

2 THESSALONIANS 2 - “The Great Apostasy; Stand Fast!”

OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – **Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221**; email – ptwente@gmail.com For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: www.ptwente.com Click on “Latest Studies” under “Bible Studies” on the right side. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

2 Thessalonians -- THE GODLY CHARACTER OF A PERSECUTED CHURCH

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO!

I. The Apostasy Must Take Place (2Th 2:1-3) The word “apostasy” means “a falling away.” Here it refers to a falling away from the truth of the Word of God. While there were certainly false teachers in Paul’s day, the church at large was united on the truths of the Word of God. If you met another Christian, you knew he believed in the Word of God, the deity of Christ, and the salvation by faith in Christ. This is certainly not true today! We live in a day of “Christian unbelief”; people say they are Christians, yet deny the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and so on.

II. The Temple Must Be Rebuilt (2Th 2:4-5) Paul promises the rise of a world dictator, the “man of sin...son of perdition” (2Th 2:3). He is not talking about a world system, but a person who will head up a world system. This “man of sin” contrasts with Christ, the Savior from sin. He is the son of perdition; Christ is the Son of God. He is the liar; Christ is the Truth. We commonly call this man “the Antichrist,” which means both “against Christ” as well as “instead of Christ.” This world ruler will be energized by the devil and will unite the nations of Europe in a great federation (the ten horns of Daniel’s image, [Dan 7:1-28](#)). According to [Rev 17:1-18](#), the Antichrist will cooperate with the apostate world church in his rise to power, and then will destroy this religious system when he doesn’t need it anymore. The program is as follows: (1) the church will be raptured; (2) the Antichrist will begin his rise to power in a peaceful way; (3) he will unite Europe and make a seven-year covenant with Israel to protect it (see [Dan 9:1-27](#)); (4) after three and one-half years he will break that covenant and invade Israel; (5) he will abolish all religion and set himself up to be worshiped ([Rev 13:1-18](#)); (6) at the end of the seven-year tribulation period (Day of the Lord), Christ will return to earth and destroy the Antichrist and his system. Both the OT and NT predict the return of the Jews to Palestine and the rebuilding of the Jewish temple. When the Antichrist sets himself up in the temple, this will mark the “abomination of desolation” of [Dan 11:31](#) and [Mat 24:15](#).

III. The Restrainer Must Be Removed (2Th 2:6-12) Satan’s mystery of iniquity is already working in the world, and we can see its godless activities increasing rapidly. What, then, holds back Satan’s evil program and the rise of the Antichrist? God has a “restrainer” in the world, which we believe is the Holy Spirit working in and through the church. God has “times and seasons” marked out ([1Th 5:1](#)), and even Satan cannot get God off schedule. The One who hinders in [2Th 2:7](#) is the Spirit, and He will continue to hinder Satan’s activities until He is taken “out of the midst” when the church is raptured. Of course, the Spirit will still work on earth, since people will believe and be saved after the rapture; but His hindering ministry through the body of Christ will end. This will give Satan free course to fill the cup of iniquity to the full. Satan will work through the Antichrist in miraculous powers ([2Th 2:9-10](#)), just as the magicians in Egypt imitated Moses’ miracles. He will imitate Christ’s powers (see [Act 2:22](#)) and get the world to accept and worship him. Men would rather believe a lie than the truth! Of course, true believers who are saved after the rapture will not be deceived; it is the lost who will be deluded and ultimately end up in hell. They will believe the lie, which is worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator ([Rom 1:25](#)).

