that the prophet Micaiah warned against going to war at all and prophesied that Ahab will be killed. Sure enough, Ahab actually was killed. When Jehoshaphat returned home, the prophet Jehu rebuked the king for joining forces with Ahab:

2 Chronicles 19:1: "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

The Lord was *not at all* pleased that Jehoshaphat had joined forces with Ahab. Even though they had a common enemy and a common threat, Jehoshaphat was forbidden from joining

forces with him. The Lord did not see it as attacking a common problem; He saw it as helping the ungodly and aiding those who hate the Lord. What the Lord focused on was the fact that *Jehoshaphat helped Ahab*, a king who hated God. What Jehoshaphat helped him do was beside the point. The Lord was upset that he had helped Ahab *at all*. Because of this, as the prophet Jehu said, "therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

Some may wonder, didn't the Lord command us to pray for our enemies and do good to them that hate us? Yes, He did. But the Lord did *not* command us to *join forces with them and help them accomplish their goals*. That is an entirely different matter. That is what Jehoshaphat did, and the Lord was very upset about it. The fact that the Syrians were evil and were also Jehoshaphat's enemy did not matter to God at all.

Let's look at another case. After Ahab died another king arose named Ahaziah, who was also very evil. Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea for the two of them to join forces and send some ships to Ophir to get gold (1 Kings 22:48). Once again we see a godly king teaming up with an evil king in order to accomplish something. Now, there was nothing wrong with going to Ophir for gold; King Solomon sent ships out and acquired great wealth. Jehoshaphat thought that by teaming up together both kings would be enriched.

However, the Lord was not pleased:

2 Chronicles 20:35: "And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber.

37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying,

Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

As you can see, what upset the Lord was not the purpose of the voyage. No, what really upset God was that Jehoshaphat had teamed up with the evil Ahaziah. Because Jehoshaphat joined himself with a pagan, God-hating king, the Lord destroyed the ships they had made. The Lord *hates* it when His people team up with His enemies in order to accomplish something. It doesn't matter if their stated goal is something that is actually good. *He hates it.* In fact, He hates it so much that He promises *wrath* on those who dare to do such things. In the example above, God was so upset at the partnership that He actually destroyed the ships.

This same principle is repeated in the New Testament:

II Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

People commonly apply this to marriage, but *Paul was*

not talking about marriage. Marriage isn't even mentioned anywhere in the chapter! What Paul is saying is that Christians should *not join forces with pagans.* As Paul points out, light has no communion with darkness and righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness. They are *different teams entirely* and they are not to be "yoked together".

How many times did the apostles join forces with pagans in order to accomplish societal goals? *Zero times.* How many times did the Church in the New Testament join with idol-worshippers to stamp out poverty, feed the hungry, or pursue some other goal? *Zero times.* Instead Paul stands up and condemns this practice – just as it was condemned in the Old Testament. God wants His people to be *separate* from the world. He doesn't want them building alliances with them; He wants His followers to "come out from among them, and be ye separate".

This principle of separation is no longer believed by the modern Church. We have rejected the clear teaching of II Corinthians 6:14-17. In fact, we think it's *great* when we can team up with God-hating organizations in order to get things done! We see that as winning. What God has to say about it is entirely forgotten – but God does not mince words about this:

II John 1:10: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:
11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

How does God say we should treat those who preach a false gospel? Does it say we should join forces with them and try to find areas of commonality so we can build agreements? Nope. What it actually says is that we shouldn't receive them into our home. In fact, we *shouldn't even bid them 'godspeed'.*

Now, when John says "receive him not into your house"

he is not forbidding us from inviting them over so we can share the gospel with them. What he is forbidding is doing anything to help them, either in deed (by giving them a place to stay so they can keep preaching a false gospel) or in word (by bidding them godspeed). John is clear that those who help them, even verbally, become a "partaker of his evil deeds".

Sadly, this is a sin that the modern church *loves* to commit. I saw a case where one church learned that a mosque was undergoing renovations, so they invited the Muslims to *borrow their sanctuary* so they could keep worshiping their false god. That is exactly the sort of thing that John was condemning – but instead of being dismayed, we hold up such terrible sins as examples of "outreach" and "building bridges" and "true love". God, however, calls it *being a partaker of their evil deeds* and hates it with a passion.

Another common thing is to see famous Christians get up and praise Catholics and Mormons for their good works and their love of God. As I have said many times before, Catholics and Mormons preach a false gospel. Praising and encouraging them goes far beyond "bidding them godspeed" and is absolutely condemned by the apostle John, but somehow the Bible's disapproval doesn't stop us from finding people who "bring not this doctrine" of saving grace and then doing all we can to encourage them and make them feel good about themselves.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate", the Lord says. That is the commandment. God repeats it in Revelation and adds a threat:

Revelation 18:4: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

In this case the "her" is the evil Babylon, the mother of

harlots and abominations. God is commanding His people to come out of that enemy of God and "be not partakers of her sins" – for those who *are* partakers of her sins will also partake of the plagues that God will send. How do we become partakers of her sins? By joining forces with them and helping them in word or deed. We become partakers when we refuse to separate ourselves from them.

The modern Church has decided that it is not interested in separation, and instead it eagerly tries to form alliances with as many god-hating organizations as it can possibly find. The Church has no idea of the great trouble that it is in. God did not hesitate to discipline king Jehoshaphat, and He will not hesitate to discipline us either.

Appendix 13: Demons

In this discussion we are going to take a close look at the subject of demons. This actually overlaps our previous discussion about angels because demons are actually fallen angels, and Satan was originally the highest created angel – and that is where we will begin our study.

Only One-Third Of Angels Fell

The Bible tells us that demons are *not* a separate class of creatures. Demons are actually fallen angels – angels that rebelled against God. We find the account of this in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 12:3: "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

There is a great deal going on in this passage, and what makes things even more challenging is its heavy use of symbolic language. Thankfully, the Bible explains the terms that it uses. Later on in the chapter we are told that the dragon is actually Satan:

Revelation 12:9: "And the great dragon was

cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Notice that the verse mentions "his angels". This makes it clear that the beings we refer to as demons are actually fallen angels. They are angels who have gone bad and allied with Satan. They are now the devil's angels, not God's angels.

Verse 4 tells us that when Satan rebelled he took one third of all angels with him. The phrase "stars of heaven" symbolizes angels. We saw this same usage earlier in Job 38:7. When the Bible speaks of stars in a symbolic way, it is referring to angels (either good ones or evil ones). Since one-third of the angels rebelled with Satan, that means that God has twice as many angels as Satan does (two-thirds vs one-third).

Angels have what theologians refer to as a "fixed will". The fallen angels (also known as demons) are evil and will always be evil. The holy angels are good and will always be good. When Satan launched his rebellion against God, each angel chose to either side with God or side with the devil. That choice, once made, was permanent.

It should be noted that fallen angels *cannot* be saved. Salvation only applies to mankind. The reason for this is because in order for salvation to be possible, an innocent party has to suffer on behalf of the guilty party. Mankind can be saved because Jesus Christ became *a man* and died in our place, suffering for our sins. Since He did not become an angel and die in *their* place, forgiveness is not possible for angels. Jesus died for mankind, not for the angels. We can be saved, but they cannot.

Satan Was Once The Highest Angel

The reason that demons exist is because of Satan's rebellion against God. The Bible tells us that Satan was once the highest classification of angel:

Ezekiel 28:12: "Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire."

Even though this passage seems to be talking about the King of Tyrus, it is actually referring to Satan, not to a human king. No human king in Ezekiel's day had ever set foot in Eden! This passage is talking about what Satan was like *before* he fell and became the devil. As you can see, God created him as a perfect being. He was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, and he was arrayed in precious stones.

Verse 14 tells us that he was "the anointed cherub that covereth". As we mentioned in our last lesson, cherubs are one of the types of angels. All of the cherubs were stationed below the throne of God, except for the covering cherub. That angel

was stationed *above* God's throne and acted as a covering. This means that the covering cherub was the highest rank of cherub – which means that Satan was created to be the highest ranking angel.

At first Satan was perfect, but then he became proud and that led to his downfall:

Ezekiel 28:15: "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee."

His beauty led to pride, and he decided to exalt himself still further:

Isaiah 14:12: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

The devil (who was originally called Lucifer, which according to Strong's Concordance means "light-bearer") decided that he wanted to be God. The gifts, beauty, position, and wisdom that God had given him were not enough; he demanded more. His pride led to his rebellion, and one third of the angels joined him.

No one knows when this happened, but it was apparently pretty soon after the angels were created. There doesn't seem to be much time between the creation of man on day six and Satan's temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. By the time that happened Satan had already fallen and become the deceiver.

Satan's Doom Is Assured

We have discussed that Satan rebelled against God and created an army of demons, so now let's take a look at how God is going to punish the devil. God did not stand idly by while Satan worked his work; the book of Isaiah tells us what God is planning on doing to him:

Isaiah 14:15: "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

The devil tried to exalt himself above God, but he will be brought down to Hell. This will happen after the Millennial Kingdom is over. When the thousand-year reign of Christ has ended, God will release Satan from his prison. The devil will then launch one final war against God, but he will be defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire:

Revelation 20:7: "And when the thousand years

are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

That is the ultimate fate of the devil – he will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will be tormented day and night, forever and ever. He will no longer be able to spread evil, or deceive the nations, or accuse believers. His reign of terror will be over forever.

This brings up an important point. Many people have this idea that Satan is the CEO of Hell and spends his time managing Hell and tormenting the people who are there. However, the Bible tells us that that is *not* the case. Satan actually spends his time roaming around the Earth:

Job 1:7: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

Notice that Satan did *not* say "Oh, I've been in Hell tormenting all the new arrivals." You see, Hell is not a fun playground for demons. The truth is actually the opposite: Hell was instead created *to torment them*:

Matthew 25:41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

Hell was created as a place to torment the devil and his angels. The demons are very aware of their fate and they are terrified of it. When Jesus walked the Earth the demons had a question to ask him:

Matthew 8:28: "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

The demons are *not* going to spend eternity tormenting all of the lost souls that they have managed to deceive. No, their future is quite different: they are going to spend eternity *being tormented* in the place of eternal fire that God has prepared for them. They are not going to be Hell's management, but Hell's *occupants*. They will be tormented along with everyone else.

