

2 Thessalonians 2:7–11 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

I. The Love and Justice of God, v. 12

2 Thessalonians 2:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

A. A correct belief in the revealed Word of God has the result of bringing the believer to salvation. Not being a believer has just the opposite effect. Compare this to 2 Thess. 7-11,

Romans 1:20–21 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that ***they are without excuse***, <sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

B. All this takes place in the mind. They are personally responsible for the delusion that they have allowed to shape their eternal destiny.

II. The AI revolution

A. For those of us who regularly browse YouTube may have noticed that many things,

1. I have been watching YouTube videos for many years. I like to tie artificial flies. You discover that there are perhaps hundreds or even thousands of fly-tying videos. Harmless enough.

2. My wife and I watch music videos, and...

3. News. Political, world, national, etc. Good old Google soon discovers what you like to watch and delivers buckets of just that.

a. I haven't tied a fly in over a year, but once in a while, I get a fly-tying video (most of which ultimately try to sell you something).

B. Then AI started to become the developer's main tool.

C. So, what is AI?

1. I asked Chat GPT (one of the best-known AI tools) to very simply define AI. Here is what ChatGPT said,

"Artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that allows computers to do tasks that normally require human intelligence. That includes things like recognizing speech, understanding language, spotting patterns, solving problems, generating images, and making decisions."

2. That's simple enough, but AI systems have progressed far beyond the bland definition and have been incorporated into,

a. Bible programs (like the one I have been using since 1996).

b. Writing programs (like grammar correctors), legal library searches, and even the ability to write research papers.

c. Military applications (specifically weapons), some of which have no human decision-making.

d. And, naturally, video production (watch YouTube and see if you can find an AI video).

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III. How does all this affect Christians and the Church?

A. I'll remind you of 2 Thess. 2:11,

"And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..."

B. Here are some examples,

"AI Just Decoded The Book of Enoch and Reveals an Unexpected Message."

"Google's Quantum AI: It Was Asked Who Built the Universe, Here's What It Replied..."

"Did the Book of Daniel predict AI?"

1. This is just a very small sample. You could go on for hours and hours.

C. When we first started watching AI-altered videos, it was fairly easy to notice the errors that were being made.

1. (Barbara is more adept at seeing these things. One evening, we noticed a "person" on a video who had a pen in his pocket that appeared and disappeared.

2. It's becoming more difficult, but you can still pick out the "deep fakes" without a huge effort. But...

3. AI "learns" as time goes by. It has made enormous progress. I have heard rumors that there are some AI computers that have become self-aware.

D. Self-awareness means that if you look in a mirror, you recognize that the reflection is actually you.

1. When your dog, cat, or parakeet looks in a mirror, they see another dog, cat, or budgie.

2. If you have seen Sci-fi films, like 2001: A Space Odyssey, or newer films, you'll see that the self-aware machine doesn't want you to pull the plug.

3. In the recent conflict with Iran, the Iranians correctly envisioned a number of "drones" or small, fast-boats, that, if launched in large enough numbers, could overwhelm any defense...five or six years ago, but AI has changed all that. Now, with weapons that need no human decision-maker, the enemy is destroyed; most often before they can get close. Many weapons today are designed by AI (at least in part).

IV. Moving on.

A. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in interstellar "Aliens." I grew up with a thirst for Science Fiction movies and books.

1. The term you want to remember is "Fiction."

a. One of my favorite Sci-Fi movies is "Men in Black." In that film, the Earth is sort of an intergalactic bus stop. Aliens came from all over the universe(s) just to take a vacation or seek asylum or whatever.

2. In all the movies I've seen, none have *rationaly* explained the problems of interstellar travel. When you understand the science, you quickly understand the impossibility of interstellar travel.

B. I will try to lay it out.

1. Distance: one of the closest galaxies to us is the Andromeda Galaxy.

a. The distance to this galaxy is approximately 2.51 million +/- .13 million light-years away. A light year is the distance light travels in one year, at 186282 miles per second. Placing yourself in an alien's shoes, assuming they have feet, you would have to travel 2.51 million years to get here.

2. Albert Einstein's famous equation,  $E=Mc^2$ , postulates that anyone traveling at the speed of light will become energy. DC Comics' *The Flash* would have nothing on you.

a. What is disconcerting is that people, including people who go to church, believe this.

3. The Lord created the universe in such a way that anything in it must obey certain physical laws. You know, gravity, momentum (a body in motion tends to stay in motion), etc. The Lord is the only being that is never subject to physical laws.

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- a. Once, I was speaking to one of my students about this very thing. He said (and I paraphrase), “What if the Aliens travel at Warp-Speed?” I was able to explain that *Star Trek* was fiction. I don’t really know if he believed me. May he live long and prosper.
4. The problem is that we have been marinating in fiction so long, we are (or at least some of us) not capable of discerning truth from a lie.
  - a. UFOs are just one problem.
  - b. Have you ever noticed that fighter pilots wear weird clothes? These clothes are pressurized in such a way as to prevent the effects of gravity that will create blackouts during high-speed turns or climbs.
    - 1) One of my resources states that the F-22 Raptor and F-16 Fighting Falcon are capable of achieving g-forces of up to 20+g’s

“A tight turn at Mach 3 [3 times the speed of sound] could theoretically generate **well over 20–30 Gs** if attempted abruptly — far beyond human tolerance and likely beyond the aircraft’s structural limits.”