IV. The Church Must Be Completed (2Th 2:13-17) The Day of the Lord applies to the Gentile nations and the Jews, but not to the church. It is a day of wrath, and the church is not destined for wrath ([1Th 1:10](#); [5:9](#)). The purpose of the Tribulation is the punishment of the Gentiles and the purification of the Jewish nation, which by this time has returned to its own land in unbelief. But Antichrist cannot begin his rise to power until Christ has taken the church from the earth. What a contrast between the church and the followers of Antichrist! We have been saved by believing the Truth; they will be damned because they believe a lie. We have believed the good news of the Gospel; they believe the false promises of the devil. We have been chosen for glory; they are destined for hell. Paul makes a wonderful application: stand fast! Don’t be moved by world convulsions, political upheavals, or religious apostasy. All these things must take place, but God is still on the throne. As the end of the age draws near, it will be more and more difficult to live for Christ and serve Him. What should the Christian do? Hold on to the Word of God! Don’t listen to the lies of the devil — the teachings of the cults, the sugar-coated promises of false teachers. Hold to the Word of God! We have in Christ and His Word eternal encouragement and good hope. We must keep on working. “Every good word and work” ([2Th 2:17](#)) is a good motto to follow in these dark days. Keep on giving out the Word; keep on working for Christ. As we win others to Christ, we are building up the body. When the body is completed, it will be caught away to glory. This is what Peter means by “hastening the coming of the day of God” ([2Pe 3:11-12](#)). As long as the church is in the world, Satan’s program of wickedness is held back; but once the church is gone, Satan will have more freedom. He will seek to destroy Israel and ruin mankind. These are great and challenging days. May we be found faithful when He comes!

Come, Thou Almighty King – Author Unknown Felice de Giardini; Maranatha Promise Band

1 Come, Thou Almighty King, Help us Thy name to sing, Help us to praise. Father, all glorious, O’er all victorious, Come, and reign over us, Ancient of Days.

2 Come, Thou incarnate Word, Gird on Thy mighty sword, Our prayer attend: Come, and Thy people bless, And give Thy word success; Spirit of holiness, On us descend.

3 Come, holy Comforter, Thy sacred witness bear In this glad hour: Thou who Almighty art, Now rule in every heart, And ne’er from us depart, Spirit of power.

4 To Thee, great One in Three, Eternal praises be Hence evermore. Thy sov’reign majesty May we in glory see, And to eternity Love and adore.

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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

2 THESSALONIANS 2 - The Great Apostasy;

*The Man of Lawlessness
2Th 2:1 Now, brethren,
concerning the coming of our
Lord Jesus Christ and our
gathering together to Him, we
ask you,*

*2Th 2:2 not to be soon shaken in
mind or troubled, either by spirit
or by word or by letter, as if from
us, as though the day of Christ
had come.*

*2Th 2:3 Let no one deceive you
by any means; for that Day (The
Great Tribulation) will not
come unless the falling away
(departure) comes first, and the
man of sin is revealed, the son of
perdition (destruction, destroyer).*

*2Th 2:4 who opposes and exalts
himself above all that is called
God or that is worshiped, so that
he sits as God in the temple of
God, showing himself that he is
God.*

Chapter 1 Encouraging the Thessalonians in the middle of tremendous persecution!

Chapter 2 Addressing a misconception concerning the Rapture of the Church.

Chapter 3 Addressing a practical issue of the Rapture of the Church being an excuse to put off current responsibilities.

vs. 1-2 *Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...* It is evident that the Thessalonians, incited by deceived or false teachers, had taken a wrong meaning out of the words of the first epistle, 1Th 4:15, concerning the day of judgment; and were led then to conclude that that day was at hand; and this had produced great confusion in the Church: to correct this mistake, the apostle sent them this second letter, in which he shows that this day must be necessarily distant, because a great work is to be done previously to its appearing. ...*our gathering together to Him: is the rapture of the church.* The first aspect of Christ's coming is in view in this verse. There is no judgment at this time. *We ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled* (terrified): Apparently, a misunderstanding or wrong application of Paul's teaching had caused the Thessalonians to be *shaken in mind* and *troubled*. Their fears centered on the idea that *the day of Christ had already come*. It is obvious that the *day of Christ* (Lord) had not been completed. Paul will go on to state that it also had not yet dawned, He will demonstrate that they are not in the *day of Christ*; because if they were, then certain signs would be present. *Either by spirit or by word or by letter*: Perhaps the troubling word had come through a misguided prophecy or perhaps some other leader wrote them *a letter* teaching that they were already in the *day of Christ*. Either way, they were upset at the idea that they had somehow missed the rapture.

