

INTRODUCTION

There have always been religious people who are a little wacky announcing that the end of the world is near. Somebody emailed me a joke about two preachers standing beside the road holding a sign that said, "The End is Near. Turn Yourself Around Before It's Too Late." A driver rolled down his window and said, "You're just a couple of religious nuts!" Then he drove on.

A few seconds later the preachers heard the sound of screeching tires and then a big splash. One preacher turned to the other and said, "That's the third one this morning. Maybe we should have just written 'Bridge Out' on the sign."

The Apostle Paul lived almost 2,000 years ago, but he believed and preached that the return of Christ was near. None of us know when Jesus will return, but if Paul believed he was living in the last days, then we must be living in the last of the last days. Paul wrote this second letter to Thessalonian believers because someone produced a fake letter, supposedly from Paul, saying that the second coming had already happened. So Paul wrote to correct their misunderstanding. In this chapter he introduces us to a future diabolical leader who is most often called the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you, I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way."

"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 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 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

"Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird, it's a plane. No, it's Superman." Chances are you've seen a Superman movie or read a comic book. The Superman comic books debuted in 1938. The cost of the comic book was ten cents.

This past summer, David Gonzales bought a rundown old house in Minnesota for around \$10,000. While he was removing a wall, he found an original 1938 Superman comic book that had been stuffed behind the walls for insulation. It wasn't in great shape after 75 years, but he sold it to a collector for \$175,000.

In 1958, the writers introduced a character called Superman Bizarro. He was the antithesis of Superman. Superman used his superpowers for good, but Bizzaro used his powers for evil.

It's not fair to compare Jesus to Superman because Superman is a fictional character and Jesus is real. And Jesus is more than a Superman: He's the Supernatural God-man. But what Bizzaro was to Superman, the Antichrist will be to Jesus. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and the Antichrist will be a pseudo-peace maker. In Isaac Watts hymn "Joy to the World" he writes that Jesus will "rule the world with truth and grace." That's referring to the thousand-year reign of Christ. But during the Tribulation, the Antichrist will rule the world with lies and disgrace.

In the last message we learned that the Apostle John used the term "antichrist" four times in 1 and 2 John. But in Revelation 13, John calls the Antichrist a beast, because his behavior is inhumane. When Jesus comes to rapture His church, millions of Christians will mysteriously disappear. You can imagine the global chaos that will ensue. But out of this chaos, a world leader will appear who will appeal to the world for "peace." He will orchestrate the most consolidate all the world's governments into one.

One of my friends and mentors was Adrian Rogers. He had a unique way of expressing truth. Here's how he describes the antichrist: "World history began with the sin of man; it will end with the man of sin. There are some people who tell us that man sprang from the beast. Man did not spring from the beast; man is headed to the beast. Man is headed to the Antichrist, that last world ruler, who is Satan's superman."

I've said before that I don't like to devote an entire message to Satan. He's not worth it. The only exception I when I get to talk about Satan's defeat—the same is true about the Antichrist. So I want to borrow Adrian's term as we examine four things about the defeat of Satan's Superman.

1. Satan's Superman will declare that he is God.

In verse 4 the Bible says, "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

Satan has always had an inferiority complex. Why? Because he IS inferior. He's always wanted to be worshipped. According to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, at one time Lucifer was a beautiful high-ranking angel. The name Lucifer means, "Light bearer."

But he wasn't satisfied to just be an angel. He wanted to be God. So he said, "I will ascend and be like the most high. I will sit on a throne higher than God's." In other words he said, "I'm going up, up, up!" But God said, "Oh no. Lucifer, you're going down, down, down."

He was cast out of heaven to the earth. Some people think Satan is in hell shoveling coal into a furnace. But Satan isn't in hell—yet. He still has access to approach God to accuse good people; that's what he did about Job, and he does it about us as well.

But Satan's main goal is to be worshipped. He even tried to entice Jesus to bow down and worship him. So it's no surprise Satan's Superman, the Antichrist, will demand that people worship him as God. And during the tribulation, he will be worshipped by everyone except those who put their faith in Jesus.

Here's how John described this worship in Revelation. "He was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. And inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all those whose names have not been written in the book of life." (Revelation 13:7-8)

This is a good place for me to ask you if your name written in the Book of Life. In Revelation 21 John is describing heaven and he writes that the only people who will enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. In Luke 10 Jesus sent out seventy disciples in teams of twos. They came back rejoicing that the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name. In Luke 10:20 Jesus said, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

The prophet Daniel predicted that the Antichrist would set himself up in the Temple in Jerusalem and demand people worship him. As I mentioned in the last message, there is currently no Jewish temple. The last one was destroyed in 70 A.D. when the Romans sacked Jerusalem. On Temple Mount today, you find the Muslim Dome of the Rock, the third most holy place in Islam. Muslims claim Mohammed had a dream in which he rode a flying horse from Mecca to "a faraway place." And from this spot, he stepped up into paradise for a visit with Allah. Many years after Mohammed died, some of his followers claimed that this "faraway place" was Jerusalem, so they built two mosques there. That's interesting, because the Quran never mentions that Mohammed ever went anywhere near Jerusalem.

