

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 27TH - 28TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

THE COMING OF OUR LORD CHRIST (2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-2)

In his first letter, Paul instructed the Thessalonian church about the, "day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5) and their being, "caught up together to be with Him" (1 Thess. 4:17).

- Paul had apparently also taught on this subject at length when he was with them (vs. 5), but in his absence some sort of a false report (either through a misguided prophecy or letter for another leader) had been accepted.

This false report was that "the day of the Lord has come" (vs. 2).

- If that was the case, then these believers had every reason to be, "shaken in mind or alarmed"!
- But it obviously wasn't the case, and these believers should've known better.
- Why? Because they had the clear teachings of the Apostle Paul. We have the clear teachings of Scripture on the matter.

In the Scripture, the main and plain things concerning the 2nd coming of Christ are main and plain.

- What is "main and plain"? Jesus is coming back, His people will rule and reign with Him for all eternity, and there will be certain obvious things that happen in the future that will lead up to and accompany His return and the end of all things.
- But we have to be honest...not everything Scripture talks about concerning eschatology is main and plain.

THREE VIEWPOINTS OF 2 THESSALONIANS 4

1. **"Pretribulational"** rapture viewpoint- believers in Christ will be removed from earth to heaven ("raptured", 1 Thess. 4:16-17) before the 7 years of tribulation and that the "coming of Lord Jesus Christ" is a separate event that will occur some 7 years after "our being gathered to Him."
2. **"Posttribulational"** rapture viewpoint- believers in Christ must endure the suffering of the tribulation and then the church is "raptured" as Jesus returns - so in this text, the "coming of the Lord Jesus" and the, "being gathered together with Him" are the same event.
3. **"Preterist"** viewpoint- the fulfillment of NT end time prophecies came to pass when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed around 70 A.D. by the Romans. In this viewpoint, the prophecies concerning the "Day of the Lord" were specifically for the 1st Century Church about God's judgment on Jerusalem. Since this letter was written around 49 A.D., this was a prophecy for them.

WHICH ONE IS RIGHT??? WHICH ONE IS RIGHT???

- When we connect the teachings of 1 Thess. 4&5 with this passage, it seems obvious that Paul is referring to the final judgment.
- However, it doesn't seem like the exact timing of the, "being gathered" with the, "day of the Lord" gets answered through this text.
- We can reasonably disagree on the exact timing of these things as brothers & sisters in Christ.

The point Paul seems to be making is that the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ will be a global, cataclysmic event that, "every eye will see" (Rev. 1:7, Matt. 24:27).

- We're not to be deceived or led astray by conspiracy theories or false claims that He's already come or the exact date of Christ's return.
- When He returns, we'll know AND certain things must come to pass before He does return.

THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS (2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-4)

We're not to be deceived (vs. 3) - "that day" will not come until the "rebellion" comes first, and the "man of lawlessness" or "the son of destruction" is revealed.

- The word "rebellion" is the word apostasia, or apostasy, which means a "falling away" or "defection."
- Before the Day of the Lord, there will be a large scale and deliberate turning away by those who profess to belong to Christ.
- **Matthew 24:10-13**

The other precursor to the Day of the Lord will be the revealing of the, "man of lawlessness...the son of destruction" (vs. 4).

- Based on the description Paul gives, it seems he's referring to the end-times false messiah who seeks (and likely achieves) world domination so that he can destroy the people of God.
- Other references call this character the "antichrist", the beast; or the "little horn" in Daniel.

How will we know that someone might be the, "man of lawlessness"? The most obvious sign is that they will claim to be God and demand to be worshipped (vs. 4c).

- They'll also blaspheme God and oppose all other religions except for worship of themselves (vs. 4a "...opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship").
- They'll desecrate God's temple (vs. 4b, Matt. 24:15, the "abomination of desolation")

Why will people worship this figure as God? Because he will have a, "fatal wound that had been healed" (Rev. 13:12) - he will come back to life after death.

- Other passages state that this figure will rule in full authority over the earth for a time (Rev. 13:5,7), that they'll control the world's economy (Rev. 13:16-17), and they'll attempt to completely destroy Israel (Dan. 9, 11:40-41).

Ultimately, this figure will unite the kings and armies of the earth to wage war against Christ Himself (Rev. 19:19).