One day Satan's power will be utterly broken. The book of Isaiah speaks of this time:

Isaiah 14:9: "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

10 All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. . .

16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

17 That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?

18 All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet."

Notice what happens when Satan finally is cast down to Hell! He is not greeted as some sort of dignitary. Instead people look at him in amazement that his power is finally broken and he has become as weak as the rest of the tormented dead. He is not reigning over Hell; instead he is described as a carcass trodden under foot that is covered by worms. He is not reigning; he is suffering along with everyone else. The one who made the world tremble and who destroyed cities will one day become nothing more than another tormented soul in Hell.

The War In Heaven Has Not Happened Yet

The book of Revelation speaks of a time when there will be a great war in Heaven, and the devil and his angels will be cast out:

Revelation 12:7: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.
11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Here we see that Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his angels. When Satan lost, he and his angels were cast out of Heaven forever. Now, when people read this they commonly assume that this event happened long before mankind was created, but that is *not* the case. This is a *future* event, not a past one. It has not yet taken place.

There are several reasons for this. First of all, this passage tells us that when this war happened the "accuser of our brethren is cast down". Satan had been accusing Christians to God day and night, but when he is evicted from Heaven he loses

the power to do that. However, if Satan was thrown out of Heaven before mankind was created then it would have been impossible for him to accuse anyone *because no one existed for him to accuse!* If you read the book of Job you will see that Satan actually *does* still have access to Heaven, and he uses that access to accuse the brethren – just like Revelation 12:10 says:

Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Here you can see Satan going before God Himself and accusing Job. The devil accused believers back in Job's day, and he is still doing it today – but one day there will be a war in Heaven and his access will be revoked. He will be cast down to the Earth.

If you study Revelation 12 (which is well outside the scope of this lesson) you will see that this event happens

immediately after the rapture. As I have discussed elsewhere, before the Tribulation begins the Lord will come to Earth, Rapture the Church, and take them with Him to Heaven. This means that when the war in Heaven happens and Satan is cast out, *we will actually be in Heaven*. We will not participate in the battle (as verse 7 explains, it is a war among angels), but we will be there.

The Devil Is Our Adversary

There are many people today who do not believe in the devil. They think of him as some sort of ridiculous cartoon character. However, the Bible paints a very different picture. It teaches us that the devil is very real – and very dangerous. We are told in no uncertain terms that the devil is our adversary, and he will try to destroy us if he can:

I Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

The devil is not imaginary. He exists, he is real, he opposes us, and he searches the world for people that he can destroy. Peter urges us to be sober and to watch vigilantly, and to resist him by remaining steadfast in the faith. We really *do* have an enemy, and we should take him seriously. We are told to *resist* him, not ignore him. If we resist the devil he will flee from us:

James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

We must fight him, because he is exceedingly dangerous. Jesus told us that when the gospel is preached, Satan and his minions are standing by so that they can snatch the word out of people's hearts:

Mark 4:4: "And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. . .

15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

The devil actively opposes the spread of the gospel. He wanted to destroy Peter:

Luke 22:31: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:"

He persuaded Ananias to lie:

Acts 5:3: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"

He is actively seeking to gain an advantage over us:

2 Corinthians 2:11: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

He actively seeks to hinder us:

1 Thessalonians 2:18: "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."

He provokes us to do evil:

1 Chronicles 21:1: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

There are even some illnesses that are his handiwork:

Luke 13:11: "And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these

eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

There are also trials and tribulations in our life that are a result of his work:

2 Corinthians 12:7: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

In fact, there are times when Satan not only strikes people with disease, but even kills them outright:

Job 1:12: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17 While he was yet speaking, there came also

another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

As we know, Satan later struck Job with a terrible disease:

Job 2:6: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

Not only does Satan tempt people to do evil, but he also has the power to strike people with diseases – and *he can even kill people*. The case of Job makes this very clear.

As if all of that were not enough, the devil and his minions can even perform miracles:

2 Thessalonians 2:9: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,"

Revelation 16:14: "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto

the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Paul explains that our chief problem in life is not other people or wicked men, but the evil spirits of darkness. He warns us that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood (that is, against human enemies) but instead we are fighting demonic powers and darkness:

Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Now we will take a look at how to fight the devil.

Fighting The Devil

The book of James tells us that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us:

James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

How do we resist the devil? By doing the other activity

the verse talks about – we need to submit ourselves to God. When we submit ourselves to God and choose to do His will, we are taking a stand for what is right and against what is wrong. We are choosing to side with God and against the forces of darkness. Submitting ourselves to God is an active measure – it attacks that which is evil.

The book of Ephesians has a lot more to say about this. Paul tells us to take on the whole armor of God so that we can resist the devil and fend off his attacks (because he is going to attack us). This is a long passage, so I'm going to take a look at each piece.

First, we are told to put on the armor of God:

Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

As we saw earlier, we *do* have an adversary. The devil is going to attack us, and when he attacks we will need to put up a fight. Putting in the armor of God will help us stand against him. Paul goes on to explain that the real problem in our life is our struggle against the forces of darkness:

Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

When the Bible says "spiritual wickedness in high places", it actually means spiritual wickedness in *heavenly* places. Think back to the book of Job. Do you remember how Satan went before God Himself and accused Job? That is the sort of "spiritual wickedness" that the verse is talking about. Our real enemy is the

devil and his minions. Our real problem are his attacks against us. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the rules of the darkness of this world. Our true enemy – whether we realize it or not – is demonic.

In order to fight them we must take the whole armor of God, so that we may stand against them:

Ephesians 6:13: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

It *is* possible to stand against them. It is possible to overcome their attacks and find victory. In order to get that victory, the first thing we need is the truth:

Ephesians 6:14: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;"

The truth is a critical defense against evil. The Bible tells us that the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan often uses lies in his attacks – for example, look at the lies he told to Eve in order to tempt her to eat the forbidden fruit. When he tempted Jesus in the wilderness he used half-truths and deception. We need to possess the truth and understand it, so that we can spot his lies and reveal them for what they truly are. Knowing the truth is a solid defense against evil.

However, just knowing the truth is not enough. It is possible to know the truth and still do evil. That is why we also need the second thing the verse talks about – righteousness. We must not simply know the truth; we also have to live in the truth. It is not enough to just understand the truth; we must walk in it. If we seek righteousness, do what is right, and submit ourselves

to God, then that is a very powerful defense against evil. That is how Jesus Himself defeated Satan – He revealed Satan's lies for what they were, and He refused to fall into temptation but instead chose the path of righteousness. Walking in righteousness – and seeking righteousness – is a powerful defense against evil.

But that is not all that we need. There is still more:

Ephesians 6:15: "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"

It may seem strange that the gospel is part of the equipment that we need, but remember that we are called to do more than simply withstand attacks – we must be on the offensive! We are not called to simply stand still and let evil attack us; we need to be on the move, preaching the gospel and spreading the message of Jesus Christ far and wide. The gospel should be literally moving us to action – in fact, it should be *the very reason why we are moving*. If we have left it behind then we have lost something critical. Jesus has called us to spread the gospel to every person, and that is exactly what we should be doing.

Another critical part of our armor is faith:

Ephesians 6:16: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

When evil attacks it tries very hard to spread fear and doubt. Fear is one of the greatest tools of demons – they try very hard to terrify people and make them so full of fear that they are unable to do anything productive. Fear, however, does not come from God. God has not given us a spirit of fear! When we are afraid and are in doubt, we should take up the shield of faith in

use it. Faith is the antidote to fear. When we are in fear we *must* choose to trust the promises of God. When things look dire we *must* take God at His Word and believe. Fear can be conquered by faith. Doubt can be destroyed by faith. It is our shield, and it is well able to quench the devil's fiery darts. We will not get very far without faith.

There are a few other things that we need:

Ephesians 6:17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

Salvation is *vital* when fighting the devil. If you are not saved then you have already lost. No one can successfully fight the devil without the Holy Spirit. If you have rejected God and are out on your own then you are guaranteed to lose. Your only hope is to become a Christian. All Christians in this age are sealed with the Holy Spirit – and it is impossible to be possessed by the Holy Spirit and by an unholy spirit at the same time. Not only are Christians immune to demon possession, but since they have the Spirit of God in them they have the power they need to resist the devil and actually defeat him. Salvation is *essential!* It is the only way to achieve victory.

We also need the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Note that while shields are defensive, swords are offensive weapons. The Bible tells us that this sword is a very powerful and potent weapon:

Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

When the Bible is preached – when we tell others what it has to say – it has an enormously powerful impact. It changes hearts and minds. It turns sinners into saints. It convicts and chastises. It is *powerful*, and it should not be abandoned. We should stand by the Bible and use it at every opportunity. There is a great power in the Word – a power that is often neglected in our time. The devil very much wants to move us away from it, and there is great pressure on the Church to neglect the Bible and talk about something else. This is a tremendous mistake. The devil is not threatened by other things; he is threatened by God's words. It is the Bible that is a threat to him, and it is the Bible that we should be using.

Finally, we must also remember to pray – not just for ourselves, but for all the saints:

Hebrews 4:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

There is great power in prayer. We should cast all our cares upon God, for He cares for us. We should ask, so that we might receive. We should pray for one another so that we might be healed. Prayer is not futile; it is vital. When a Christian prays he is making a request to an all-powerful God – a God who not only loves him, but who sent His Son to die on his behalf. The book of James tells us that the prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Armed with the armor of God, we will have what it takes to stand in the evil day and to resist the wiles of the devil. He will attack us, but God has given us what we need to withstand him. We have the ability to overcome him – but the lost do not. They are utterly helpless, and that is what we will look at next.

