

2 Thessalonians 2

Verses 1-2:

--(1) **Now, brethren.** . . . introduces a turn in the epistle. Paul is going to address the confusion troubling the congregation in a brotherly manner.

--**concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.** . . . Paul is speaking about one event in two aspects—Christ’s presence and our gathering.

--Paul is referring to what he wrote in **1 Thess. 4:13-5:11**. He had clearly differentiated in *we/they* language the hope of the believer in being caught up with Christ and the following judgment of the unsaved world during the day of the Lord.

--They were still confused about Christ’s coming *for* His people and His coming to judge the world despite the fact he had clearly explained the rapture was separate from the day of the Lord. First, they were worried about dead saints missing Christ’s return. Now, they were worried about the living saints waiting for Christ’s return!

--It is important to recognize here that Paul is not giving them any *new* prophetic information—**5 +15**. He is reminding them about what they knew to comfort them in the face of false and unbiblical information.

--(2) **we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter.** . . . the fellowship was seriously disturbed because someone was contradicting the truth Paul has spoken.

--Paul mentions **spirit** (which seems to refer to a prophetic utterance); **word** (which was a supposed word of mouth or report); **letter** (which seems to be a forgery seemingly from Paul himself—**3:17**). The various descriptions infer that Paul was unsure about the means or way this false teaching had come. *Paul was not afraid to call out false teachers by name!*

--What was this teaching about? **As though the day of Christ had come.** . . . the language being: *is present; has come; is already come.*

--Paul had clearly told them the day of the Lord would occur after the rapture and catch the unsaved world by surprise like a thief, but not them. Someone else was saying that was wrong, and they were already experiencing the day of the Lord!

--In recap, the day of the Lord refers to a period of time when God will directly judge the unsaved world, culminating in the revelation of Jesus Christ as King of Kings to destroy His enemies and usher in His kingdom.

--When we take the various events mentioned in Scripture that take place in this future day of the Lord, it clearly becomes the seven-year period called the tribulation.

Verse 3:

--**Let no one deceive you by any means.** . . . It really is incredible how easily people are tricked and troubled by “new” (but false) prophetic headlines or conspiracies.

--**for** *“that Day will not come”*. . . You will notice *that Day will not come* is in italics. That means those words are inserted by translators to help with the sense of the language. The Greek makes for a strange sentence in English.

--Our simple reading makes it seem these things he mentions happen *before* the day of the Lord, but Paul is saying these happen in sequence *within* the day of the Lord. Similar grammatical structures of **Mk. 3:27; John 7:51; Rom. 15:24.**

Matthew 12:29: Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

--Obviously, the house is entered, and then the first thing done within the house is the binding of the strong man.

--Here, Paul is saying the same thing. Verse **8** makes it clear he is thinking of the events within the day of the Lord, culminating with the return of Christ in judgment as was also just referenced in **1:5-9.**

--The falling away and revelation of the man of sin will be the first things happening within the day of the Lord.

--Paul is combating deception by reminding them about the things he already taught them about the day of the Lord. When the day of the Lord comes, you will see these things first:

--**the falling away.** . . the Greek is *apostasia* which technically describes a *defection* or *standing apart*. This is not the rapture but a type of mass departure of the faith. The Scriptures clearly describe a worldwide type of apostasy during the last days: **Mt. 24:10-13; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1+13; 4:3-4.**

--There is going to be a widespread type of professed Christendom that is not true Christianity.

We see this happening now in various churches filled with unsaved people who refuse to believe hardly any truths found in the Word of God!

--Things will get worse, not better. The victorious church will not usher in the King and His kingdom. Jesus will claim victory for Himself and render God’s just vengeance on a rebellious world.

--Not to depress anyone, but we are never promised a worldwide revival of the church in the last days. In fact, Jesus and the apostles tend to teach the exact opposite. ***God may graciously grant revival on the way, but it doesn’t seem to come at the end.***

Luke 18:8: Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

--**the man of sin is revealed.** . . the man of sin or *lawlessness* is the man who is the fully ripe version of sin and lawlessness. This is a true man—not Satan, the pope, or a personification of sin as an impersonal force. This is the anti-christ as described in: **Dan. 8:11-13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11** and later in **Rev. 11:1-2.**

--We are told that he will be **revealed** (*apokalypto*) as is said of Jesus in **1:7** and is repeated about this man of sin twice more in **6+8.**

--If the anti-christ is hidden, we are not in the day of the Lord.

