



Lesson 14 - In the twinkling of an eye...

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 and 50-58, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Lesson 14

The apostle Paul echoes what Jesus told the disciples but he adds some additional detail and he focuses on avoiding deception. Paul also talks about the deception that God sends to the people because they love the lie. We will get to that later. First we want to reflect on what we learned from Matthew. We saw Jesus give stern warnings to His disciples about being deceived. Jesus added emphasis to this by telling them 3 parables. When the Bible states something twice that means it is very important so when it emphasizes it 5 or 6 times - it is super important.

The material we are covering is some of the more advanced topics covered in the Bible. God challenges us as Christians to grow spiritually and that means we have to dig deeper into the challenging subjects to grow. The Holy Spirit opens our minds

to these topics as we pursue them. Paul addresses these in his letter to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians and in both he indicates that he had discussed this with them when he was with them. He is trying to make sure that when they hear other things from other people that they do not believe it if it differs from the message he preached.

The first letter to the Corinthians was written around 54-56 AD from Ephesus during his 3rd missionary journey. He spent time in Corinth during his second missionary journey a few years earlier. Paul wrote this letter to correct some of the teachings that he had gotten word about that were incorrect as well as some issues that had learned about within the church at Corinth.

One concept that Paul dealt with in many of his letters was that some people would invariably come behind Paul and try to add things to the gospel that he had preached when he was with them. In chapter 15 he deals with the resurrection because some started teaching that Jesus had already come and others that He was not raised from the dead and Paul was setting them straight.

1 Cor. 15:20-21 - *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.”*

Paul would have made a great engineer or lawyer. He lays a logical foundation to his points that he wants to make. In v. 12-19 Paul points out that if Jesus was not raised from the dead then all our faith is futile and we are still in our sins. Then he kicks off v. 20 pointing out that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. Paul met Jesus briefly on the road to Damascus but that was more than enough of an encounter for him to be 100% convinced for life that Jesus was indeed the Son of God and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

1 Cor. 15:22-23 - *“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*

Follow the logic - through one man - Adam - all humans became infected with sin and because of our sin the penalty for any sin is death. But through one man - Jesus - all can be made alive again. This is the resurrection.

1 Cor. 15:24-25 - *“Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”*

Notice here that Paul is telling us the exact chronology of events yet to come. First, Jesus will destroy all dominion, authority and power. He will reign until all His enemies are conquered. We have seen this in Revelation 19 and 20. Then, Jesus will hand over everything to the father. This is when God, the Father has created the New Heaven and the New Earth and the old Heaven and Earth will have passed away.

1 Cor. 15:26-28 - *“The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”*

Paul just adds a side note that God, the Father has not put Himself under Jesus - but when Jesus has done everything God has sent Him to do, then Jesus will make Himself subject to the Father. At no point in His ministry did Jesus ever hint at or indicate in any way that He was superior to God, the Father. Jesus, very convincingly pointed out that He and the Father are one and if you know Him then you know the Father and He said that He can do nothing apart from the Father.

1 Cor. 15:50 - *“I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”*

Paul is further pointing out that one reason for the resurrection is that our human bodies cannot be in Heaven and inherit the Kingdom of God. Our bodies will waste away and how can we spend eternity in a body that only has a maximum life of 100-115 years.

1 Cor. 15:51 - 52 - *“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*

Now Paul is pointing out to the Corinthians that believers will not have to die in order to go to Heaven. In the New Testament the term “sleep” is a metaphor for dying

just as Jesus spoke of Lazarus when Jesus said Lazarus just sleeps. Paul introduces this concept of believers being changed in a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. We will see the seven trumpets in Revelation 11:15 which says - *‘The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”*

Paul is writing this about 35-40 years before John has the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to him on the isle of Patmos. We get our concept of the rapture from this verse in part because we will be transformed in an instant without actually dying when Jesus appears and sends His angels to collect the believers from the 4 corners of the world. The sequence of events are just as important in 2019 as they were in 55 AD. We do not know exactly when - BUT we have been given many details about what will have to happen first and when to start looking for these things to take place.

