

Introduction

Recently, someone told me about an unbelieving man who died and went to Hades. While in the place of the dead, God visited him and showed him heaven, and it was wonderful. He became a believer, and the Lord sent him back to earth. He wrote a book about his experience, and now has a ministry telling people about heaven. As I listened to the story, I was running it through the filter of God's word. God does not want us deceived, and the primary way that we examine and judge everything is by filtering it through God's word. Here is my take on the testimony. In Hebrews 9:27, God tells us that it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. God does not go to the place of the dead to give people another chance to repent and turn to him. People have until death to make the most important decision of their life, and once they die, they are either going to be with the Lord in heaven, or in the place of the dead known as Tartaroo, where unbelievers wait for judgment day.

There have been people who were brought back from the dead. Jesus brought back several people from the dead, including the synagogue official's daughter (Luke 8:49-56), and Lazarus (John 11:1-44). When He died on the cross there were many people that came out of their tombs. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-42). Paul raised Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:7-12). So, there are some exceptions, but the general rule is that people die once and then comes judgment. God does not want any to perish, and He has revealed himself in some pretty remarkable ways to people. He appeared to Paul in a vision on the road to Damascus, and Paul became a believer and served God the rest of his life. I think that this man probably was near death, and the Lord gave him the vision. Visions are often so real it is difficult to distinguish them from what is real. When Peter was led out of prison by an angel on the night before he was to be executed, he thought he was having a vision, but it was real. The opposite can be true. The vision can be so real that you think is really happening. I believe that after the vision, the man recovered and began to serve God. The things in the vision are real, but I don't think it took place in Tartaroo. I have not looked at the other content about this experience, and I do not know anything about the man, and it is important to know those who are sharing messages. God does not want us deceived, even if we see miracles, signs, and wonders. We must run things through the Word of God and examine them carefully.

(Heb 9:27) "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,"

In Part 1, we learned that God does not want us to be deceived. We saw some of the many ways that we can be deceived, and also what we can do prevent being deceived. Knowing the truth is vital to keep from being deceived. In Part 2, we will look at the truth about the Day of the Lord. Once the Thessalonians have a clear understanding of the things that must happen before the Day of the Lord can happen, nobody will be able to deceive them about it. Finally, we will look at their exhortation to the Thessalonians to stand firm and hold to the traditions that they had taught them. The passage is about not being deceived about the Day of the Lord, but the principles shared in the passage apply to every other area. God does not want us deceived in any area of our lives.

Standing Firm Against Deception – Part 2

1. Be on guard against deception (2 Th 2:1-3) – Part 1
2. Know the truth (2 Th 2:3-12) – Part 2
3. Stand firm on truth (2 Th 2:13-17) – Part 2

(2 Th 2:1–15) “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, {2} that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has **come**. {3} Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy **comes** first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, {4} who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. {5} Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? {6} And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. {7} For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. {8} Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His **coming**; {9} *that is*, the one whose **coming** is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, {10} and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the **truth** so as to be saved. {11} For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is **false**, {12} in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the **truth**, but took pleasure in wickedness. {13} But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the **truth**. {14} It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. {15} So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.”

1. **Be on guard against deception** (2 Th 2:1-3a)

In Part 1, we covered the different ways that deception can come in. The deceivers had shared things with the Thessalonians that the Spirit had given them. They apparently had a prophetic message from the Lord, and if that was not enough, they had a letter that they said was from Paul. The young Thessalonians had become disturbed and shaken. Paul, Silas, and Timothy responded quickly with this second letter in an effort to comfort and encourage the Thessalonians, and to correct this erroneous doctrine they had received. False doctrine must be corrected, as it almost always disturbs and upsets people.

We looked at the various ways that believers can be deceived. We saw in Ephesians that immature believers are tossed around like waves, and can easily be deceived. The Thessalonians were all new believers and had been deceived. Part of maturing is becoming knowledgeable about the Word of God. Believers need to be in the word and know the word. When you know the truth, you will not be deceived. Believers need to examine prophecy, visions, dreams, messages, and things given by the Spirit to make sure they are Scriptural. The proper examining and judging of Scripture requires you to know the Word of God.

The leadership of the church is charged with watching over and guarding the flock from deception. Unfortunately, the Thessalonians did not have elders in place. Paul did not leave them with a vacuum in leadership; I am sure that leaders were appointed. I believe that Jason was the one Paul left in charge and that there was a plurality of leadership. Paul’s pattern was to appoint leaders and then after they had proven themselves, he would go back and ordain them as elders. The church was without mature elders, and this safeguard was partially missing.

