

March 7, 2010

Beware the Deceivers

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Deceiver? What or who is that? Today's text has some underlying information concerning the return of Jesus, and about the -antichristø For today's perspective, the emphasis is not on eschatology, but on our reaction to false teaching. How do we discern if a teaching is deceptive, and if so, how do we encounter it properly?

There was a lot of selfish and corrupt doctrine battling against the early church. There was one idea that said that the full presence of Jesus had already returned, and therefore you could abandon any work or discipleship. There were many who were trying to claim the title of Christ, to draw followers and the resulting power to themselves. In this environment, Paul had to write to lift the truth above the noise of the falsehood. He encourages the Thessalonians, and us, to be discerning, to cling to the truth.

1. vs. 1-4. Paul tells the Thessalonians NOT to do something. What is it? What is our best tool for evaluating an idea to see if it is true? **2Tim 3:16**. Why do spiritual matters stir up our emotions so vigorously? The Thessalonians may have had a panicky reaction to this teaching. Can there be modern issues that -set us offø Do we wonder sometimes if evil is going to win? Can you think of some who would try to claim God's place? The issue with the Thessalonians was that some were saying Jesus had already returned, and they'd missed Him. Have you ever been deceived by a rumor? What is the appeal of a rumor?

2. vs. 5-8. Evil and sin are restrained by what? Satan cannot rule with abandon, for he does not have every person in his evil grasp. Also abiding in this world is the Holy Spirit, and He cannot be defeated. The influence of the Spirit of God is still a persuasive and powerful influence in this world, one that constrains the full effect of Satan. **1John 4:4**.

3. vs. 9-11. Isn't God being unfair, if some perish because they are deceived? **Rom 1:1-20**. Sometimes we reject the truth. Why? When it goes against something we have already accepted. Some love the shock value of a new and sometimes bizarre teaching, for it shakes up the status-quo. **John 8:32**.

4. vs. 12. What would a person be like who *delighted in wickedness*? **Titus 1:5**. Have you ever delighted in wickedness? What kind of attitude adjustment did you need?

5. **1John 2:18-19**. It can occur that deceptive teachers arise from the Church of Jesus. They become something that we eventually don't recognize. What kinds of things can corrupt Christian teachers and preachers? Can you think of a modern example? Have you ever become aware that you were deceived? What did that do to your trust in your own judgment?

6. **1John 2:20-23.** How confident are you in the Spirit's guidance when you have to make decisions that require spiritual discernment? What extra steps do you take to become confident of a correct decision?

7. **1John 4:1.** What are you doing to test whether a given spiritual insight is truly from God? **Acts 17:11.**

How would you summarize our work in the Lord, as it pertains to discernment? What can we do to prevent being deceived?

What three things do we need to see and to help others to see?

1. There is a lot of deception in this world, and we have an adversary who is quite skillful and determined to spread it around.
2. We have the potential for sin and darkness in our own hearts and the hearts of those we love.
3. We have hope in Jesus to know the truth, His power to obey it, and to treasure the benefit of that hope and faith.

