II Thessalonians 2:1-17
THE EVENTS PRECEDING ‘THE DAY OF THE LORD’

In this chapter Paul takes up the subject of events preceding the DAY OF THE LORD in an effort to calm the believers at Thessalonica because of false teaching being circulated. Paul corrects this by providing more detailed information related to the events and conditions surrounding the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. The chapter can be divided into the following sections of scripture:

- No Cause for Alarm (vv.1-2)
- The ‘Falling Away’ & ‘Man of Lawlessness’ Revealed (vv.3)
- The Man of Lawlessness—His Credentials (vv.3-5)
- The ‘Restrainer’ is Removed (vv.6-7)
- The Activity of the Lawless One & the Strong Delusion (vv.8-12)
- The Reaction & Responsibility of the Believer (vv.13-17)

v. 1-2 ➢ NO CAUSE FOR ALARM

[1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 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 the Lord {Kuriou} had come.]

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul addressed the subject of the ‘Rapture’ which he mentions in v.1; “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” Refer to 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

Since this was a very exciting subject and human nature being what it is, a false perception and teaching were being promoted claiming that the Day of the LORD had come. The implication to the believers was that the Rapture had not occurred per Paul’ previous instruction so should they really trust Paul on any subject.

The source of this false teaching evidently varied from a believer’s own internal reasoning and doubt, a spirit of fear, words that were being spoken to a letter, whether real or imagined, claimed to have come from Paul, Silvanus [Silas] and Timothy.

The point is that believers were getting upset, shaken in their thinking and emotionally disturbed over this. The word used for ‘shaken’ here means ‘to be agitated’ and it was a word used to describe the affect of a storm’s wind on the sea in stirring up waves or shaking something up in a bottle. The believers’ thinking was getting shaken up and they were getting confused and it was all becoming very unsettling.

The word used for ‘troubled’ here literally means ‘to cry aloud’ and refers to the frightened reaction of someone who is scared. Paul did not want the believers to be frightened nor should they be.

1 This event is described in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 where he describes the believers who have died and those who are alive at the 2nd Coming of Christ as being resurrected and ‘caught up’ together to meet the LORD in the air.
v. 3 ➢ THE “FALLING AWAY” AND THE ‘MAN OF LAWLESSNESS’ IS REVEALED

[3 .....Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition…….]

What “Day” is that? Well verse 2 tells us it is the ‘D AY OF THE LORD’. Although some translations have ‘Day of Christ’ here, the Greek word is Kuriou meaning ‘Lord’ or ‘Master’ and is so used throughout the New Testament.

This is then referring to the G REAT AND T ERIBLE D AY OF THE LORD spoken of by the prophets Isaiah {Isa. 13:6-13}, Ezekiel {Ez. 30:2-3}, Zephaniah {Zeph. 1:7-18}, Joel {Joel 2:11-31; 3:9-16} and Amos {Amos 5:18-20} as well as Jeremiah {Jer. 30:4-9} and Daniel {Dan. 9:24-27; 11:36-12:3}. The events and conditions during this time are the subject of the Book of Revelation chapters 8 through 20.

We told here that two things will happen prior to the D AY OF THE LORD:

1) T here will be a falling away. In the Greek this word is ‘apostasia’ where we get the English word ‘apostasy’. This word literally means to ‘stand away from’ or ‘stand off of’. In the context of this passage, this means to believe in a lie and stand away from the Truth of God’s Word. There will be a wholesale turning away from God’s Word. It is quite likely that this has already started because there is so much deception coming from the church itself [e.g., covenant theology, theistic evolution, the emerging church and others]

2) T he ‘man of sin’ will be revealed. This is the ‘abomination of desolation’ spoken of by both Daniel {Dan. 9:27} and Jesus Christ {Matt. 24:15-21}. Paul is going to explain in the next verse that this occurs when this person “……sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

The ‘man of sin’ or ‘man of lawlessness’ is also called ‘the son of perdition’ indicating he is scheduled for destruction for this is what the Greek word [apoleias] used here means. When will this happen? It happens immediately after the BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON at the end of the G REAT T RIBULATION [also known as ‘Jacob’s Trouble’] when the LORD Jesus Christ returns visibly to this earth to begin His 1000-year reign. This evil person referred to as ‘the beast with 7heads and 10 horns and he will be cast alive into Hell, described as the L AKE OF F IRE burning with brimstone [see Rev. 13:4-7; 19:20].
v. 4-5 ➢ **THE ‘MAN OF LAWLESSNESS’ – HIS CREDENTIALS**

[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.  5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?]

Here Paul identifies the man of lawlessness with one who exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped so that he himself is worshipped sitting in the Temple of God as God! The Temple of God is not any Pagan temple. It is none other than the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem where God chose to meet with the people of Israel.²

This agrees with other scripture concerning the coming of a self-exalting, blasphemous man of sin; see for example:

- Daniel 7:7-8, 23-25
- Daniel 11:36-38
- Revelation 13:1, 5-6

This then is referring the person also known more commonly as the ‘anti-’ or ‘instead of-’ Christ. And although he is not specifically called the anti-Christ anywhere in the Bible he nevertheless qualifies to be called that per the definition that John gives in [1 John. 2:22 and 4:2-3.](#)

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.—[1 John. 2:22]

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.—[1 John 4:2-3]

The man of sin in desiring to be worshipped as God will not be willing to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh nor will he acknowledge either the authority of the Father or the Son. That by definition makes him anti-Christ.

Note carefully an interesting prophetical truth. For the man of lawlessness to sit in the temple claiming to be God; the Temple must be rebuilt since today there is none standing in Jerusalem.

v. 6-7 ➢ **THE ‘RESTRAINER’ IS REMOVED ['TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY’]**

[6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.  7 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.]