(Ac 14:21–23) “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, {22} strengthening the souls of the

disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” {23} When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

2. **Know the truth** (2 Th 2:3-12)

In order to not be deceived we must filter everything through the word of God; we must know truth. If we are not going to be deceived about the deity of Christ, we must know the truth pertaining to His deity. In Paul’s letter to the Colossians he referred to the deity of Christ, saying, “in him the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” We could use a number of other passages to examine the truth about the deity of Christ. John 1:1-4 is another good passage.

(Col 2:9) “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,”

If we are not going to be deceived about the Day of the Lord, we must know the truth about the Day of the Lord. Therefore, Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave the Thessalonians the truth about the three events that must take place before to the Day of the Lord. Second, they mention what is going on in the meantime.

A. **Things which must happen before the Day of the Lord**

Paul, Silas, and Timothy said that three distinct things must happen before the Day of the Lord comes. They did not want the Thessalonians to be deceived about His coming, and God does not want any of us to be deceived. The first thing that must take place before the Day of the Lord is the apostasy. The second event that must take place is the man of lawlessness is revealed. The antichrist must take his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. The third event is that the one that restrains the antichrist will be taken away. The lawless one will be revealed and the Lord will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by His appearance of His coming. Paul makes it clear so that they would not be deceived into thinking that the day of the Lord has already come.

(2 Th 2:1–7) “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, {2} that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. {3} **Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.** {4} who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.... {6} **And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. {7} For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.** {8} Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;”

1. **The Apostasy**

The first event that must take place is the apostasy. What is the apostasy? The Greek word is apostasia (Strong’s G646), which is a compound word. The prefix is apo (Strong’s G575), which means away from, and the root word is histemi (Strong’s G2476), which means to stand. Together, it means to fall away, to forsake, or to defect from the truth. This is the noun form, and

it is used twice in the Scriptures. The verb form of the same word is *aphistemi* (Strong's G868), and it is used fifteen times. We gather from the verses with verbs some of the different reasons for people falling away. From this verse, we learn that there is going to be an event or specific time period where people fall away, and it is called the apostasy. There will be a time where people fall away from the faith.

In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” Deception is one of the reasons that people fall away, and this is one reason that Paul, Silas, and Timothy have quickly addressed deception with the Thessalonians.

(1 Ti 4:1) “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,”

People can be deceived in a number of ways. In verses nine and ten, we see that the activity of Satan includes power and signs and false wonders. Just because there is a miracle or sign or wonder, we need to examine it closely. The devil opposes and exalts himself above everything and displays himself as God. What is the message behind the miracle or sign? If it is to worship anyone but Jesus Christ we are to reject it. If it is against the Scriptures we are to reject it.

(2 Th 2:9–12) “*that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, {10} and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. {11} For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, {12} in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

In Deuteronomy 13:1-4, God spoke through Moses, saying, “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, that the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams.... You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him: and you shall keep His commandments.” We must always look at the words behind the signs and wonders. Is the goal to bring people to Christ, and to encourage them in Christ, or is it to turn people away and serve other gods? We must look beyond the sign, wonder, or miracle; we must look at the underlying message so that we are not deceived. In these last days, the activity of Satan includes false signs and wonders to deceive people and turn them away. There will be some who are deceived and fall away.

(Dt 13:1–4) “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, {2} and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ {3} you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. {4} “You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.”

In 1 John 4, God exhorts us not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits to see if they are from God. Many false prophets have gone into the world. They deny that Jesus has come in the

flesh. False spirits try to deceive and turn people away from Christ. We must always look at the message behind the spirit, and examine it with truth.

(1 Jn 4:1–6) “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. {2} By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; {3} and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world... {6} ... By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

Deception is one of the key reasons that people will fall away and the apostasy takes place. Another reason is because of persecution. In the parable of the soils, Jesus taught that those in rocky soil immediately sprang up, but then withered away. In His explanation, He said that these are those who have no firm root, and when persecution and affliction happen, they fall away. To prevent this, we need to help people get firmly rooted in Christ.

(Mt 13:18–23) “Hear then the parable of the sower. {19} “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. {20} “The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; {21} yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he **falls away** (skandalizo, Strong’s G4624). {22} “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. {23} “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

In Luke’s account, he said that those in the rocky soil fall away in time of temptation. Those who are not firmly rooted in Christ, fall away because of persecution, affliction, and temptation. In these last days there is going to be a tremendous increase in persecution, affliction, and temptation. The temptations facing young people today is far different than the temptations when I was young, and as a result, there will be many that fall way. The lowering of dress standards, the removal of moral absolutes, the liberal teachings about sexual activity, the elimination of drug laws, and many other factors have increased the temptations that young people face today.