Demon Possession

As was said earlier, it is impossible for any Christian to be possessed by a demon. This is because, in this age, all believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Ephesians 4:30: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

This is so important that Paul said that if you do not have the Holy Spirit then you are not a Christian at all:

Romans 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Having the Holy Spirit within us does *not* make us immune to the devil's attacks, but it *does* make us immune to demon possession. Satan may still attack us, tempt us, and perhaps even make us sick (as he did to the apostle Paul) and kill us (as he did to Job's children), but he *cannot* possess us. It is utterly impossible for the devil to force us to do his bidding. He can tempt us to sin, but he cannot *force* us to sin. That is a very

big deal. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we *can* resist the devil and we can overcome him. We do not have to give in to temptation and we do not have to do evil. We have the power to win.

The lost, however, are in a very different situation. Since they are not filled with the Holy Spirit, there is nothing in their lives that is keeping demonic influences out. They actually *can* be possessed by demons, and that is a very serious matter.

Demon possession is a rare thing, especially in this country. Possession is not the same thing as being tempted to do something that is wrong. In cases of possession, demons (which, remember, are actually spirits, so they are not physical beings) take up residence inside a person and force them to do their bidding. They act like parasites – powerful, evil parasites. The effects of this are catastrophic.

We can find a number of cases of this in the New Testament. For example:

Mark 5:2: "And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,
3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:
4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.
5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

This passage gives quite a ghastly description of demon possession. First, we see that this man had incredible, supernatural strength. People had tried to bind him with chains, and the man utterly tore them apart. There was simply no way to

bind or imprison this person. Supernatural strength is not unusual in cases of demon possession; we see it in other cases as well. For example:

Acts 19:14: "And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

This demon-possessed man was able to overcome *seven other people* and abuse them to such an extent that they fled from him naked and wounded. Seven people should have been able to restrain one man, but not this time. Likewise, in the case that Mark related, chains should have been able to imprison him, but they were useless because he had supernatural, demonic strength.

This man was also wild and out-of-control. He dwelt among the tombs and spent night and day howling. He was out of his mind and utterly out of control. He could not dwell among civilized people; he was wilder than any animal and was extremely dangerous. Not only was he dangerous to others, but he was also dangerous to himself – the Bible says that he cut himself with stones. He was possessed with an evil spirit of destruction.

Also notice that in these cases, when the person spoke the people were actually talking with the demon. In Acts 19:15 we see that it was the *evil spirit* who answered him.

Now, in some cases demon possession results in a *loss* of senses:

Matthew 9:32: "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel."

Since the man was possessed he could not talk. That does not always happen, but it did happen in this case.

Adults are not the only people who can be possessed. Children can be possessed as well:

Mark 9:17: "And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child."

Here we find out that this particular person had been possessed *since he was a child*. Children are *not* immune to this. You can see that this child exhibited many of the same symptoms of the case we looked at earlier – the same violent, out-of-

control, self-destructive behavior.

It turns out that even animals can become possessed:

Matthew 8:31: "So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

Demons prefer to possess people, but when that is not an option they are willing to possess animals as well.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no cases of demon possession mentioned in the Old Testament. All of the cases that we read about are in the New Testament. This may seem strange, but it makes sense if you think about it. Demonic activity was at its height when Jesus walked the Earth. During that time Satan concentrated all of his efforts on the places where Jesus was located. The reason why he would do this is obvious – he wanted to hinder Jesus from carrying out His ministry. It's really not at all surprising that Jesus would constantly be coming across people who were possessed.

Jesus explained this when He said that He was binding the strong man so that He could loot his house:

Matthew 12:29: "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house."

Jesus went through the countryside, casting out demons and driving the darkness away – and then He sent out His

disciples, who preached the gospel. Since Jesus had first bound the strong man, His followers were able to spoil the devil's house. Since Satan had already been pushed back, the disciples were able to be much more effective and met with much less resistance. Yes, they were still persecuted, and yes, they still had problems, but things were not as bad as they could have been.

However, demon possession has not gone away. It still exists. The difference is that it is rare – just like it was in the Old Testament. Satan is no longer concentrating all of his efforts on one tiny piece of real-estate, the way he did back in the time of Christ; now he has an entire world to trouble.

Demon possession is much more common in countries that either have a heavy occult presence or that worship demons. They are very rare in Christian nations or in areas with a strong Christian presence. Think of it this way: Christians are the light of the world, and demons cannot stand the light – they vastly prefer the darkness. In places that are saturated with the light, there is very little room for darkness to exert its influence and power. However, places that are filled in utter darkness are very inviting. Those are the sort of places where you would expect to find possession – and that is why possession is rare in all but the very darkest of places.

Now, it is possible to *invite* demons into your life. There are real Satanists who actually do delve into the occult, and who worship demons and invite them into their lives. These people actually *try* to become possessed. I am not going to go into the details of this because there are some things that should not be discussed. You are *much* better off not knowing how to worship or summon demons. The Bible says that we should be wise concerning righteousness and ignorant concerning the deep things of evil. It is a very bad idea to know the deep things of Satan.

So, unless you spend a great deal of time in parts of the world that are filled with devil-worship, you will probably not

come across anyone who is actually possessed. Remember, mental illness and demon possession are two very different things. It is possible to be mentally ill without being possessed. When it comes to possession, it is really best to let a seasoned professional study the case and make a determination. How that determination is made is a question that is well outside the scope of this paper.

Exorcism

Let me say right up front that it is probably a bad idea for you to try to perform an exorcism. If this is the first time you have ever studied this subject then I can say with confidence that you have no idea what you are doing. The reason I bring this subject up is *not* so that you can go out there and start trying it on your own; it is so that you will have an understanding of the Biblical principles that are involved. I want you to know enough about this subject so that the next time you see an exorcism performed on television, you will be able to point at it and laugh at how ridiculous it is. I want you to understand the truth.

However, exorcisms are a serious business. It takes a professional to diagnose true possession (and tell it apart from mental illness), and actually casting the demon out is not something to be taken lightly. All demons are not the same, and all cases of possession are not the same either. Some demons can be cast out immediately while others require fasting and prayer. If you are not experienced in this sort of thing and if you do not have a really good grasp of the finer details then you should avoid this as much as you possibly can. Do not perform exorcisms yourself; instead have someone do it who is trained and who knows what they are doing.

Exorcisms are not a joke. In true cases of possession you

are dealing with a person who has supernatural strength, demonic fury, and who is absolutely out-of-control. When the seven sons of Sceva attempted an exorcism in Acts 19:14 they were very nearly beaten to death by a single possessed man. Trying and failing this can injure or even kill you. It can be done – and Christians have the power to do it – but it is *not* a game and it should *not* be treated lightly.

To understand how exorcisms work, let's take a look at how Jesus cast out demons. During His ministry Christ actually used a couple different methods. The common method in His day for casting out demons was to ask the demon its name and then use that name to cast it out. For example:

Mark 5:6: "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.
8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.
9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many."

The reason Jesus asked its name was so He could use its name to cast it out by saying something along the lines of "Legion, come out of the man". In order to do that, though, you had to find out the demon's name. That meant it was impossible for anyone to cast a demon out of a man who couldn't talk – and that was why people were shocked when Jesus did exactly that:

Matthew 9:32: "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel."

When Jesus cast a demon out of a man who could not talk, He amazed Israel. What He had just done was impossible without the power of God; Jesus had just done something that had never been done before. According to their traditions, the only person who had that kind of power was the Messiah. By doing this Jesus was demonstrating that He really was the Messiah, the Son of God. This miracle was every bit as astonishing to ancient Israel as raising Lazarus from the dead. It was proof that Jesus was exactly who He said He was.

As you can see, the way Jesus cast out demons was simply by ordering them out. Jesus would say "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit", and the demon would come out. It was not any more complicated than that. Unlike what you see on television, there was no fancy ritual that had to be performed. You did not need a crucifix or holy water or a special incantation. Jesus simply told them to come out, and they came out. There was no special magic words involved. What made it possible was the power that Jesus had. Since *He* told them to come out, the demons had to obey. They had no choice.

Jesus gave His followers the power to cast out demons:

Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

The disciples cast out demons the same way that Jesus did – they just commanded the demon to come out, and it did:

Acts 16:16: "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

The reason that Paul was able to cast our demons was because he did it in the name of Jesus Christ. Now, let me be clear about something. The reason it worked was *not* because he uttered the words "Jesus Christ" in his exorcism. As we saw earlier with the seven sons of Sceva, the phrase "Jesus Christ" is not a magical incantation. The reason it worked was because Paul did it as a Christian, *on behalf* of Jesus Christ. It is like when the American ambassador to France does something in the name of (or on behalf of) the United States. Since he is the American ambassador, he has the power to do things in the name of our country. Since we are Christians, we have the power to do things in the name of (or on behalf of) Jesus Christ. *That* is what "in the name of Jesus" means. It means we are taking that action on Christ's behalf. It is as if Christ was there doing it Himself – and since demons cannot resist Christ, they could not resist Paul either.

The reason the seven sons of Sceva failed is because they were not Christians. Since they were not Christians, they could not do things on behalf of Christ. They just invoked the name of Jesus like some magical good-luck charm – and that mistake very nearly killed them.

Does that mean that all we have to do is walk up to someone who is possessed and order the demon to depart? Sometimes that works, but sometimes it is more complicated than that. Jesus told us that there are certain demons that can only be removed by fasting and prayer:

Mark 9:28: "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

There are times when it is possible to battle a demonic presence by casting it out in the name of Christ, and that alone is enough to defeat it. There are other times when it cannot be done without fasting and prayer. It simply depends on the type of possession. Of course, before any of this will work at all you must make sure that you really *are* dealing with demons, and not with something else entirely. You will never be able to cast a demon out of a man who is just confused or mentally ill, and that is where wisdom comes into play.