vs. 3-4 Be not deceived! *For that Day will not come*: Paul will not describe events which must precede the rapture, but events that are concrete evidence of the Great Tribulation. In this sense, one cannot be certain *the day of Christ* (the Great Tribulation) has come unless these signs are present. 1) - Unless the falling away (*apostasia* – to depart) *comes first*: Paul's point is clear: "You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen *the falling away* that *comes first*." *The falling away*: Notice the article "*the*" not "*a*". This is not *a falling away*, but *the falling away*, the great and final rebellion. See also 1 Tim. 4:1. 2.) And the man of sin is revealed: Before the Great Tribulation can be identified with certainty, a particular person – known as *the man of sin*, – must be *revealed*. Paul's clearly states, "You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen *the man of sin ... revealed*." Daniel described the man of sin as an individual person: *The prince who is to come* (Daniel 9:26), *the king of fierce countenance* (Daniel 8:23), *the willful king* (Daniel 11:36-45). Jesus described an individual person: The one who comes *in his own name* (John 5:43). We are not surprised that Paul described this *man of sin* as an individual person. This *man of sin* is a prominent figure in the Bible, the ultimate personification of the *spirit of the Antichrist* spoken of in 1 John 4:2-3. He will no doubt live years before the Great Tribulation but will only be *revealed* as the *man of sin* during that period. The idea behind the title *man of sin* is that "Sin has absolute domination over him so that he seems to be the very embodiment of it. *Son of perdition* (destruction, the complete loss of well-being). It is really the opposite of salvation. *Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped*: The *man of sin* demands worship for himself that belongs to God only (Luke 4:8, Rev. 13:1-6). This *man* stands against, exalting himself above all Divine authority, above every object of adoration, and every institution relative to Divine worship.

v. 1 Do we understand the difference between the "*gathering together to Him*", which is the Rapture of the church and the seven-year period of the Great Tribulation, at the end of which we will come to the earth with Him?

v. 2 Paul had clearly taught them that they would escape God's judgment on this earth during the period known as the *day of the Lord* or the *day of Christ* (1 Thes. 4:14-18). Do we believe that they church will not go through the Great Tribulation?

vs. 3-4 How would you define or describe "*the falling away*?" Are we taught here that this "*falling away*" must come first or before The Great Tribulation? What is the other thing that must occur before the Day of the Lord will occur. What temple is being referred to here?

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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

<p><i>2Th 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?</i></p> <p><i>2Th 2:6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.</i></p> <p><i>2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He (the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.</i></p> <p><i>2Th 2:8 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.</i></p>	<p><i>vs. 3-4 cont'd) So that he sits as God in the temple of God:</i> The man of sin’s demand for worship will be so extreme, he will set himself up as God in the temple at Jerusalem, demanding this blasphemous worship from everyone (<i>Revelation 13:14-15</i> and <i>Matthew 24:15, 21, 29-31</i>). <i>He sits as God in the temple:</i> The Greek word for temple indicates the most holy place and not the temple as a whole. This is the ultimate blasphemy that results in certain judgment, the abomination of desolation spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus. Daniel told us the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and bring sacrifice and offerings to an end; that the Antichrist will defile the temple by setting something abominable there (<i>Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11</i>). Jesus said to look for an abomination standing in the holy place, which would be the pivotal sign that the season of God’s wrath was upon the earth (<i>Matthew 24:15-16, 21</i>). <i>Showing himself that he is God:</i> The man of sin is truly an <i>Anti-Christ</i>. Satan has planned the career of the man of sin to mirror the ministry of Jesus. The man of sin is Satan’s pretending to be the true Messiah. The coming of Jesus and the judgment of God will make it clear that the man of sin is not God at all.</p> <p><i>v. 5 When I was still with you I told you these things:</i> Although Paul was only with the Thessalonians for a few weeks, he thought it most important to teach these new Christians in detail about Biblical prophecy.</p> <p><i>v.6 And now you know what is restraining:</i> Presently Satan and the <i>man of sin</i> are being restrained by the working of the Holy Spirit in the church. The principle of their working is now present (<i>the mystery of lawlessness is already at work</i>). But at the right time, the Holy Spirit (<i>He who restrains</i>) who restrains their full revelation will be <i>taken out of the way</i>.</p> <p><i>v.7 Taken out of the way:</i> The Holy Spirit will not leave the earth during the Great Tribulation but will be present on the earth during the Great Tribulation because many are saved, sealed, and serving God during this period (<i>Revelation 7:3-14; 14:1-5</i>), which can’t happen without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not removed but is <i>taken out of the way</i>. <i>The mystery of lawlessness is already at work</i> in the world. This <i>mystery</i> will ultimately be unveiled in the <i>man of sin</i>, not that of a new wickedness in the world, only an intensity of prior wickedness. Right now, this <i>lawlessness</i> is a <i>mystery</i> – that it is, it can only be seen and understood by revelation. Otherwise it is hidden.</p> <p><i>v.8 And then the lawless one will be revealed:</i> Paul states two certain things about the man of sin, here called <i>the lawless one</i>. First, it is certain that the <i>lawless one will be revealed</i> when <u>the Holy Spirit removes His restraint</u>. Second, it is certain that the <i>lawless one</i> will be destroyed by the mere <i>brightness</i> of Jesus at <i>His coming</i>. Whoever the <i>man of sin</i> is, he has not had his career yet. We know this because at the end of his career, the <i>man of sin</i> is destroyed by <i>the brightness of the coming</i> of Jesus Christ Himself.</p>	<p><i>v. 5</i> We can see in Paul’s being there only a short time how important he thought it was to teach them of the second coming of Jesus Christ, of the great judgment of God that is going to come upon the earth of this man of sin, that was going to be revealed. How important are these things to you and do they effect the way you are living?</p> <p><i>v. 6</i> What is holding back the man of sin from being revealed now? Do you think that the man of sin has control of anything?</p> <p><i>v. 7</i> Do you agree with the following statement? The Holy Spirit within the church, is the hindering force that is holding back the revelation of the antichrist. He, the Holy Spirit, will hinder. He will hold back until He is taken out of the way—that is, until the church is removed.</p> <p><i>v. 8</i> Following the removal of the hindering force of the church, the lawless one will be revealed. He will be a miracle worker and will deceive nations. What happens to him when Jesus comes again?</p>
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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