- 2) In other words, you would simply die. Mild g-forces are what make people go to Magic Mountain to be tortured at an estimated 3.2g’s.
- 3) Now, imagine an alien “aircraft” traveling at roughly Mach 17, and decides to make a 90-degree turn.

V. Switching Gears, What if...

A. The Book of Revelation has this to say (I doubt that we’ll be here, but somebody will be...especially the “False Prophet!”)

Revelation 13:14–15 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> And he deceives those who dwell on the earth—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. <sup>15</sup> He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

B. Last Wednesday, Pastor Terry emphasized the importance of belief. This belief is not an assent to whether or not Jesus existed, but what Jesus accomplished. Why is Jesus’ sacrifice more valuable than that of any truly good man? And finally, who *really is* Jesus?

1. A majority of historians, going as far back as Tacitus and Josephus, describe His life and ministry.
2. His Sacrifice made eternal life possible for anyone who has existed or will exist by His death on the cross, being valuable in its ability to allow God to forgive all sin of those who believe.
3. The effectiveness of a sacrifice is measured by how valuable the sacrifice is. Since Jesus is the Son of God, is deity in His own right (John 1:3). This answers the question of the value of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and His identity.

C. We have to think this through carefully. Too much is contained in all that has gone before. Let’s imagine the scene.

1. The False Prophet has made a proclamation. A live image has been made of this wonderful World leader. A man who has stopped a war that had the capability of destroying all human life on the planet.
2. This World leader has also unveiled the existence of a race of beings who will provide mankind with technology that will eliminate starvation and disease, and will be instrumental, along with the false prophet, in bringing a new world religion that will unite mankind and, at the same time, answer the deepest questions that have plagued mankind for all recorded history. Yes, we are not alone in the universe.
3. The statue of the world leader will be unveiled via a new technology worldwide, and all citizens of the earth must attend.
4. The statue of the world leader is so lifelike, and it radiates a power and a love for all mankind. But there’s a catch. The False Prophet explains that *The Leader* has confided that he cannot lead or govern while there are groups who refuse to accept his authority.

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5. The False Prophet will announce that the Leader has authorized him to execute anyone who refuses to participate in the inauguration of the new religion by worshipping the image of the Leader. The worship is aided by the life-like
  - D. If this sounds like the book series *Left Behind*, I can't blame you. It's just an educated guess. However, throughout history, there have been concerted attempts to wipe out Christianity and, before that, Judaism. We see the attempts in the Old Testament times in Exodus, later in Esther, and finally recorded in the apocryphal books of Maccabees.
  - E. The Romans made similar attempts, though it wasn't until the Emperor Diocletian that an empire-wide persecution of Christians took place.
    1. The majority of the time, persecutions were more localized.
  - F. If the church is gone in the rapture by this time, believers will be martyred for their refusal to bend a knee to whoever is running the "New World Order."
    1. Many who believe countries can't change rapidly are deceived. The nations of the EU and also the UK are glutted with an influx of legal and illegal Islamic "immigrants." The UK was once the seat of the Christian missionary movement.
      - a. At one point, the average survival time for a missionary in Africa was about 6 months. People were volunteering in droves for that opportunity. No longer. Many churches have simply closed, and the buildings have been repurposed.
- VI. Persecution
- A. The early church isn't by itself the target of persecution. For example, northern Iraqi Christian communities have been decimated, their people simply murdered. But this is going on all over the world.
    1. More Christians have been martyred during 20<sup>th</sup> century, with conservative estimates as high 45 million, with this century about 100,000 to 160,000 killed per year.
      - b. At this time, there are an estimated 8.4 billion humans on this planet. During the Great Tribulation, there will be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population will be killed by war, disease, and natural disasters. The Book of Revelation estimates that when the final battle takes place, it will take Israel about seven months to bury the corpses of the attacking armies.
- VII. Using our heads and hardening our faith.
- A. First of all, the Lord created us as rational beings. Every day we make decisions based on
    1. Math: Do I have enough money in my bank account to pay the bills?
    2. "Guesstimate": How long will it take me to get to work? I worked in Covina for over 8 years. That drive was about 35 miles, yet some days it would take 2 – 3 hours to get to work. On a good day, less than an hour.
      - a. All this is complicated if you have to drop your children off at school.
    3. And the challenges of life: illness, trying to get competent medical care, etc.
    4. This, and a great deal more, including helping your children with homework, cooking, cleaning, buying a new fridge, or worse, a new car. The Lord gave us a brain far more powerful than we can even conceive of to take us through this life. Some are better than others. But, to summarize: A quote from the play, "A Man for All Seasons."
  - B. Our great and holy Lord has prepared us Christians to make decisions based on faith, our knowledge of His Word, and all of it, to keep us from the enemy and to serve Him.

Revelation 20:9–10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. <sup>10</sup> The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Do not be deceived. Most of us are easily deceived, but the Lord said in 2 Thess. 2:10,

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12 (NKJV)

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<sup>11</sup> And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned **who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

C. Use the mind that the Lord gave you. Do not be deceived. Believe what is true.