One critical thing to remember when dealing with this is that casting a demon out of someone can have very serious consequences if the person does not become a Christian afterward. In fact, it can actually make their lives much worse. Jesus explained why:

Matthew 12:43: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and

they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

As you can see, demons are different, and some demons are more wicked than others. All of them are bad, but some are much *more* wicked than others. When a demon is cast out, the person's body is emptied of the evil spirit that used to be in it. If that person becomes a Christian then the house (or "body") becomes filled with the Holy Spirit, and that defends the house against invaders. However, if the person does *not* become a Christian then the house stays empty – and an empty house is defenseless against evil spirits. In that case, the spirit that was cast out goes and finds other spirits that are even more evil than itself, and they *all* take up residence inside the person. In the final end, the person becomes much worse off than they were originally. The problem is not that the exorcism failed; it is that the person did not take advantage of the cure to fill himself with the Spirit. If you have the Holy Spirit then you can defeat the devil, but if you lack the Holy Spirit then you are defenseless against him.

Appendix 14: The Truth Behind The UFO Phenomenon

A lot of people think that the subject of aliens is "goofy" and don't really give it very much thought. It is seen as a weird fringe belief – just like belief in Bigfoot or the Abominable Snowman. It's one of those things that gets laughed at and ignored by most people.

What people *don't* realize is that belief in UFOs differs from belief in Bigfoot in a very important way: the supposed aliens in the UFOs are peddling a *belief system*. Regardless of whether these aliens actually exist, there are millions of people who believe in them and who are accepting the religious system that they are teaching. If belief in aliens was classified as a cult, it would be one of the largest in the country. To put it into perspective: the number of people in this country who claim to have met aliens is about the same as the number of Mormons. That is how big this thing really is.

And it is not harmless. You can believe in Bigfoot all you want without doing any real harm. People may look at you a bit strangely, but that's about it. Belief in aliens, though, is different. If you read the messages that were supposedly left by the aliens and listen to what people who have supposedly met aliens have to say, you will discover that the aliens are peddling a religion – a religion that has drastically altered many lives and turned people away from God. That is *not* harmless, and that is a serious matter.

It really doesn't matter if *you* believe in aliens or not. You may happen to think that the whole subject is a lot of nonsense. The point is that there are millions of people who *do* believe, and they are paying a lot of attention to the New Age beliefs that the aliens are peddling. What we are actually dealing with is a very subtle kind of cult – one that has largely gone unchallenged by

the Church.

So how many people are we talking about? Well, for starters, it's pretty obvious that our culture in general is very interested in aliens. According to a 2008 Scripps UFO poll, 56% of Americans believe that life probably exists on other planets, and 8% of Americans believe that they have seen an actual UFO. On top of that, according to a 2002 poll commissioned by the SciFi channel, 2% claim to have had an encounter with alien life. That 2% number has been fairly consistent over the past few decades; it keeps coming up in poll after poll. If there are 300 million Americans then that means that *six million people* claim to have encountered alien life – or, to put it more bluntly, have been abducted.

One thing you may not realize is that UFO sightings have been increasing over the past few decades. In July 1992 there were 32 reported UFO sightings. In July 2002 there were 430 reported sightings. In July 2012 the number of sightings increased to 867. The reported sightings has jumped sharply in the past twenty years. You may not hear about them on the news, but the number of sightings is going up, not down. The UFO phenomenon is *not* going away.

Another fact you may not realize is that UFO sightings are not a recent occurrence. There are reports of UFOs in documents from ancient Egypt, Rome, and during the Middle Ages. A UFO was seen in Boston in 1639 – and there are many other cases as well. What *has* changed in the last century is the frequency of the sightings. In the past they were rare; now they are quite common. People have always been seeing strange things in the sky, but it is now more common than it has ever been before.

If the UFO phenomenon was limited to people seeing odd things in the sky then it would probably be safe to ignore it. We could step back and let the scientists and researchers decide if there was anything to it or not. The problem is that it is *not*

limited to strange lights. As I said earlier, there is a spiritual component to this.

If you ever sit down and read a book about people who claim to have been abducted by aliens, you will discover some rather odd trends. (Once again, it really doesn't matter if *you* believe in aliens or not. What does matter is that there are many people who *do* believe and who are being changed by this whole phenomenon.) First of all, the message that the aliens are bringing tends to be very religious. They don't want to talk about science, or their home planet, or what their lives are like, or anything like that. Instead they want to talk about religion. The aliens spend a great deal of time trying to convince people that Christianity is a hoax. Of all the religions in the world, Christianity is the one that is singled out and attacked. For some reason the aliens hate Christianity with a passion. They don't attack any other religions; they just focus on Christianity.

The aliens make many claims that contradict the Bible. For instance, aliens claim that we had past lives:

"Then [the alien] said that it was my choice, that I agreed to all this a long time ago. I said I didn't remember the agreement ... and he answered, 'Before you were born, and we've had this conversation before.'" [*Taken*, p147]

They claim that they are here to help us, and that if we join them we can become one with the Creator (which is a pagan belief known as "pantheism"):

"People on Earth, open your doors to our help, for you need it desperately ... Join our Confederation and be one with the Creator."

The aliens claim that they (not God) created mankind:

"'Did you create humans, too?' [the abducted woman] asked, and he confirmed this." [*Taken*, p157]

"Aliens genetically changed the DNA of a distant cousin to the ape on this planet ... the aliens took the natural evolution and sped it up." [*Alien Contact*, p178-9]

They claim that the Bible is not accurate:

"Not all stories in your Bible are accurate because your Bible is not 100% correct..." [*Alien Contact*, p177-8]

They claim that Jesus was an alien:

"The messages include ... exhortations to put the world in order by returning to the 'Cosmic Laws' as taught by great Masters such as Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna – all of whom are said to have come from other planets" [*Aetherius Society*, p12-3]

"The millions that come from other worlds, from far-off galaxies to assist in bringing peace upon Earth, have my staunch support... I am Sandanda, known to you as Jesus the Christ... I am Sandanda, and this is my message to the world." [*Project World Evacuation*, p8-9]

"The most controversial thing is the ascension and resurrection of Christ. You see, he went up to a UFO in a beam..." [*Alien Contact*, p177-8]

"the creators therefore arranged for a child to be born of a woman of the Earth and one of their own people (aliens). The child in question (Jesus Christ) would thereby inherit certain telepathic faculties which humans lack... Mary was the woman chosen..." [*The True Face Of God*, p60]

There is a great deal more, but I think you get the point. I realize that all of this may seem utterly ridiculous to you, but *thousands of people believe it*. They are listening to the message from the "aliens" and their lives – and beliefs – are being radically changed. These aliens are spending a great deal of time trying to convince people that Christianity is false, and they are being very effective. Aliens claim that Jesus didn't actually die; instead He was just beamed up to a UFO and scientifically revived. They claim that Mary was an alien. They claim that Jesus was not sent here to save us from our sins but to help us advance scientifically – and on and on it goes.

The point is that these supposed aliens spend a great deal of time attacking the Bible, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel. Their message is primarily a religious, New Age message that is a *direct attack on Christianity*. In other words, the aliens are spending their time spreading a false gospel and promoting a false religion.

This message, incidentally, is having a *tremendous* impact. People are believing what the aliens are telling them. One person put it this way:

"My belief system went right out the window"
(1 in 40, p322-3).

After encountering aliens, people are not only drawn

away from Christianity, but they are plunged into the occult. Alien encounters have the effect of changing the person's worldview – and this is happening to a great many people! Regardless of what you may think of alien abductions, these people believe that it was real, and their experiences are causing them to reject the gospel. In many cases alien abductions turn into *conversion experiences*, as people are shocked by what happened and accept a false gospel. Regardless of whether they were actually abducted or not, their embrace of paganism after the encounter is *very* real.

This should be a cause of great concern, because the aliens' message is spreading. Each year people are becoming *more* interested in what the aliens have to say. The message that they bring is both clear and disturbing: the Bible is false, Jesus cannot save you from your sins, the Earth is on the verge of a terrible crisis, and the only way to save mankind is to reject Christianity and put our faith in the aliens. What we are dealing with here is nothing less than a false religion – a dangerous cult that has led countless lives astray, and that has gone almost completely unchallenged by the Church.

All of this brings up a question: does it seem likely to you that genuine extraterrestrial beings would travel thousands of light-years across space just to come to Earth and tell people that the Bible is wrong? Does it seem likely that an advanced race of beings, with superior intelligence and amazing powers, would spend their time torturing people, sexually molesting them, performing horrifying medical experiments on live subjects, and preaching a false gospel to them?

Dr. Jacques Vallee put it this way:

"The 'medical examination' to which abductees are said to be subjected, often accompanied by sadistic sexual manipulation, is reminiscent of the medieval tales of encounters with demons. It

makes no sense in a sophisticated or technical framework: any intelligent being equipped with the scientific marvels that UFOs possess would be in a position to achieve any of these alleged scientific objectives in a shorter period of time with fewer risks." [*Confrontations*, p13]

John Keel was more blunt:

"The UFO manifestations seem to be, by and large, merely minor variations of the age-old demonological phenomenon..." [*Operation Trojan Horse*, p299]

What do we know about these supposed aliens? Well, based on abduction reports, the aliens are sadistic, cruel, and heartless. They torture people and molest them. They have tremendous powers. Most of all, though, they attack Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the gospel. Given that profile, isn't it possible that, instead of extraterrestrials, what we are actually dealing with are *demons*? What if these beings aren't aliens at all but are actually evil spirits *posing* as aliens in order to peddle a false gospel and inflict horror? This does fit the profile of what we know about them, and demons are known as deceiving spirits.