2Th 2:9 *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,*

2Th 2:10 *and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

2Th 2:11 *And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,*

2Th 2:12 *that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Stand Fast!

2Th 2:13 *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord (not appointed to wrath), because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,*

v. 9 *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan:* The Antichrist will come with **power**, with **signs** and with **lying wonders**, all of this is *according to the working of Satan*, as described in **Revelation 13:13-17**. Spiritual **power**, **signs**, or **lying wonders**, are insufficient to prove they are from God, as even Satan can perform his own powerful works, either through deception or through his own resources.

v. 10 *Among those who perish:* The deception can only take root in those who **do not receive the love of the truth**. These people are ready for the deception of the Antichrist, because they readily accept a lie, and **God will send them a strong delusion**. In the end, the Antichrist is only God's messenger. God has judgment to bring, and He will **send ... a strong delusion** through the Antichrist. God will not force this **delusion** on anyone, but those who **do not receive the love of the truth** (the truth about God; about His son and about salvation!) will receive this **strong delusion**.

v. 11 *That they should believe the lie:* Specifically, during the Great Tribulation, God sends them **the lie**. This isn't just **any lie**, but **the lie** that has enthralled the human race since Adam, **the lie** that God is not God, and that we are or can be gods. Paul's point is that the anti-Christ will embody all that is profane and blasphemous, every conceivable element of impiety. Unfortunately, instead of being repudiated, he will be welcome by both Jews and pagans.

v. 12 *That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness:* God does not give rebellious man the lie he desires out of His generosity. Instead, it demonstrates God's judgment on those who reject the truth. **Romans 1** points out, in judgment God may give a man up to the depravity of his heart, to his **pleasure in unrighteousness**. Unbelievers think that they are acting in defiance of Him. But eventually they find that those very acts in which they expressed their defiance were the very method of their punishment.

