

Today's Quick Word 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11

By Bruce Christian

2 THESSALONIANS 2:9-11 *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ...*

The 'Evil One' is given different names throughout Scripture. He is called 'Satan' (the 'Accuser'), and the 'Devil' ('Diabolos', the 'Deceiver'). Jesus also referred to him as 'The prince of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), because ever since his (Pyrrhic) 'victory' in the Garden of Eden, he has exercised his power in the lives of all the descendants of Adam - a 'power' which Jesus has now defeated and overcome through his Death, Resurrection and Ascension.

Notwithstanding his defeat, the Deceiver continues to exercise his influence in human hearts, making every attempt to oppose and undermine the advance of God's Kingdom wherever he can, and, of course, one of his most effective weapons is deception. So how do we arm ourselves against this?

Paul tells us: "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." Do we 'love the truth' of God's written Word? How is this reflected in our commitment to reading it each day and sitting under its authority? How is it reflected in our acknowledging before a watching world that Jesus is the ONLY Saviour, who declared, "I AM the way and the TRUTH and the life. No-one comes to the Father EXCEPT THROUGH ME." (John 14:6)?

Do we realise how vulnerable we are, in our natural state, to the the Deceiver's barrage of lies that he hammers us with through the media and the influence of a God-denying, man-centred worldview that dominates our present culture? Are we looking forward with expectant hearts to the time when we can start to gather together freely to encourage each other in 'WALKING in the TRUTH' (2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:3-4)? Remember, if we are NOT WALKING in THE TRUTH, we are a sitting target for the Deceiver, and 'the Father of Lies' of whom Jesus said: "... there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language." (John 8:44)!

Today's Quick Word Daniel 7:25-27

By Bruce Christian

DANIEL 7:25-27 *“He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed for ever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”*

The prophecies revealed to Daniel in visions from God are a great arena for speculation about the future course of human history. But much of this ‘confident’ speculation has already been proved to be wrong - and has therefore done much damage to the faith of individuals as well as to the testimony of the Church.

It seems to me that the true value of apocalyptic writing in Scripture is to reassure the people of God in times of persecution and distress that HE remains in FULL CONTROL of everything that is happening around us, regardless of how confusing his providence might appear to be from our perspective. What we can only speculate about at any given point in history becomes crystal clear when the prophecy is fulfilled, and one of the best examples of this is God’s Promised Messiah, Daniel’s ‘Son of Man’ (13-14), being the Crucified-Resurrected-Ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

Two thousand years ago and beyond, God’s people had speculated about what their Messiah would ‘look’ like, and this (wrong) speculation was the reason they actually missed him

when he came! But for us now, seeing so many OT prophecies so clearly fulfilled in Jesus confirms for us UNDENIABLY that ALL history is in God’s faithful, loving, powerful hands! This is especially comforting as we experience more and more forces ‘speak[ing] against the Most High and oppress[ing] his saints and try[ing] to change the set times and the laws’, and as we see so many ‘saints [being] handed over’ to these forces around the world. Let us be truly comforted, in our present experience of human history, by the reliable truth that “the court will sit, and [Satan’s] power will be taken away and completely destroyed for ever”, and that “then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven WILL be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”

The Apostle Paul confirms this truth for us: “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:18-23)

Today's Quick Word Psalm 116:7-9

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 116:7-9 *Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*

As I read these verses, I thought of the song: “Count your many blessings, name them one by one; and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.” The psalmist realises that the pressure of his current strife has robbed him of the peace, composure and security he had known when things had been going well for him.

Had he been just taking all this for granted, and had he forgotten that the covenant-keeping LORD, who was the source of this ‘rest’, was always faithful to all his covenant promises? Did he not remember that these promises included things like the one the LORD had made to Joshua (Joshua 1:5), and, by implication, to us in similar circumstances (cf Hebrews 13:5): “I will never leave you or forsake you.”?

The Hebrew behind ‘Be at rest once more, O my soul’ is literally: “RETURN, my soul, to your rest”, and it is interesting that the verb, ‘return’ (shub), is often, in other places, more appropriately

translated ‘repent’. There is a degree of TRUE REPENTANCE required when we allow ourselves to forget the blessing of all the LORD’s goodness, and his never-failing promises, and when we sink into depression and anxiety because of what is happening around us.

More than this, FOR US, the New Testament makes it clear that when we put our trust in Jesus we begin to experience ETERNAL LIFE here and now, so the psalmist was anticipating this when he said, “you, O LORD, HAVE (already) DELIVERED my soul from death ... that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the LIVING.” It is good to remember that, unless we KNOW God’s saving grace in Jesus, this world is NOT ‘the land of the LIVING’, but ‘the land of the DYING’!

It is no wonder that the NT gently warns us, “Do not be anxious about your life” (Matthew 6:25), and “Do not be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6). I need to say to myself: “Stop sinning, and REPENT! RETURN, my soul, to your rest.”, and “Hear your God say: ‘Be still, and KNOW that I am God.’” (Psalm 46:10).