There is another reason to suspect that these alien encounters are actually demonic in nature: born-again, Bible-believing Christians *have never been abducted*. Unbelievers are abducted all the time, and people who are involved in the occult are especially likely to have an encounter. According to researchers, virtually *all* abductees had some sort of prior involvement with the occult before they were abducted. They are usually people who are involved in mysticism or New Age cults, and who have rejected Christianity.

However, Christians are *not* abducted. In the tens of

thousands of abduction cases that have been studied, *not one* has ever been reported by a Christian.

On top of that, it turns out that there is only one way to stop an alien abduction. In nearly all cases, people who were abducted had no power over what happened. The aliens simply took them and there was nothing they could do about it. In a few cases, though, people were able to stop the abduction. How did they do it? In every case it was the same: they *called on the name of Jesus*. Even though the abducted people were not Christians, when they called on Jesus the aliens became terrified. They simply could not stand that Name. The name of Jesus made them flee.

Is there a group of powerful, superhuman beings who is terrified of the name of Jesus? Yes there is. Demons are terrified of the Lord, as the New Testament demonstrates time and time again:

Matthew 8:28: "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

So, does this mean that demons are off somewhere building spaceships and flying them to Earth? No, it doesn't. Researchers believe that the UFOs that people are seeing are not material objects. In other words, *they are a deception*. Without going into too much detail, even *secular* researchers are beginning to speculate that UFOs are a psychic phenomenon. In other words, what the person is seeing isn't actually real and

doesn't actually exist; it's just a deception that is planted into their mind. As one person said:

"I have even come to suspect that, in some instances, what we have been terming "spaceships" may actually be a form of higher intelligence rather than vehicles transporting occupants ... I feel, too, that these intelligences have the ability to influence the human mind telepathically in order to project what appear to be three dimensional images to the witnesses of UFO activity." (UFO: End-Time Delusion, p124)

Another person put it this way:

"John Keel, one of the most respected researchers in this field, noted that "over and over again, witnesses have told me in hushed tones, 'you know, I don't think that thing I saw was mechanical at all. I got the distinct impression it was alive.'" (UFO: End-Times Delusion, p130)

Now, in some rare UFO sightings, there is some physical evidence left behind, in the form of odors, baked earth, charred plants, electrical interference, and even sunburn. However, all of those phenomenon could be explained by manipulating energy fields. This is how one expert put it:

"Drawing from what we know can happen in seances and poltergeist activity, it seems that these supernatural forces can manipulate matter and energy, extracting energy from the atmosphere, for example (which manifests as a local temperature change) ... and I guess my

feeling is that on a larger scale this is what a UFO could be. It seems to me likely that UFOs are large-scale violations of the second law in which energy is arranged to take on enough of a force field appearance so that it appears to look like matter, yet it's really just energy concentration..." (UFO: End-Times Delusion, p130)

The evidence points to the conclusion that UFO sightings are being faked by very advanced beings who have the ability to work with energy fields and mess with people's minds. However, the UFOs themselves *aren't actually real*; they're just a very sophisticated deception. In fact, this is what one professor said:

"Many UFO reports, he said, seem to pertain more to accounts of "poltergeists" (cases where objects fly around the room and strange sounds are heard) and other types of "psychic" manifestations than to "actual solid items of nuts and bolts hardware." "This is one of the reasons," added Dr. Hynek, "why I cannot accept the obvious explanation of UFOs as visitors from outer space."

In other words, even UFO researchers are suggesting that UFOs have more in common with *ghosts* than actual aliens. The two phenomena are very similar (which is something we will look at next week when we actually study ghosts); the only real difference is the window dressing.

I say all of that to say this. The modern Church has this idea that demonic occurrences are something that happened a long time ago, back when Jesus walked the Earth. In those days there were lots of demon-possessed people, and Jesus fought the demons and cast them out. Today, though, times are

different. Demons may tempt people to sin, but that's about it. They don't go around tormenting or possessing people anymore. That only happened back then, in Bible times. Things are different now – or so the Church thinks.

But what if demons have *not* stopped seeking whom they may devour? What if they're still active and the Church simply hasn't noticed because the demons picked a particularly good disguise? After all, posing as aliens would be a *terrific* way to deceive countless people, since there are many who would believe anything an "alien" told them. What makes it even better is that most people think UFOs are "goofy" and just ignore them – which would give demons free reign to do just about anything they wanted. If the demons are behind the UFO phenomenon, I have to say that they are winning because the Church isn't even fighting the battle. We're ignoring it entirely.

Regardless of whether aliens are demons or not, *someone* is out there destroying the faith of millions of people and bringing countless souls into spiritual darkness. Is this really something that should go unchallenged?

But there is another facet to this that should not be ignored. The "aliens" are doing more than just peddling a false gospel. They are also telling the world that it is in great danger, and that the aliens are going to save us all by giving great power to the man of their choosing:

"Their message is crystal clear: In the midst of our despair they will save us. They will raise a human leader and endow him with supernormal powers that will enable him to put together a New World order, and from this the beneficence of world peace will proceed." (UFO: End-Times Delusion, p104)

And that's not all. The aliens are telling people that humanity is being held back by all these Bible-believing Christians. One day soon, though, all of these Christians will be removed from the planet and ascend to a different plane. After that has happened, the aliens can then come and bring world peace. They just have to wait until all those Bible-believers are gone, and then they can come in force and lead mankind into a new era.

That puts a rather different light on things, doesn't it? The aliens are teaching UFO believers to be *expecting* the Rapture. They are saying that it's just a necessary part of human evolution. Suppose that after the Rapture, with all of the Christians gone and safely out of the way, demons pose as aliens and claim to be here to rescue mankind. If that were to happen, it's quite likely that *many* people would be fooled. (After all, there won't be any Christians around to warn them!) Demons have great power and supernatural abilities. It would not be hard for them to pose as aliens, and our culture is very receptive to the idea that aliens exist. If the world was in chaos, millions of people had just vanished, and "aliens" arrived to set things right, isn't it quite likely that the world would listen to them? If the "aliens" brought forth a man and said that he would lead the world into a new era of peace, isn't there a good chance – in a world utterly devoid of anyone who believes in God – that he would be accepted?

Many people have wondered how demons would "explain away" the Rapture, but as you can see they are already teaching people to expect it! They have a game plan in place that could be extremely effective. After all, who would have the spiritual discernment to see through the deception? God did promise to send a strong delusion:

2 Thessalonians 2:8: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall

consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

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.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

I don't know how things will play out, and the truth is that the demons don't know either. They know that the Rapture is coming, but they have no idea when it will occur or what the circumstances around it will be. They can plan all they want, but in the end God's will is going to be done. What we do know is that God is going to send them a strong delusion, and this would be a very effective delusion indeed.

In conclusion, I think that our culture's belief in aliens is actually very dangerous, and has led many people away from God and into a false, New Age belief system. I do not think that UFOs are harmless; based on the available evidence, it seems almost certain that demons are behind them and are using the disguise of aliens to hide who they really are. I also think that when the Rapture happens, the demons may try to pose as aliens to lie to the world and take advantage of the chaos in order to pave the way for the antichrist. Whether they will succeed or not I do not know; demons don't have any special knowledge about the timing or events surrounding the Rapture, and are as ignorant about it as we are. However, I do think that they are going to try.

It is high time that the Church, as a whole, stopped treating belief in aliens as something goofy and started treating it as the dangerous, New Age cult that it really is. The Church possesses the truth; we need to be proclaiming it far and wide.

Resource 1: Chapter Summary

2 Thessalonians

II Thessalonians 1

- PAUL, SILVANUS, AND TIMOTHY, TO THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH
- IT IS A RIGHTEOUS THING WITH GOD TO RECOMPENSE TRIBULATION TO THEM THAT TROUBLE YOU; YOU WILL REST WITH US WHEN JESUS IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN AND TAKES VENGEANCE ON THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD
- MAY THE NAME OF JESUS BE GLORIFIED IN YOU, AND YOU IN HIM, ACCORDING TO GOD'S GRACE

II Thessalonians 2

- THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL NOT COME UNTIL THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT APOSTASY AND THE ANTICHRIST HAS APPEARED
- PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT THE ONE WHO RESTRAINS THE ANTICHRIST, AND DISCUSSES THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE ANTICHRIST
- FOR THIS CAUSE GOD WILL SEND THEM A STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE, THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE DAMNED
- GOD HAS CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION THROUGH THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT AND BELIEF OF THE TRUTH
- THEREFORE STAND FAST

II Thessalonians 3

- PRAY FOR US, THAT WE MAY BE DELIVERED FROM WICKED MEN

- THE LORD WILL ESTABLISH YOU AND KEEP YOU FROM EVIL
- WITHDRAW FROM EVERY BROTHER THAT WALKS DISORDERLY
- PAUL WORKS NIGHT AND DAY SO HE IS NOT CHARGEABLE TO ANY – NOT BECAUSE HE DOES NOT HAVE POWER, BUT SO HE MIGHT BE AN EXAMPLE
- BE NOT WEARY IN WELL DOING
- IF ANY MAN REFUSES TO OBEY THIS EPISTLE, MAKE NOTE OF HIM AND HAVE NO COMPANY WITH HIM SO HE WILL BE ASHAMED
- THE SALUTATION OF PAUL WITH MINE OWN HAND, WHICH IS THE TOKEN IN EVERY EPISTLE

Resource 3: The Teachings Of The Bible

2 Thessalonians 1

- This letter was written by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (v1)
- This letter was written to the Thessalonian church (v1)
- God is our Father (v1)
- Jesus is our Lord (v1)
- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v1)
- Twice in two verses Paul said that God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our Lord. Paul clearly wanted to emphasize that fact to the Thessalonian church. (v2)
- This letter addresses the concerns of the church that they had missed the rapture; in response Paul is emphasizing that God is our father (who loves us), and Jesus is both our Savior and our Lord; He has not forgotten us and He will remember to gather us when He returns (v2)
- Paul prayed that the church would have both grace and peace (v2)
- Grace and peace come from God the Father and God the Son (v2)
- Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian church because of their great faith and love (v3)
- Since the church was a blessing, Paul thanked God for

them (v3)