(Lk 8:11–15) “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. {12} “Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. {13} “Those on the rocky *soil are* those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation **fall away**. {14} “The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity. {15} “But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”

Another reason that people fall away is because of offenses. I have met many people who have been hurt at church. Somebody said or did something against them, and they fell away from going to church. In Hebrews 10, God tells us to see to it that no root of bitterness springs up, causing many people to be defiled. We need to seek and pursue peace with one another and see

to it that there are no unresolved matters which can turn into a root of bitterness. We must teach on relational principles like forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, and love. But in the apostasy that must take place before the day of the Lord, many will fall away and some of these from offenses.

(Heb 12:15) “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;”

When COVID-19 hit America, many people exited the church. Some left because of fear. Others left because it was a good excuse to do other things that they wanted to do. In 2 Peter 2:1-3, “many will follow their own sensuality.” The context is listening to false prophets, but the principle is still valid. In the parable of the soils, the seed that fell on the thorny soil was choked out by the worries and riches and pleasures of this life.

(2 Pe 2:1–2) “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. {2} Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;”

(Lk 8:14) “The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

Many of the people that left the church during COVID never returned. They got in the habit of not going to church. In Hebrews 10:24-25, we are exhorted not to forsake the assembling of ourselves as is the habit of some. I have encouraged many people the last few years to get back in church. I encourage them to go to their old church, and if they don’t want to go there, I encourage them to come to our church, and by all means, not to forsake assembling together.

(Heb 10:24–25) “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

God tells us to encourage one another when we gather together. Encouragement needs to be a priority in our gatherings. In Hebrews 3:12-15, we are told to encourage one another day after day so that none of us are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We are to take care that there is not an evil unbelieving heart that falls away. That is the verb tense of the same Greek word.

(Heb 3:12–15) “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that **falls away** from the living God. {13} But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. {14} For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, {15} while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.”

I have listed a number of reasons for people falling away. Mike Bickel combined a number of these together and came up with the acronym, FOLD. Some will fall away because of fear. Some will fall away because of offenses. Some will fall away because of lust, and some will fall away because they get deceived.

| Contributing Factors to the Apostasy | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deception (2 Pe 2;1-3, 1 Tim 4:1-5, 2 Th 2:9-11) • False doctrine and false prophecy (Tit 1:5, 10-11) • Sin and an evil, unbelieving, and hardened heart (Heb 3:12-15) • Fall away because of temptations, persecution, and affliction (Luke 8:11-15, Matt 13:18-23) • Offenses (Heb 12:15) • Sensuality and lust (2 Pe 2:1-3, 2 Ti 4:3-4) | <p>FOLD</p> <p>F: Fear</p> <p>O: Offenses</p> <p>L: Lust</p> <p>D: Deception</p> |

2. Revealing of the man of lawlessness

The second thing that must take place before the Day of the Lord is the revealing of the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction. John referred to him as the anti-Christ, and that he will be coming in the last hour. He gave several characteristics of the antichrist. He is a liar, and a deceiver. There have been many different speculations over the years about who this anti-Christ is. It is very clear that he has not been revealed yet. I believe that when the man of lawlessness is revealed, there will be no more speculations; it will be obvious to everyone. The son of destruction will take his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as God. The antichrist is no respecter of religions; he opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship. He will be against Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and every religion. He will take his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. When we see this take place, we should know that the return of the Lord is imminent.

(2 Th 2:3) “Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

(1 Jn 2:18) “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that **antichrist** is coming, even now many **antichrists** have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.”

(1 Jn 2:22) “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the **antichrist**, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”

(2 Jn 7) “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the **antichrist**.”

The temple of God is in Jerusalem, and it has not been rebuilt yet. It is important to keep our eyes on what is happening in Israel, as the rebuilding of the temple must be done before the antichrist can take his seat and display himself as God.

Paul reminded the Thessalonians that he had told them these things. He was only there for a few weeks before having to leave. In those few weeks, they had preached the gospel to the Jews and to the Greeks, formed a church, formed a leadership team and put them in charge of the congregation of new believers. Having been a church planter, I have never started new believers or a new church off by teaching them about the Day of the Lord. Normally, with new believers, we teach them about spending time with the Lord, and having a quiet time. We encourage them to read their Bibles, and perhaps even memorize some verses. We give them the basics about baptism, prayer, and other topics. I am sure that Paul, Silas, and Timothy did all of those, but they also taught about the Day of the Lord. This tells me that he did not meet with them once a

week for an hour. Paul and his team spent a lot of time with them in those three weeks, and taught them many different things. They spent several intense weeks teaching and training the Thessalonian. The goal was not just to give them a weekly message, but to equip and prepare them for their life in Christ.