--Paul also calls him **the son of perdition**. . . of *the son of waste—son doomed to destruction*. The same was said of Judas—**Jn. 17:12**.

Verse 4:

--How is this man of sin to be revealed? Two ways.

--1) **who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped**. . . He will claim to *be god*—not *a god*. He will be against anything and everything else that could be worshipped. He will have one image, one mark, and claim to be the one god.

Daniel 11:36-37: Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.

--2) **so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God**. . . this is a specific reference to the abomination of desolation as spoken of by Daniel and referenced by Jesus Christ—**Mt. 24:15**.

--The anti-christ will be revealed when he enters the holy place of a rebuilt Jewish temple and claims deity over anything that could possibly be worshiped as god.

*Bellett (Notes On Thessalonians): *“But when the building shall be completed, and Satan’s creature seated in it; when Satan, after his own manner, shall have fulfilled his own promise, ‘Ye shall be as gods’ (Gen. 3:5), then, upon his consummation, this full-grown form of evil, this manhood of iniquity, the doom of God shall come, and the man of sin shall become the son of perdition.”**

Verse 5:

--Here is a gentle rebuke. If they held to the things he taught them, they wouldn’t have been troubled or deceived by false teaching.

--Paul’s method here is still good for us! When someone claims something prophetic is happening, we should remember *all* the Bible says.

--Also, to repeat context, Paul’s purpose here was to comfort and correct these believers. He was not teaching new end-times content. This was all a reminder of facts forgotten or challenged.

Verses 6-7:

--This is admittedly one of the more difficult sections of Paul’s epistles. Who or what is this restrainer? First, it is spoken of as a force—**what is restraining**. Second, as a person—**He who now restrains**.

--There have been a lot of guesses: Satan himself; popes; the rule of law in general; etc.

--I think the answer is clear when we ask a simple question: *What is being restrained?*

--The answer: ***the mystery of lawlessness***. . . a biblical ***mystery*** is a divine secret that has been made known—(Rom. 16:25). Here, the mystery is the secret of sin and its ultimate full-grown form before harvest.

--What can we speak of in force and person to restrain the ultimate plan of sin and Satan? Who can restrain a fallen spirit like Satan? Not any law in the world as Satan rules the kingdoms of this world.

--Only one answer makes sense biblically and contextually. The Holy Spirit. ***Gen. 6:3***

--The only problem with the restrainer being the Holy Spirit is Paul's last phrase: ***until He is taken out of the way***. . . or *out of the midst*. The One taken out of the midst is the One who is now in the midst. The Holy Spirit has been promised to abide with the Church forever: ***And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever (Jn. 14:16)***.

--Pentecost inaugurated a new work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. The appearance of the day of the Lord will finish the Holy Spirit's work in the church age, and the Holy Spirit will be removed from His restraining work in the world at the rapture. That will also begin the day of the Lord.

Verse 8:

--***And then the lawless one will be revealed***. . . The revelation of the anti-christ will not happen until the restraining work of the Spirit is finished.

--The Greek word translated ***lawless one*** is in the singular—the only time in the NT. It identifies this man as the embodiment of lawlessness against God.

--Except, the Lord will ruin His appearance with an appearance of His own! It is as if Paul doesn't want to give the anti-christ any credit. ***Whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming***.

--Jesus' second coming will be unmistakable—not eclipsed by the anti-christ. Also, there is no real struggle with evil here. You couldn't even really call it a battle. It is more correctly, judgment.

Verses 9-12:

--(9) This lawless one, and the mystery of iniquity, will include the height of supernatural deception. The man of sin will be a conduit for all the power of Satan.