- Paul let the church know how thankful he was for their faith and love (v3)
- Paul referred to the church as his "brethren"; it is Biblical to refer to other Christians as brothers and sisters (v3)
- Paul rejoiced that the faith of the church was growing (v3)
- Churches must be characterized by faith (v3)
- Paul rejoiced that the people in the church showed great love toward one another (v3)
- Churches must be characterized by love (v3)
- Paul praised the Thessalonian church for the patience and faith that they displayed in the midst of persecution (v4)
- The patience and faith that the Thessalonian church displayed in the midst of so much suffering made them an example to other churches (v4)
- The Thessalonian church was suffering greatly when Paul wrote them this letter; they were going through terrible persecution (v4)
- Even though the church was being persecuted, it was holding on to its faith and was patiently enduring the trials (v4)
- Churches should respond to persecution and suffering with patience (v4)
- Churches should respond to persecution and suffering with faith (v4)
- God expects churches to endure persecution; suffering should not cause the church to lose its faith in God (v4)

- When a church experiences persecution and suffering, it is not a sign that God has abandoned the church or does not care about it; instead it is something that the church must endure with patience, while holding on to its faith (v4)
- Persecution may be part of the life of the church; it may be something that the church has to endure (v4)
- It is praiseworthy when a church patiently endures persecution (v4)
- When a church patiently endures persecution, other churches should recognize that and be encouraged by that example (v4)
- Paul knew that the Thessalonian church was enduring persecution (v4)
- When a church suffers persecution, that makes manifest the judgment of God (v5)
- The judgment of God is righteous (v5)
- God is a God of judgment (v5)
- The Thessalonian church was suffering persecution because of their faith in God (v5)
- Those who endure persecution and hold on to their faith are counted worthy to enter into the kingdom of God (v5)
- Some are counted worthy to enter the kingdom of God, and others are not (v5)
- God has a kingdom that we may enter (v5)
- The path to enter into the kingdom of God may require great suffering on our part; if it does then we must

endure it patiently, while holding on to our faith (v5)

- Although the church had faith in God and was abounding in love toward one another, they still had to endure terrible suffering and persecution; their faith and love did not exempt them from persecution (v5)
- Paul did not condemn the church for being persecuted; instead he praised them for enduring it so patiently (v5)
- Paul did not think it was strange for such a faithful church to be suffering so much; instead he told them that was what they had to endure in order to enter into the kingdom of God (v5)
- Paul did not believe that since the church was suffering, that meant God did not love that church or that church was somehow inferior to other churches (v5)
- When we suffer in life, God requires us to endure it patiently and with faith; if we do then we are counted worthy to enter into the kingdom of God (v5)
- One day God will punish those who persecuted His church (v6)
- God believes it is righteous to punish those who persecuted His church (v6)
- Those who have persecuted the church will not go unpunished forever (v6)
- God did not promise that the church would not face persecution, but He did promise that one day He would punish the persecutors (v6)
- Those who persecute the church will not be allowed to do that forever (v6)

- Paul encouraged the persecuted Thessalonian church by telling them that one day God would punish the people who were hurting them (v6)
- The Lord will punish those who persecute His church; this will happen when He returns at the end of the tribulation; we must wait until then, for that will be the day of vengeance (v7)
- The judgment of the persecutors is still in the future; it is waiting for the return of Christ (v7)
- Paul told the church to look forward to the vengeance that Jesus will pour out upon the world when He returns, and take comfort in it (v7)
- Paul spoke of the return of Jesus at the end of the tribulation as Jesus being revealed to the world; in that day the world will see Him clearly (v7)
- Jesus will come from Heaven to this world; when He does He will avenge His church and punish the wicked (v7)
- Before Jesus returns to this world at the end of the tribulation, He will be in Heaven (v7)
- When Jesus returns to this world at the end of the tribulation, He will bring His angels with Him (v7)
- The angels of God are mighty (v7)
- Paul told the church to patiently endure persecution and wait for the return of Jesus at the end of the tribulation (v7)
- God has an army of angels (v7)
- Paul expected the Thessalonian church to wait for vindication until the return of Christ at the end of the

tribulation (v7)

- We can find rest in times of persecution by looking forward to the return of Christ at the end of the tribulation; at that time He will return to judge the world (v7)
- When Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation He will take vengeance upon the wicked (v8)
- Paul describes the wicked as people who do not know God (v8)
- Paul describes the wicked as people who do not obey the gospel (v8)
- When Jesus returns and takes vengeance upon the world, He will do so with flaming fire (v8)
- Those who do not know God will face the fiery vengeance of the Lord Jesus (v8)
- It is not enough to know what the gospel teaches; we must submit to it and obey it (v8)
- The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved; those who do not obey it will face the wrath of God (v8)
- The day of the Lord's vengeance upon the wicked, and upon those who persecuted His church, will be the day He returns at the end of the tribulation period (v8)
- Jesus will punish the wicked with everlasting destruction (v9)
- The punishment that the wicked receive will be everlasting; it is not temporary or just for a time (v9)

- Jesus will destroy the wicked (v9)
- The wicked will be punished (v9)
- The presence of the Lord will bring destruction upon the wicked (v9)
- The Lord Jesus is full of glory (v9)
- The Lord Jesus is full of power (v9)
- The power of the Lord Jesus is very glorious (v9)
- There will be some people who Jesus will punish with everlasting destruction, which means not everyone will be saved (v9)
- The Lord Jesus holds people accountable for their actions and punishes the wicked for their sins (v9)
- The punishment of the wicked is certain and will happen (v9)
- When Jesus returns, His saints will glorify Him (v10)
- When Jesus returns, His saints will admire Him (v10)
- All those who believe in Jesus will glorify and admire Him (v10)
- One of the reasons Jesus is returning is to be glorified in His saints (v10)
- One of the reasons Jesus is returning is to be admired by His saints (v10)
- The saints are those who believe in Jesus (v10)
- The saints are those who believed the testimony of the apostles (v10)

- The apostles testified to the truth of the gospel (v10)
- Paul encouraged the persecuted Thessalonian church by having them look forward to the return of Christ, when He will punish the wicked for their sins and be glorified and admired by His saints (v10)
- Paul used eschatology and end-times prophecy to encourage a persecuted church (v10)
- Paul used the topic of persecution in order to start a conversation about end times prophecy (v10)
- Paul did not believe it was wrong to teach people to long for the return of Christ (v10)
- Paul said that he continually prayed for the Thessalonian church (v11)
- Paul prayed that God would find the Thessalonian church worthy of what they had been called to do (which was suffer on behalf of the gospel) (v11)
- Paul wanted the church to be found worthy of suffering for the sake of Jesus (v11)
- It is good to pray for churches that are being persecuted (v11)
- Paul did not pray that their persecution would stop; instead he prayed that God would finish the work that He was doing through the persecution of that church (v11)
- God is good (v11)
- The suffering of the Thessalonian church was an example of the goodness of God (v11)
- The Thessalonian church was being persecuted by the will

of God; it was due to His good pleasure, and Paul commanded the church to patiently endure what God had called them to do (which is suffer) (v11)

- Paul prayed that the power of faith would work in the church as they were persecuted (v11)
- Genuine faith has power (v11)
- Faith has the power to work in our lives (v11)
- Suffering is something that God may call us to do (v11)
- Paul said it was God's good pleasure for the church to be persecuted; he saw this as a good thing (v11)
- Paul prayed that the church would fulfill all of God's will for them, which included suffering (v11)
- Jesus is Lord (v12)
- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v12)
- The persecution of the Thessalonian church was bringing glory to the name of the Lord Jesus (v12)
- When the Thessalonian church was persecuted, they were glorified in Jesus (v12)
- In order to endure persecution we need the grace of God (v12)
- Grace comes from God the Father and God the Son (v12)
- One of the reasons that persecution is part of God's good will is because it brings glory to the name of the Lord Jesus (v12)
- God may call the church to suffer persecution in order to glorify the name of Jesus (v12)

- We may have to suffer so that Jesus is glorified (v12)
- Christians are commanded to bring glory to Jesus; in order to accomplish that, God may call the church to persecution and suffering (v12)

[Last updated 8/4/2022]

2 Thessalonians 2

- Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian church to address their concerns about the rapture; the church was worried they had missed it and been left behind, and Paul was assuring them that had not happened (v1)
- Jesus is Lord (v1)
- Jesus is the Messiah (v1)
- One day Jesus is going to return to this world and gather us together to Him (at the rapture) (v1)
- Jesus is coming (v1)
- When Jesus comes, He will gather us together to Him (v1)
- Paul expected the church to understand end times prophecy (including the rapture); not only did he expect them to believe it, but he also expected them to take comfort and hope in it (v1)
- Paul referred to the people at the Thessalonian church as his brothers (v1)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to understand that they had not missed the rapture, and the tribulation had

not begun (v2)

- Someone had been teaching the Thessalonian church that the rapture was past and the tribulation had started; the church may have received a forged letter of some kind (v2)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to understand how to recognize that the tribulation had started, so they would not be led astray by people making false claims (v2)
- Paul expected the church to know enough about end times theology to not be deceived by heresy or false teaching (v2)
- Paul did not tell the church to ignore end times prophecy and focus on other things; instead he expected them to understand it (v2)
- Paul refers to the day of Christ; earlier in this book he talked about the time when Christ would return to this world to punish those who persecute the church, and how in that day the wicked would receive flaming vengeance and the saints would glorify and admire Christ (v2)
- The church was deeply troubled at the thought that they had missed the rapture and entered into the tribulation (v2)
- Paul had been teaching the church a pre-tribulation rapture; otherwise they would not have been troubled at the thought that the tribulation had begun (v2)
- Paul wanted the church to have a thorough knowledge of end times prophecy so that no one could deceive them (v3)