(2 Th 2:5) “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

3. Restraint Removed

The third thing that must take place before the Day of the Lord is the one restraining the man of destruction is taken away. There are different views about what is restraining him now. Some believe that it is the governments of the world that are restraining the man of lawlessness. Some tie this in with the prophecies in Daniel about the ten kingdoms, and the governments of those kingdoms. They are correct in saying that it is the role of government to restrain evil in society. Whether it is the Roman government, or a coalition of governments in the last days, or some other government, or someone else restraining the son of perdition, we cannot be emphatic. When there is a complete breakdown of law and order, it will set the stage for the man of lawlessness to step in. We have seen a tremendous attack in recent days against law and order, and it would appear in the natural that these restraints are being lifted. In any case, Paul had apparently told the Thessalonians what was restraining the son of lawlessness, because he wrote, “And you know what restrains him now...” Some theologians believe that it was the Roman government and that Paul did not want to say anything in his letter that might get the Thessalonians in trouble with the Roman government.

(2 Th 2:6–7) “And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. {7} For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.”

In the verse, there is a person restraining the man of lawlessness, and he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. I believe it is highly likely that an angel has been assigned to restrain the antichrist, and at the right time, God will take him out of the way. Governments come and go, and we generally do not call a government a “he.” Someone like Michael, the arch angel (Jude 8:9) could be one of many choices of angels to put in that role. In Daniel, Gabriel was the angel that came to Daniel. He was delayed because he was fighting with the prince of Persia, a demon assigned to that country where Daniel was. The prince of Greece was about to come, and Gabriel would also be battling him. Gabriel would be another good candidate. (See Dan 8-10.)

In 1 John we find two terms, the spirit of the antichrist and the antichrist. John said that the antichrist is coming and many antichrists have appeared. The antichrist is a person, while the many antichrists refer to a spirit of antichrist, which operates through many people. The antichrist has not yet come, but the spirit of antichrist has been operating for a couple thousand years. The message of the spirit of antichrist is that the Son has not come from the Father, that Jesus did not come in the flesh. The spirit of antichrist denies the Father and the Son. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, and governments have a limited ability to war against spiritual forces of darkness. So, governments cannot restrain the spirit of antichrist, but they do have the ability to restrain a person.

(1 Jn 2:18–22) “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.... {22} Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. {23} Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.”

B. What is going on in the meantime

The Day of the Lord had not taken place, and still has not taken place. Those three events, the apostasy, revealing of the son of destruction, and the removal of the restraint, have not yet occurred. So, what is happening right now (before the Day of the Lord)? First, the man of lawlessness is being restrained.

(2 Th 2:6–7) “And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. {7} For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.”

Next, we are given some of the activity of Satan in these last days. Satan’s activity is with power, signs, and false wonders. Where there are genuine signs, wonders, and miracles, there will be false signs. In John 2:23, people believed Christ because they were observing the signs which He was doing. The first sign that He did in John 2 was turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana, and His disciples believed in Him. In John 5, Jesus said that the works that He was doing testify that He was sent by the Father. In John 20, there were many other signs that Jesus did that were not recorded in John’s gospel, but the ones included were given so that we would believe. Signs and wonders are given so that people will believe in the gospel.

(2 Th 2:9–10) “*that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, {10} and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

(Jn 2:23) “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.”

(Jn 2:11) “This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

(Jn 5:36) “But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of* John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.”

(Jn 20:30–31) “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; {31} but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Unfortunately, there are counterfeit signs that Satan performs in order to deceive people. While we are waiting for the return of Christ, the activity of Satan includes all power, signs, and false wonders, that are done with all the deception of wickedness so that people will believe what is false. As believers, we must be very discerning about the signs and wonders we witness. God still performs signs and wonders, and we should be like the early church and ask God to extend

His hand to perform signs and wonders. We should also be aware that there are false signs being done in order to deceive and lead people astray.

(Ac 4:29–31) “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, {30} while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Who are those who are being deceived? The ones that are being deceived are those who are perishing, those who did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. Because they have rejected the gospel, that have been given a deluding influence so that they believe what is false, in order that they may be judged because they did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

(2 Th 2:10–12) “and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. {11} For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, {12} in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

3. **Stand firm on truth** (2 Th 2:13-15)

Paul contrasts those that are being deceived with the Thessalonians. He said, “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.” The Thessalonians were not deceived; they had been chosen from the beginning for salvation. They were called through the gospel message, which they had believed and received, in order that they would gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Th 2:13–14) “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. {14} It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul, Silas, and Timothy end with an exhortation and a prayer for the Thessalonians. First, they exhorted them to stand firm and hold to the traditions which they were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter. They are to stand firm in truth. It is great to have trustworthy people in your lives that teach you the word of God, and that you can stand firm and hold on to the things that they have taught us. That does not mean that we should not be good Bereans and examine what we are taught. We should examine the things that we are taught. We should also stand firm and hold to the teachings, ordinances, principles and traditions that our trusted leaders give us.