- But Jesus will swiftly and decidedly, "kill him with the breath of his mouth and bring him to nothing" (vs. 8, Rev. 19:19-21).

- Antichrist will be so given over to sin and controlled by Satan that he will be the embodiment of pure evil ("many antichrists have come," 1 John 2:18)

But interestingly, antichrist will be worshipped, adored, and seen as a global savior by the people of the earth (Rev. 13:4).

- Rev. 13:18 "This calls for wisdom" - this means we are not to put our hope, faith, or confidence solely in another person or party or political system to fix us or our world.
- This means we're not to jump on the bandwagon with certain cultural movements and beliefs just because it's the "popular" thing to do.

We are to examine the claims of religious movements, "spiritual" events, and spiritual leaders.

- We are to, "test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21) - we're called to have wisdom, discernment, and critical minds, but not critical spirits.
- We're called to, "stand firm until the end" (Matt. 24:13).

THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS (2 THESSALONIANS 2:5-8)

When Paul was with these believers, he apparently taught them extensively on these things (vs. 5).

- But some new teaching or revelation had swayed them in their understanding.
- No teaching or interpretation should undercut the clear, main and plain truths of God's Word - in every generation there will always be new theories, conspiracies, twists, and false claims.
- But God's Word remains steady and true.

Why is the antichrist not revealed yet? This, "man of lawlessness" is being restrained; something is holding him back.

- The antichrist will have power because he'll be under the control of Satan (Rev. 13:4).
- Though Satan is the ruler of this system and the world, he is still restrained by the sovereignty of God.
- God is restraining this evil until its appointed time.

This "lawlessness" is a mystery - it's a hidden mindset and attitude in humanity that can only be seen if God reveals it to us.

- It's in the world right now in a hidden form, but that's only because God is, "restraining it" (vs. 7).
- God is restraining this evil because He, "...desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).
- This world isn't as evil as it's going to be!

Someday, God's restraining hand is going to be removed and this earth will be delivered over to the chaos of total evil and the personification of that evil in the, "man of lawlessness" (vs. 8).

- Romans 1:24 tells us that sometimes God gives humanity over to what they want as an act of judgment.
- The worst thing that can happen to a sinner is for God to hand them over to the sins that they love so they can keep on sinning.

Sin blinds us, hardens our hearts, and leads us to proudly and willingly abandon what is honorable, dignified, and holy.

- In the last days, God will remove his restraining hand over evil, lawlessness and "the rebellion" will occur, and then the man of lawlessness will appear.
- But almost as soon as he appears Jesus will destroy him completely in an act of judgment (vs. 8b).

"DO NOT BE QUICKLY SHAKEN IN MIND OR ALARMED..." (VS. 1-2)

- The main and plain teachings of Scripture are that Jesus is coming back, His people will rule and reign with Him for all eternity, and certain obvious things must happen in the future that accompany His return.
- Don't get fooled by speculation or unprofitable "myths" or conspiracy theories!
- When He returns, we'll know **and** certain things will come to pass in the broad daylight of human history before He does return.
- Stay grounded in the main and plain truths of the Word and be humble about what you don't know about the minors (those things that aren't "heaven or hell" issues).

"FOR THAT DAY WILL NOT COME UNTIL..." (VS. 3-4)

- These prophecies about the return of Christ call for us to be people of discernment, wisdom, and critical minds (Matt. 10:16).
- There will be a great "falling away"/"rebellion" (apostasia) within the church.
- To endure, we must know our Bibles, stay filled with the Holy Spirit, and not let the culture hijack our faith.
- There will come a "man of lawlessness."
- He will be controlled by Satan and be the very personification of unrestrained evil - yet he will be worshipped and adored by the world.
- Do not be seduced into giving your heart or allegiance away to any human being - be it a political leader, spiritual leader, or entertainer.

"THIS MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS IS ALREADY AT WORK..." (VS. 5-8)

- There is and always has been a spirit of rebellion against God, God's laws, and God's people that has been brewing for centuries.
- The only reason that evil isn't completely dominating the world right now is because God is restraining that evil.
- This "mystery" has been revealed to us.
- We wrestle not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12).
- As the world grows increasingly darker, we aren't to be so shocked, surprised, and offended by the darkness - instead, we're to be light (Matt. 5:14-16).
- As light, we should have the heart of God and desire for **all** people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) while there's still time!