The word that Paul uses here for ‘restraining’ is and it literally means ‘to hold down’ and can be translated to ‘hold back’ or ‘detain’. There is some person (not just an impersonal force) ‘He’ who is doing the holding down.

² Note that the Temple is the object of [Rev. 11:1-2.](#)
So the man of lawlessness will only be revealed when God so chooses the timing. And just as Jesus Christ is revealed\(^3\) at His 2nd COMING, so too will the anti-Christ have a ‘revealing’ but as a deceiver his will be first.

The word translated ‘lawlessness’ here is the Greek word *anomia*, which literally means ‘without law’ and oftentimes translated ‘iniquity’ meaning ‘missing the mark on purpose’.

There has been much speculation and discussion on exactly what is holding back the full conditions of lawlessness necessary to bring the man of sin into power. However, an important clue is given in v.7; “……only He who now restrains”.

Evidently the restraining power is a person and the only person with this much power is God and specifically the Holy Spirit {Luke 9:1; Rom. 15:13,19}. Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit of power {Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8}.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.—Acts 1:8.

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.—1 Thess. 1:5

But what is the Holy Spirit restraining? It is the ‘mystery of lawlessness’ [which Paul said was already at work 2000 years ago!] that when it is fully bloomed will usher in the man of sin—the anti-Christ.

And how is the Holy Spirit restraining the constant pressure of lawlessness to grow and expand? I believe it is through believers who make up the Body of Christ—His Church! We have the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that works in us to perform the will of God in this world and be a witness of the Light.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.—Eph. 3:20-21

Therefore, I believe that when the Church is ‘caught up’ to Heaven it will leave a massive spiritual void on the earth and the mystery of lawlessness will be unrestrained and its full affect unleashed upon the earth. Thus, the RAPTURE quite possibly will be the catalyst leading to conditions favorable for prophesied 7-year peace pact with many Middle Eastern countries [Dan. 9:27] and the sudden and quick rise to power of the anti-Christ; the ‘man of sin’ who will receive Satan’s power, throne and authority! {Refer to Rev. 13:1-2}

\(^3\) The word used for ‘revealed’, *apokalupto*, literally means to ‘take the cover off’.

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v. 8-12  ➤ **The Activity of the Lawless One & the ‘Strong delusion’**

[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.  9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 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. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.]

Thus, the man of lawlessness, the anti-Christ, will be revealed after the Rapture during the **Seven-Year Tribulation** period. Specifically during the middle of the last seven years [the 70th Week of Weeks] after which he comes to full power for 3 ½ years according to **Dan. 9:27** and **Rev. 11:2-3; 12:14; 13:5**.

The man of lawlessness was called the ‘son of perdition’ in v.3 where we saw this referred to destruction. He will be destroyed by the brightness of Jesus’ 2nd COMING when he is thrown into the **Lake of Fire**!

God Himself will send a ‘strong delusion’ to get anyone ‘setting on the fence’ spiritually to commit one way or another. Compare what God will do here to what He did in the Old Testament {1 Ki. 22:19-29; 2 Chron. 18:18-28}. This is also similar to when we are told that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart {Ex. 9:12; 10:1} – God provided the conditions to allow the true nature of Pharaoh’s heart to be revealed.

When people stubbornly refuse to believe in the Truth when it is ‘staring them in the face’, then the LORD allows them to be deceived. This is a tragic state to be found in—when the LORD removes knowledge and wisdom from a person.

Those who **allow themselves** to be deceived by the **man of lawlessness** and receive the mark of the anti-Christ will ultimately be destroyed in the Lake of Fire {Rev. 14:9-11; 20:11-15}.

v. 13-17  ➤ **The Reaction & Responsibility of the Believer**

[13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 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, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.]

Finally, Paul gets back to encouraging the believers by reminding them they were chosen by God for salvation and that the power of the Holy Spirit continues to work in them to set them apart [sanctifying them] for God’s glory in Jesus Christ.

As believers we are exhorted by God’s Word to stand fast and retain and take hold of those things they were already taught through the preached word or written word. Note that the word translated ‘traditions’ here is not the traditional meaning of ‘tradition’ (pun intended!).
The word is ‘paradosis’ literally meaning ‘given near’ and it refers to a transmitted precept or spiritual truth and oftentimes was used to refer to the oral precepts taught by Jewish rabbis.

Paul gives a closing benediction that includes a prayer for the believers to be comforted and established [‘stand firm’ or ‘set firm’] in both every good word and work.

He also reminds them (and by extension us) of two things:

- That they (and by extension we) are loved by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and our God and Father.
- God has given us and eternal consolation and a good hope by His wonderful, matchless grace!

Note that by associating Jesus Christ with God our Father, Paul is alluding to the deity of Jesus [since God does not acknowledge any other lesser god, He claims to be the only God and only Savior. See for example Isaiah 42:8; 43:10-11; 44:6-8; 45:6].

**Discussion Questions:**

- What is the difference between remaining calm and patient and having all your prophetical questions answered?
- How does the knowledge of God’s eternal consolation and good hope enhance our understanding of His grace?

**Life Application:**

(1) When we as Christians reject false teachings about Jesus’ return we will have confidence in the future and have no reason to become alarmed. This of course assumes we are familiar with the Word of God!

(2) When we remember the Biblical teaching about Jesus’ return, we will have cause to remain calm in the face of events happening around us.

**Bibliography**


(2) Thru the Bible With J. Vernon McGee, 1 Corinthians-Revelation, Vol.5; The Book of 1 Thessalonians, J. Vernon McGee, pp. 370-405, copyright © 1982