(2 Th 2:15) “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.”

Conclusion and Applications

God does not want us to be deceived. He wants us to be alert and sober, and He wants us to be informed. He wants us to know truth, and it is truth that we use to determine whether something is of God or not. The Thessalonians had been deceived, and so this second letter to the

Thessalonians was written as soon as Paul, Silas, and Timothy heard what had transpired in Thessalonica. Someone said the spirit had showed them something; they had a message from God. Not only that, but they also had a letter from Paul. The result of these false words and teachings were that people had been shaken and disturbed. So, Paul, Silas, and Timothy wrote this to stop the damage and to prevent further deception. They clarified their teaching on the Day of the Lord, and gave the Thessalonians truth about the Day of the Lord.

Three things needed to take place before the Day of the Lord: 1) apostasy, 2) revealing of the son of destruction, and 3) the restraint removed. The apostasy was a falling away of the saints. The revealing of the son of destruction, or son of perdition, or the lawless one also had to happen. The antichrist would take his seat in the temple and declare that he was God. This is the abomination of desolation, the defiling of the temple. The third condition was that the one restraining the antichrist would be taken out of the way. Then, the Lord will come and slay with His breath the lawless one and bring him to an end.

In the meantime, Satan is busy at work, deceiving people with all power, signs, and false wonders. Those who have not believed the gospel message will be deceived. They will receive a deluding influence so that they believe what is false. Believers, those beloved and chosen by God will not be deceived. They are to stand firm and hold to the traditions and principles that they have been taught by their trusted leaders.

The application for us is to know the truth. We must know what God's word tells us about every area of our life. We must know His truth about the Day of the Lord. We must know His word about finances, marriage, spiritual gifts, resurrection, and every other subject so that we do not get deceived. God does not want you and I to be deceived. In these last days, there is going to be more deception. There will be deception through letters, visions, dreams, signs, and wonders. We must be sober and alert, on guard, and full of truth. We must stand firm on the things that we have been taught.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for Your word. Thank You for giving us Your truth. Thank You for the revelation and understanding that You give us. Thank You for the letters to the Thessalonians, and for the truth we have received about the Day of the Lord. Help us not to be deceived, and to be discerning about the things that we hear. I ask You to protect us from all deception. I ask You to give us Your comfort and to strengthen our hearts in every good work and word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Standing Firm Against Deception – Part 2 (2 Th 2:1-15)

Introduction (Heb 9:27, Luke 8:49-56), John 11:1-44, Acts 9:36-42, 20:7-12, 2 Th 2:1–15)

1. **Be on guard against deception** (2 Th 2:1-3a, Ac 14:21–23)

2. **Know the truth** (2 Th 2:3-12, Col 2:9)

A. Things which must happen before the Day of the Lord (2 Th 2:1–7)

1. **Apostasy:** (1 Ti 4:1, 2 Th 2:9-12, Dt 13:1–4, 1 Jn 4:1-6, Mt 13:18-23, Lk 8:11–15, Heb 12:15, 2 Pe 2:1–2, Lk 8:14, Heb 10:24-25, Heb 3:12–15)

- **Contributing factors**

- Deception 2 Pe 2:1-3, 1 Tim 4:1-5, 2 Th 2:9-11
- Sin and an evil unbelieving heart (Heb 3:12-15)
- Temptations, persecution and affliction (Lk 8:11-15, Mt 13:18-23)
- Offenses (Heb 12:15)
- Sensuality and lust (2 Pet 2:1-3, 2 Ti 4:3-4)

2. **Revealing of the man of lawlessness** (2 Th 2:3, 1 Jn 2:18, 2:22, 2 Jn 7, 2 Th 2:5)

3. **Restraint removed** (2 Th 2:6-7, Jude 9, Dan 8-10)

B. What is going on in the meantime (2 Th 2:6–7, 1 Jn 2:18–22, John 2:23, 2 Th 2:9-10, Jn 2:11, 5:36, 20:30-31, Ac 4:29-31, 2 Th 2:10–12)

3. **Stand firm on truth** (2 Th 2:13-15)

Conclusion and Applications