v. 13 *But we are bound to give thanks:* Repeating **2 Thess. 1:3**, that Paul was obligated to thank God for His work in the Thessalonians, in light of the greatness of that work. **Brethren beloved by the Lord:** Paul is first thankful that they are **beloved by the Lord**. God's love for us is the primary motivation for all His work in and through us.. **Because God from the beginning chose you for salvation:** Paul also praised the sovereign choice of God in bringing the Thessalonians to salvation. God's choice was **from the beginning**. Before they chose God, He **chose** them, and He **chose** them for **salvation through sanctification**. The two go together. Those who claim to be chosen but lack evidence of **sanctification** (separation from the world and unto God) are on shaky ground. We can't see if a person is chosen, but we can see if they are sanctified. **By the Spirit and belief in the truth:** God's work of sanctification uses two great forces, **the Spirit** and the **belief in the truth**. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are essential to our **sanctification**.

v. 9 What is the source of power of the lawless one, which will give him what appears to be supernatural power, lying wonders and signs? Do you think that everything that is supernatural is from God?

v. 10 We are told here of the tragic nature of the deception of people who reject the truth of God, people who do not have a love for the truth; that they will perish because they didn't receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. How does this fact affect the urgency in our getting the gospel out?

vs. 11&12 What is the cause for God sending them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they would believe the antichrist and worship the image?

v. 13 Repeating **2 Thess. 1:3**, Again we see the evidence of Paul's life reflecting a continuous thankful, prayer, life! How thankful to the Lord am I? How consistently am I praying for others?

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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

2Th 2:14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Th 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

2Th 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace.

2Th 2:17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

v. 14 To which He called you by our gospel: The call for this salvation comes through the gospel, the Gospel Paul preached (*we preach Christ crucified, 1 Corinthians 1:23*), and the Gospel that will enable us to obtain the glory of Jesus. *For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ:* This is the same glory John wrote of in *1 John 3:2 – we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

v. 15 Therefore means to consider what he has written up to this point. In this letter, he has given compelling reasons why Christians must *stand fast* and not be moved. Reasons include: because their current distress (the *persecutions and tribulations* described in *2 Thess. 1:4*); because of the coming judgment of this world (*in flaming fire taking vengeance, 2 Thess. 1:8*); because of the strength of coming deception (*all power, signs, and lying wonders, 2 Thess. 2:9*); because of our glorious destiny (*the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. 2:14*). The command to *stand fast* tells us what Christians must *stand fast* upon. They must keep standing on God's Word, delivered both by the authoritative word of the apostles (*by word*) and the letters of the apostles (*our epistle*). *Traditions* can be a dangerous feature of religious systems (*Matthew 15:2-3*) or the traditions of man (*Colossians 2:8*). But Paul has in mind the *apostolic traditions* preserved for us in the record of the New Testament. Only God's Word that can enable us to *stand fast* under the weight of our present tribulation, and the weight of our coming glory.

v. 16 Who has loved us: Before Paul asked God to do something specific for the Thessalonians, he remembered all God had done for them. God has *loved* them! He gave them *everlasting consolation* and *good hope by grace*. In our worship, prayers and intercessions we need to thankfully remember God's past faithfulness and present blessing and that His faithfulness in the past is a promise of His faithfulness for the future!

v. 17 Comfort your hearts and establish you: Paul asked God to do two things in the Thessalonians. First, he wanted God to *comfort* their *hearts*. Second, he asked God to *establish* them *in every good word and work*. This prayer for comfort and continued testimony and work for Jesus is most fitting for those under pressure and persecution. It includes these most important and useful things: *Jesus is ours! God is our Father! God has loved us! God has given us much! We have everlasting consolation!* It is all through grace! *And establish you:* A Church is established, not by government or by laws, but by the purpose and by the presence of God in the midst of it. *In every good word and work:* There is some textual evidence that Paul originally put the order as *every good work and word*.

v. 14 This verse is future! God takes of the past! He is taking care of the present. He is going to take care of the future. The future is the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 15 We too, as Paul tells the Thessalonians, are to hold fast to the traditions that I gave you, that I taught you and that I wrote to you in the first epistle. I set it out for you. Hold fast to these things!

vs. 16-17 This glorious benediction here by Paul to every believer, fits us! The Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us. He has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. May He comfort your hearts. They were disturbed. They were upset. They thought they were in the Great Tribulation period. They thought that the Day of the Lord had come. There were those who were teaching that Paul said, we are in it. The Day of the Lord has come. This is the Great Tribulation. Paul said oh, no!. Now just comfort your hearts. Establish yourselves in every good word and work—a good exhortation.

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