- Before the tribulation begins there will be a "falling away" (a "departure"; most likely this is a reference to the rapture, since Paul was just talking about our being gathered together unto Christ) (v3)
- Before the tribulation can begin, there is a "departure" and the revealing of the antichrist; if those two things have not happened then the tribulation could not possibly have started yet (v3)
- Paul expected the church to understand the events that must take place before the tribulation begins, so that no one could deceive them (v3)
- The antichrist will not be revealed until after the "departure" (the rapture) (v3)
- The antichrist is called the man of sin (v3)
- The antichrist is currently hidden, but one day he will be revealed (v3)
- The antichrist is called the son of perdition (v3)
- Paul made it clear that the antichrist was an evil being (v3)
- Paul was concerned about people deceiving the church about end times prophecy (v3)
- There is a real antichrist, who is a specific individual that will be revealed after the rapture (v3)
- The antichrist opposes all religions and faiths (v4)
- The antichrist exalts himself above all deities and religions (v4)
- The antichrist demands to be worshiped above

everything else that is worshiped (v4)

- The antichrist will sit in the temple of God and declare that he is God Himself (v4)
- At some point in the future the third temple will be built (v4)
- The antichrist will claim the temple of God for himself (v4)
- The antichrist will be a male (v4)
- The last time Paul had been with the Thessalonian church he taught them about end times prophecy (v5)
- Paul expected the Thessalonian church to remember what he had taught them about prophecy and eschatology (v5)
- At some point in the past Paul had been with the Thessalonian church in person (v5)
- Paul had explained to the Thessalonian church the doctrines of the rapture, the tribulation, and the antichrist (v5)
- Paul believed there was great value in teaching eschatology; he did not avoid that subject or claim that it had no merit (v5)
- The antichrist will not be revealed until the right time (v6)
- Paul speaks as if the antichrist already exists, but is being hidden for now by some outside force (v6)
- There is a force stronger than the antichrist that is preventing him from being revealed until the time is right (v6)

- Something is restraining the antichrist (v6)
- The Thessalonian church knew what force was holding back the antichrist (v6)
- The antichrist will rise to power; it cannot be avoided (v6)
- God has appointed a season of time for the antichrist to have his kingdom and do his evil work (v6)
- The antichrist will continue to be held back until whatever is restraining him is taken out of the way (v7)
- Paul does not name who is currently restraining the antichrist (v7)
- The force that is restraining the antichrist is a male being of some kind (a "he") (v7)
- The mystery of iniquity is already at work, even though the antichrist has not yet been revealed (v7)
- Once the restrainer is taken out of the way, the antichrist will be revealed (v8)
- The antichrist is called "wicked" (v8)
- The antichrist will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus when He returns at the end of the tribulation period (v8)
- Jesus will personally destroy the antichrist with the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming (v8)
- The coming of the Lord will be accompanied with brightness (v8)
- The antichrist will be destroyed by Jesus, not by the church or by any of God's angels (v8)
- The antichrist will not endure forever; he is going to be

destroyed (v8)

- Even though the antichrist will declare himself to be God and will exalt himself above everything that is worshiped, Jesus will destroy him when He returns (v8)
- The antichrist will have the power of the devil (v9)
- The antichrist will be able to perform signs and wonders (v9)
- The antichrist will use the power of the devil to do miraculous things (v9)
- The antichrist will use the power of the devil to deceive people (v9)
- The coming of the antichrist will be a work of the devil (v9)
- The power of the devil will not be able to save the antichrist from the power of the Lord Jesus (v9)
- The devil can perform miracles (v9)
- Some miracles and signs are from the devil and are intended to deceive (v9)
- Those who rejected the truth of the gospel will receive the antichrist and be deceived by him (v10)
- Those who accept the antichrist will perish along with him (v10)
- Those who accept the antichrist are unrighteous (v10)
- Unrighteousness is deceptive (v10)
- God has called us to love the truth (v10)
- Those who do not love the truth will be deceived by sin

and perish (v10)

- Those who love the truth of the gospel will be saved, and will not be deceived by the antichrist (v10)
- Those who love the truth of the gospel will not perish (v10)
- The devil can use miracles to deceive people, so that they perish (v10)
- There is no salvation apart from the truth of the gospel (v10)
- God is going to send a strong delusion into the world so that people are deceived and believe a lie (v11)
- The reason God will deceive the world is because they rejected the truth and refused to believe it (v11)
- Since the world refused to believe the truth, God will send them a strong delusion so they will believe a lie (v11)
- The deception of the antichrist will be very powerful (v11)
- The delusion that God will send upon the world in the end times will be very strong (v11)
- God will punish the people of this world by giving them a powerful lie to believe, which will deceive them; those who believe it will perish (v11)
- God is the one who is going to send a lie into this world, as a judgment against it (v11)
- Since the world refused to believe the truth, God is going to send a strong delusion that will cause all those who

believe in the deception to perish (v12)

- Since people took pleasure in unrighteousness, God is going to send them a strong delusion that will cause them to perish (v12)
- God is angry with those who refused to believe in the truth (v12)
- Unbelief is a fearful sin (v12)
- God is angry with those who love sin and take pleasure in it (v12)
- God is going to destroy all those who do not believe the truth of the gospel (v12)
- God is going to destroy all those who take pleasure in unrighteousness (v12)
- There are enormous consequences for not believing in the truth (v12)
- God does not give a free pass to those who do not believe (v12)
- There are enormous consequences for loving sin and taking pleasure in it (v12)
- Even though the church was being persecuted, Paul called them beloved of the Lord (v13)
- If we are suffering and in pain, that doesn't mean God hates us, for we are still beloved of the Lord; it may mean that He has called us to suffer for His name (v13)
- Paul thanked God for the faithful Thessalonian church, which stood strong in the midst of persecution (v13)
- We should give thanks to God for faithful churches (v13)

- Paul continually thanked God for faithful churches (v13)
- The reason the church was saved was not because they chose God; it was because God chose them (v13)
- God made the decision to save the Thessalonian church from the very beginning of creation (v13)
- The reason we are saved is because God made the decision to save us; it was His decision, not ours, and it was made at the beginning of the world (v13)
- The apostles consistently teach that salvation is a decision that God made, not one that we made; it was His doing, not ours (v13)
- God uses the Holy Spirit to sanctify us (v13)
- We are saved by the sanctification of the Spirit and by believing in the truth of the gospel (v13)
- Genuine salvation is always accompanied by sanctification (v13)
- All genuine Christians have the Holy Spirit sealed within them (v13)
- Those who have no evidence of sanctification in their lives are not saved (v13)
- Those who do not believe the truth of the gospel are not saved (v13)
- God used the gospel to call the Thessalonian church to salvation (v14)
- God uses the power of the gospel to save them that believe (v14)
- The gospel has the power of salvation (v14)

- Those who believe in the gospel will share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (v14)
- There is glory in store for the church, and that is something we can look forward to even in the midst of persecution (v14)
- The glory of the church comes from the Lord Jesus (v14)
- Paul commanded the Thessalonian church to stand fast in the truths that they had been taught (v15)
- The church is not allowed to compromise the truth or cast it aside (v15)
- The church must defend the doctrines of the Scriptures and hold on to them; the church is not allowed to cast them away in the name of pragmatism or appealing to the world (v15)
- Paul taught that the letters which the churches had received from the apostles were binding to the churches, and should be taken as Scripture (v15)
- Paul wanted the churches to continue to hold on to the things they had been taught by the apostles, whether those teachings were done by the apostles in person or by the letters that the apostles had sent them (v15)
- We need to study and learn the teachings of the Scriptures so that we can stand fast in those doctrines and not be pulled away from them (v15)
- Paul did not say that it was fine for the church to walk away from what they had been taught and go do something else instead; the church was not allowed to add anything to what the apostles had taught, or to take anything away from it, or to come up with their own

traditions (v15)

- The church was required to faithfully keep everything they had been taught, and not stray from it at all (v15)
- Christianity is about standing fast in the truth, not finding common ground and compromising (v15)
- God is our Father (v16)
- God loves us (v16)
- Jesus loves us (v16)
- Jesus is our Lord (v16)
- God has given us everlasting consolation (v16)
- Paul encouraged the suffering Thessalonian church by reminding them of the everlasting consolation that is found in God (v16)
- God has given us hope (v16)
- The grace of God gives us hope (v16)
- Paul prayed that God would comfort the hearts of the Thessalonian church (v17)
- God has the power to comfort our heart; that is something we can pray for (v17)
- Paul prayed that God would establish the church in every good work (v17)
- Paul prayed that God would establish the church in His Word (v17)
- Paul wanted the church to be established in every single word that God had spoken (v17)

- Paul believed that every word of God was important and none of them could be neglected or compromised (v17)
- Paul believed that the church should pursue all of the good works that are found in the Scriptures; the church was not given the option of just picking one and ignoring the rest (v17)

[Last updated 8/4/2022, 8/5/2022]

2 Thessalonians 3

- Paul asked the Thessalonian church to pray for them (v1)
- It is Biblical to ask others to pray for you (v1)
- Paul prayed that he would be able to freely preach the gospel to others (v1)
- Paul did not pray for the specific souls of individuals; in fact, no one ever did that in any of the epistles (v1)
- Paul wanted the opportunity to spread the gospel (v1)
- Paul asked the Thessalonian church to pray that the word of God would be glorified (v1)
- The Thessalonian church glorified the Word of God, and Paul was happy about that (v1)
- It is a good thing to glorify the Word of God (v1)
- Churches should pray that they might be able to freely spread the gospel (v1)
- Churches should seek to glorify the Word of God (v1)