When you look at an aerial photograph of the Temple Mount, and line up the place that is directed in front of the Eastern Gate, it's easy to see the location of the Jewish Temple is about 200 feet north of the Dome of the Rock. Dr. Asher Kaufman, Professor Emeritus of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, claims this is where the Jewish Temple was built.

I say this because some have claimed the only way the Jewish Temple could be rebuilt would be to destroy the Dome of the Rock. But if the Antichrist is able to negotiate a treaty between the Muslims and the Jews, there is room for both on the Temple Mount. Today, the Israelis own and control the entire Temple Mount. The Muslims are allowed to worship there. Another scenario could have the Israelis claiming the northern part of the Temple Mount, and building a wall to separate the two.

2. Satan's Superman will deceive people to believe the lie.

In verses 9 and 11 the Bible says, "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles...God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie." Satan has power to perform miracles. When Moses stood before Pharaoh, his staff was transformed into a snake. The priests of Pharaoh were able to perform the same tricks. Just because someone claims to perform a miracle, doesn't necessarily mean they are from God.

Sometimes we can be so gullible, we easily believe a lie. For those of you who use an iPhone, you know there was a recent software update called iOS7. Someone posted a fake ad on Facebook claiming that the new software made the iPhone waterproof. The ad said: "With the new features and smart formalities of iOS7 the phone can now detect sudden changes in thermo distribution with the touch sensitive screen and the home button. This utilizes emergency shut off of the phone's power supply and corresponding components to prevent any damage dealt to the delicate circuitry."

According to news reports, hundreds of iPhone users believed that lie and immersed their phones in the sink or bathtub to see it work. It shut off the phone, all right. But it didn't come back on. It ruined them. One of my friends said Apple probably sponsored that adjust to sell more new iPhones!

These iPhone users believed A lie. The Bible says during the time of the Antichrist, people will believe THE lie. What is THE lie? Jesus said Satan was a liar from the beginning. Satan and his Superman have the same purpose—to deceive and then to kill, steal, and destroy.

The lie of Satan is the same lie he told Eve in the Garden of Eden. God said, "Help yourself to all the food in the Garden, but there is one tree that I reserve to myself. Don't eat of that fruit, or you will die." Satan's lie was this: "Eve, you don't need a God because you can be your own god. Eat of this tree and you won't die. Instead, you'll become like god!" These words were spoken from the lips of a liar who had once tried to be like God and failed.

But Eve believed the lie. In fact, when God confronted Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, her excuse was, "The serpent deceived me."

Satan is still telling that lie today. There is a growing number of Americans who claim they don't need God. In essence they are swallowing the lie of the devil. They believe there will never be any consequences for their sin. They call themselves self-made people, and they worship themselves as their own creator.

Antichrist and his right hand man, the false prophet, will perform miraculous signs and wonders to seduce people. John writes, "Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast [Antichrist], he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed." (Revelation 13:14-15)

Now remember John had this vision in the 1st century. To him it was miraculous that an image, a picture could actually speak. But in 21st century terms, most of us have a device in our homes or in our hands where a picture can move or talk—it's a television, or a tablet, or a computer. And the technology exists today so a person could speak live on television and it would be broadcast all over the world.

Some people really stumble over the phrase, "God will send them a delusion." But the language simply states that God will allow them to be deceived. He could have kept Eve from being

deceived, but there is one area of the universe where God has willingly limited Himself. That is in the area of your will. God allowed Eve to be deceived.

When you read Romans 1, this process is described. Everyone has a certain amount of truth. Truth is like light, and deception is like darkness. The Bible says even if a person has never read a Bible or heard the Gospel, they have some light, some truth. They can look at the stars and realize that there must be a Creator. If they go toward the light they have, God will give them more and more light. But Romans 1 describes how most people turn their back on the truth and move toward the depravity of darkness. If you walk toward the darkness, it just keeps getting darker. That's what I call the gravity of depravity. The more a person rejects the truth of God, the easier it gets to believe the Lie. But I want to warn you, that there are consequences to sin. You cannot be your own god. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death, [spiritual separation from God] but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

3. Satan's Superman will be defeated when Jesus returns.

In verse 8, the Bible describes the defeat of the Antichrist. "Whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming."