--If you are looking for supernatural experience over the truth (instead of *in the truth*) you live in grave danger! Jesus and the apostles did miracles to authenticate their message—which was the more important part. *The emphasis of the anti-christ's unrighteous and deceptive ministry will be supernatural miracles and economic prosperity. If that is so, how much satanic preaching is laying the groundwork for his arrival today?!*

--How does this happen? ***They did not receive the love of the truth. . . who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

--Why are people condemned in the end?

--The Bible is very clear about why people reject the truth. Men reject truth because they love sin—not because they don't have enough evidence.

****John 3:19: And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.****

--It's funny how people tend to believe what gives them the most pleasure.

--***And for this reason God will send them strong delusion. . .*** God's lack of resistance to the anti-christ is a response to the forceful rejection of the truth. God is giving the world the sin and lawlessness they want. Sinful men hate the truth. ****1 Kings 22:1-23: There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.****

--Men can consider this unfair, but if a creation rejects its Creator, the Creator can justly do what it wants with the creation. There is no reality where the creation becomes independent of the Creator.

--Let me state a very sobering reality. If you reject the truth of God's Word—you reject God. Those who reject the truth have no right or ability to choose which lie they fall to. They are unprotected and helpless before Satan's deceptions. ****I will believe such and such later. . . I won't get the mark. . . I only want a little sin. . . ****

--Once we reject truth, we are primed to be deceived by any error. In the day of the Lord, those who reject God's truth *will* be deceived by the anti-christ.

--***for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie. . .*** the lie being that which leads to the worship of the anti-christ, the mark of the beast, an armed confrontation with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and everlasting judgment.

--Satan's deceptions drive men headlong into hell—Judas.

Verses 13-14:

--***(13) But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord. . .***

Here Paul returns to paying another debt of thanksgiving to God **(1:3)** for His work in these beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

--Paul is again emphasizing diverging destinies in Christ. He does not have the individual salvation of believers in view as much as the destiny of the elect in salvation in contrast to the destiny of the deceived and condemned who follow the lie of Satan and the anti-christ.

--***because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. . .*** Why is Paul so thankful to God? Because their salvation was all His work from the start!

****Acts 15:18: Known to God from eternity are all His works.****

--(14) God's love is seen in calling us through the gospel, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and sharing in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Without Him moving first, we are all slaves to the sinful influences of the world, flesh, and devil.*

Verse 15:

--**Therefore, brethren.** . . this is a strong concluding exhortation.

--**stand fast.** . . means to refuse to shift or move to new paths or foundations.

--**and hold.** . . means to hold with a firm grip. It is to keep on clinging to something.

--**the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.** Paul commands them to stand on and hold to **the traditions** (the traditions are the commands and teachings passed on from Christ to the apostles) which were passed to them by Paul's personal teaching or writings.

--We see this emphasis of holding onto faithful doctrine passed down from Christ in numerous Scriptures: **Rom. 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor. 11:2; 15:1-11; Gal. 1:6-9; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:8.**

--Don't fall for "new" doctrines or revelations. Don't leave the old paths for supposedly "new" ways God is working. Hold firm to the teachings of the Bible and never let go!

Verses 16-17:

--(16) Here we have One God in **our Lord Jesus Christ and our God and Father who has loved us and given.** . . Our God, who is love, is a giving God. He doesn't need love. He is love. He is always full and therefore, always ready to give. He is more ready to give than we are to receive! The cross proves it.

--What does our God give? **Everlasting consolation; good hope by grace; and comfort** in our **hearts.** The God who chose us, saved us, came as us, and destined us to glory will help us along the way to His designed destiny for us. He knows the journey is difficult.

--(17) Paul also prays that God would **establish** them **in every good word and work.**

--Paul uses the Greek word for **establish** four times in **1+2 Thessalonians** and only twice in one other epistle (**Rom. 1:11; 16:25**). The word means to *make stable, firm, constant.*

--Paul is praying these young, persecuted believers would find a deeply rooted solidity in Christ and produce every type of good fruit proper to stable, Christian life.

--He prays for good fruit before he deals with some of the bad fruit that is obvious in the congregation.