- Paul asked the church to pray that he would be delivered from unreasonable men (v2)
- Paul asked the church to pray that he would be delivered from wicked men (v2)
- Paul sought deliverance from people who were wicked and unreasonable (v2)
- It is bad to be wicked (v2)
- It is bad to be unreasonable (v2)
- Paul said that salvation is not universal; there are some people who are not saved (v2)
- People who are unreasonable are unsaved and lack faith (v2)
- People who are wicked are unsaved and lack faith (v2)
- Paul asked a church that was being persecuted to pray that he would be delivered from wicked men who wanted to persecute him; he did not think it was unreasonable or wrong to ask a persecuted church to pray for him (v2)
- The apostle Paul had to deal with unreasonable men (v2)
- The apostle Paul had to deal with wicked men (v2)
- The Lord is faithful (v3)
- The Lord will establish us (v3)
- The Lord will keep us from evil (v3)
- We should look to the Lord to establish us (and not ourselves) (v3)
- We should trust God to keep us from evil (v3)

- Being kept from evil does not mean being kept from persecution (v3)
- Being established does not mean we will not be persecuted (v3)
- God is faithful to us even in times of persecution (v3)
- When we are being persecuted for the faith, that does not mean God is not faithful (v3)
- Paul believed that the Thessalonian church was already doing the things he wrote about in his letter, and that they would continue to do those things (v4)
- Paul believed that the material in his letters to the churches were commands that the churches were required to follow; he believed that he spoke and wrote with divine authority (v4)
- Paul told the Thessalonian church that he had confidence in them that they would do what was right (v4)
- The church needs to obey God both now and in the future (v4)
- It is not enough to have been obedient at one point in the past; we need to continue to be obedient (v4)
- The reason we love God is because He directed our hearts to Him (v5)
- Our love of God comes from God and was caused by God; it is a gift from Him (v5)
- Paul prayed that God would cause the Thessalonian church to love God more (v5)
- Paul expected the church to patiently wait for the return

of Christ (v5)

- Paul expected the church to be aware of the doctrines around the return of Christ, and to keep them in mind; he did not tell the church to ignore them, or claim they were not important (v5)
- We must learn to wait for Christ in a patient manner (v5)
- Paul prayed that God would direct the hearts of the Thessalonian church so that the people would learn to patiently wait for His return (v5)
- God has the power to direct our hearts (v5)
- God has the power to direct our hearts to Him (v5)
- Jesus is going to return; our job is to patiently wait for that day (v5)
- Paul wanted the church to have the return of Christ on its mind (v5)
- Those who do not obey God's commandments are walking disorderly; the church must separate itself from such people (v6)
- Obedience to God in all things is a requirement for church membership (v6)
- Those who break God's commandments or reject them may not be church members (v6)
- Those who are teaching heresy and error are walking disorderly; the church must separate itself from such people (v6)
- Those who reject the doctrines of the Bible, or the teachings of the apostles, may not be church members

(v6)

- God does not allow fellowship between those who are in the church and those who walk disorderly (by sin or by false doctrine) (v6)
- God requires us to separate from those who are living in repentant sin, and who are teaching heresy and error; this is not optional (v6)
- Doctrine is very important; the church is not allowed to tolerate those who teach false doctrine (v6)
- Obedience is very important; the church is not allowed to tolerate those who are living in unrepentant sin (v6)
- The Lord commands us to separate from sin and heresy; He forbids the church from making alliances with such people, or building bridges to them, or working with them in any way (v6)
- The church must keep itself pure, in both doctrine and obedience to God (v6)
- The Bible teaches strict separation; it forbids becoming yoked with evil and does not allow pragmatism (v6)
- The church is not allowed to prosecute heretics or put them to death; all it can do is withdraw from them (v6)
- The church must separate itself from every single person who walks disorderly (by sin or by false doctrine); it may not make exceptions to this rule (v6)
- The commandment of God is to believe and obey the teachings of the apostles, as we find them written in their letters to the churches; their teachings are binding and are not optional (v6)

- Those who reject the teaching of the apostles are to be cut off from the church (v6)
- God does not allow the church to "agree to disagree" on matters of doctrine or obedience (v6)
- The apostles taught from the very beginning that their writings and teachings were binding, and their epistles were sacred Scripture (v6)
- The apostolic letters to the churches were considered both Scripture and canon from the time those letters were written (v6)
- The apostles did not behave in a disorderly manner when they visited the churches (v7)
- The apostles set an example of behavior that others were to follow (v7)
- Paul expected the church to follow his example and behave the way that he did (v7)
- The apostles held themselves up as examples to follow (v7)
- When the apostles visited churches, they did not ask the church to pay any of their expenses; they did not even expect the churches to feed them (v8)
- The apostles worked hard to pay their own way so that they would not be a financial burden to the churches; they expected their example to be followed by others (v8)
- The apostles worked night and day in order to earn their own money, and were missionaries at their own expense (v8)
- It was very important to the apostles to not be a financial

burden to any of the churches (v8)

- The apostles had the right to ask the churches to pay for their food and provide for their financial needs, but they refused to exercise that right (v9)
- The apostles deliberately worked night and day to pay their own way in order to set an example, and they expected others to follow their example and do the same thing (v9)
- Paul did not want people to rely on churches for financial support; instead he wanted them to follow his example and work so that churches would not be burdened (v9)
- Paul did not just teach that people should not be paid by churches; instead he lived it (v9)
- Paul did not receive money from churches; instead he paid his own way (v9)
- The apostles taught the church that if anyone did not work, they should not eat either; they also believed that this applied to those who proclaimed the gospel - and that proclaiming the gospel did not count as work (v10)
- Paul believed that church workers should not be paid by the church, or fed by the church; instead they should work to pay their own way (v10)
- Paul did not believe that those who were unwilling to work should be given food; instead they should work and earn their own food (v10)
- Paul did not believe in giving food to people who were able to work but who weren't working; he believed that everyone should have to labor for the food that they received (v10)

- The principle of working for your food is not optional; it is a commandment from God (v10)
- Those who demand to be given food, but refuse to work for it, are violating a commandment from God (v10)
- It is important to work for our food (v10)
- It is a bad thing to not work (v11)
- Those who do not work may fall into sin and become busybodies, and cause trouble in the church (v11)
- Those who do not work are putting themselves into a place of temptation (v11)
- The Thessalonian church was plagued with busybodies who did not work, and who used their free time to harm others and cause trouble (v11)
- It is good for a person's time to be filled with work (v11)
- God commands those who are not working to go out and get a job and start working (v12)
- Those who are busybodies must stop doing that and fill their free time with a job (v12)
- God commands people to work and eat their own food, instead of expecting other people to feed them (v12)
- God requires people to work (v12)
- If people are idle in the church and are going around causing problems, the solution is to have them get a job; the church shouldn't feed such people or give them free food (v12)
- Giving idle people food that they didn't have to work for can cause all kinds of trouble; instead of doing that, the

church should push people to get a job and eat their own food (v12)

- We are not allowed to become weary in doing what is right (v13)
- We must continue to do what is right, and not grow tired of it or weary of it (v13)
- We need to continue to pursue good works and do what is right, even in times of persecution and distress (v13)
- We need to continually pursue a life of good works and never stray from that path (v13)
- The church must refuse to have company with anyone who rejects any of the teachings of the apostles, or rejects anything in any of the letters to the churches (v14)
- The church is not allowed to tolerate heresy or disobedience (v14)
- There must never be any compromise with those who reject any part of the Scriptures, or any of the commandments of God; the church is not allowed to "agree to disagree" (v14)
- Those who disagree with anything the apostles taught must be removed from the churches (v14)
- Christians are not allowed to have fellowship with those who reject any of the teachings of the apostles (v14)
- Churches must distance themselves from heretics and those living in unrepentant sin, but they are not allowed to go further than that and kill or prosecute them (v14)
- The purpose of distancing from heretics and those living in sin is so they will become ashamed and repent (v14)

- The apostles taught strict separation from everyone who rejected their doctrines, or who continued to live in sin; they did not allow any compromise on this, and they utterly rejected all pragmatism (v14)
- People who continue to keep company with heretics are sinning (v14)
- People who continue to keep company with people who claim to be Christians but who are living in sin are sinning (v14)
- Churches who form alliances with the ungodly and work with them are sinning (v14)
- God does not allow anyone to reject any of the teachings of the apostles; what they taught came from God and is binding upon the churches (v14)
- Those who reject the apostles, or anything that they said or taught, are sinning (v14)
- Christians must separate from heretics and those who are living in sin, and keep no company with them; however, we are not allowed to view those people as an enemy but instead we must admonish them as we would our own brother (v15)
- The purpose of separating from heretics and Christians living in unrepentant sin is so they will be ashamed and listen to admonitions (v15)
- The church needs to admonish heretics (v15)
- The church needs to admonish those who claim to be Christians but are living in unrepentant sin (v15)
- Paul did not say that heretics should be put to death;

instead he told the church to admonish them (v15)

- Although the church is not allowed to count heretics as an enemy, they must still separate from them and have no fellowship or company with them (v15)
- God is the God of peace (v16)
- God has the ability to give us peace (v16)
- Paul prayed that God would give the Thessalonians peace (v16)
- Paul prayed that God would be with them as they suffered persecution (v16)
- If we want peace then we should seek it from God, who has the ability to give us lasting peace (v16)
- The proof that Paul wrote an epistle can be found in the fact that he identifies himself as its author and he signed it personally (v17)
- If an epistle does not contain the salutation of Paul then it was not written by Paul (which means Paul couldn't have written the book of Hebrews) (v17)
- Paul personally signed the letter to the Thessalonian church (v17)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to know that he was the one who wrote this letter; unlike any other letters they may have received, this letter truly was from him (v17)
- Paul prayed that God would give grace to the suffering Thessalonian church (v18)
- Grace comes from the Lord Jesus (v18)

- Paul ended his letter with "Amen" (let it be) (v18)

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