Halfway through the seven-year tribulation, the Antichrist will set himself up in the Temple and say, "Worship me." At that point, Israel will reject him. The temple will be deserted and desolated after that. What an abomination! Jesus called it an abomination that causes a desolation.

From that point, Israel will suffer. The Antichrist will gather all the armies of the nations together to fight against Israel. They will gather at a place about 60 miles north of Jerusalem called Armageddon.

The Israeli army will be outnumbered by a thousand to one. But as the battle starts, Jesus, the Heavenly Hero, arrives just in time to decide the battle. His foot will stand on the Mount of Olives, probably in the exact spot where His foot last touched when He ascended into heaven. And according to the prophet Zechariah, the entire mountain will split into two parts. That's what I call a powerful touchdown!

Here's how John describes it in Revelation. "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True...He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations." (Revelation 19:11, 13-15)

The most powerful weapon in the universe is the Word of God. Paul said the breath of Jesus will defeat the Antichrist. Now, maybe you've knocked people over with your breath after you've eaten garlic and onions, but Paul is referring to the spoken Word of Jesus. The Antichrist might have a massive armament of nuclear and biological weapons, but they will be useless against the Word that Jesus speaks.

In Martin Luther's great hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God," he refers to the devil and says, "The prince of darkness grim; We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure; For lo, his doom is sure. One little word will slay him... That word (is) above all earthly powers."

I believe it will be the shortest fight battle in history. Jesus will simply speak, and the battle will be over. I don't know what Jesus will say, but it will be enough to get Antichrist to immediately cease and desist.

Jenni and Jason have a bullmastiff named Addie. When Addie is misbehaving, you can say, "Addie, down!" And Addie stops. Maybe Jesus will say, "Antichrist, down!" And for sure, he's going down!

4. Satan and his superman will be disposed forever.

When Paul introduces the Antichrist, he announces his destruction in verse 3, "For that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction."

One meaning of the word "disposed" means to get rid of. When we use something and throw it away, we call it disposable. We have disposable diapers and disposable razors. And just so you'll know, Satan and his superman are very disposable. And Jesus will dispose of them forever.

Many of us have a life verse. Did you know that Satan has a death verse? And every time I read this I have to smile. It's because I know the devil knows the Bible. He even tried quoting part of it to Jesus. So the devil knows what's going to happen to him. That's why I call this his death verse. But he won't really die; he'll just suffer forever. "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Revelation 20:10)

Satan, I've got some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is you have won an all-expense paid trip to a lake. The bad news is that it's a lake of fire. And here are the details of your trip. You won't be tormented from 9 till 5; you'll be tormented day and night. You won't be tormented for a few years or a few millennia; you'll be tormented forever and ever.

The devil is just a big bully, but his days are numbered. When I was in elementary school, there was a student that bullied me. This bully tripped me in the hall, and pushed me down. This bully was bigger than me, but one day I had had enough. The bully tried to trip me, and I turned around and said to her, "Leave me alone!" And she did.

The devil is just a big bully, and he knows his days are numbered. So don't let him bully you around. Remember, the Bible says, "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

CONCLUSION

So what does this mean to us? Again, it reassures us that whatever happens in the world around us, that we shouldn't worry or lose hope. God is in control, and in the end, Jesus wins.

But there's another application as well. The Bible predicts there will be a horrible man, the Antichrist, leading during the worst time in the history of humanity. Jesus said it would be a time of tribulation worse than the world has ever experienced. And the Jesus has promised to take His church home before this horrible time occurs. When He was speaking to the church at Philadelphia Jesus said, "Because you have kept My command to endure, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth." (Revelation 3:10 HCSB)

So, it is important for you to make sure that you are saved. You don't want to be left when the Rapture happens.

There was a great song written by Larry Norman in 1972. The song was "I Wish We'd All Been Ready." When I was a youth pastor in the 1970's we used to sing it a lot. It describes what life might be like after the rapture. The lyrics say, "Life was filled with guns and wars; And everyone got trampled on the floor. I wish we'd all been ready. Children died, the days grew cold; a piece of bread could buy a bag of gold. I wish we'd all been ready." And the chorus said, "There's no time to change your mind. How could you have been so blind? The Father spoke, the demons dined. The Son has come, and you've been left behind."

If Jesus came this afternoon, would you be taken? Do you know that you know that you know the Lord? If you aren't sure, today is the day of salvation. The Bible says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (Hebrews 3:15)

Jesus is calling you to put your faith in Him? Will you do that today?

OUTLINE

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Revelation 13:7-8

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Pastor David Dykes