1 Cor. 15:53 - 54 - *“For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’”*

Our mortal bodies will have to be made immortal for us to exist in Heaven. This is why in Revelation 20:14 it says *“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.”* It is hard for us to understand but the concept of death can and will be destroyed. Why will we need “death” when God makes us immortal? Death is the punishment for sin - life is the reward for righteousness. We cannot possibly achieve righteousness on our own but through the blood of Jesus Christ our faith will gain us righteousness.

1 Cor. 15:55 - 56 - *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”*

Everything goes back to Adam and the first sin. Gen. 3:13 - *Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

The first sin came from the first deception then notice what happens in Gen. 3:22 - *“And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.”*

He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”

So this is where Adam came to know good and evil - evil being disobedience BUT notice that God says that Adam cannot be allowed to take from the tree of life or he would live forever with the knowledge of good and evil. In Gen. 2:9 - *“The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

We can see that both trees were in the middle of the Garden of Eden and so God removed Adam quickly from the Garden to prevent him from partaking of the tree of life. That is why we die, but through Jesus and the resurrection we will regain that immortality that Adam had before the deception.

1 Cor. 15:57 - 58 - *“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”*

We have victory in Jesus Christ!!! Stand firm - do not let anything sway us or deceive us into going off course. Remember how Joshua and the elders got tricked - they did not inquire of the Lord about making a treaty with the Gibeonites in Joshua 9:14 - *“The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.”*

2 Thessalonians

It is believed that this letter may have been written in 51-52 AD. Thessaloniki was a large commercial center that was built by Alexander The Great in 315 BC and was located at a crossroad from the north and the main road to the east. Paul praised the Thessalonians for their faith and love and he wanted to clear up some questions they had.

2 Thess. 2:1-2 - *“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—as-*

serting that the day of the Lord has already come.”

Paul is allaying their fears and the questions that they had concerning the Day of the Lord. It has not come! It had not come at that time and it has not come at our time.

2 Thess. 2:3-4 - “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.”

Here we see the same strong warning that Jesus gave His disciples and telling them that the day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the anti-christ are revealed. Just as Daniel told us, the antichrist will be the one who opposes God and acts like he is god and even proclaim himself to be god. This is referring to the apostasy - a great denial of God.

2 Thess. 2:5-6 - “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.”

In v. 5 Paul gives us insight that he did indeed talk with the people about this concept when he was with them. The one who is holding back at the moment is the Holy Spirit. The man of lawlessness, the antichrist will be revealed at the proper time. He could be here now and is just biding his time. We do not know, but God will make sure he is revealed at the right time.

2 Thess. 2:7-8 - “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.”

Notice the sequence of events - first the Holy Spirit will continue holding back Satan until the time is ready. Then Jesus will come and overthrow him. Everything about Jesus will be focused on stopping the antichrist and destroying his splendor.

2 Thess. 2:9-10 - “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the

lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

Here Paul is telling the believers that the ways of wickedness will deceive those who are perishing. All of us are perishing but we endeavor to love the truth because God is Love and God is the truth. Those who are perishing will be deceived and they will follow the antichrist and the false prophet (more on him in Revelation).

2 Thess. 2:11-12 - “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.”

Notice that God, Himself, will send the powerful delusion that will encourage many people to believe the lie of the antichrist. Probably about one world government; or maybe Islam, Mormonism, Communism, Liberalism, etc. We do not know what it is but as Christians we should be prepared and alert so that we are not in the group that gets deceived. The Holy Spirit is here to convict people of their sin and listen for the prayers of believers and the prayers of those accepting Jesus Christ and God’s gift of Grace. At the time of the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will be removed along with the believers. Then the man of lawlessness will be able to deceive most of the rest of the world. People will come to accept Jesus during this tribulation time but it will be much more difficult for them at that time.

Lesson Goals - What did we learn?

