

August 24, 2025 (Lesson 13)

BE INFORMED ON CHRIST'S RETURN

1. **Do Not Be Deceived** (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)
2. **Beware the Spirit of Lawlessness** (2 Thessalonians 2:5-8)
3. **Believe Only the Truth** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

Central Truth: The Christian lives in the assurance of Christ's coming.

Focus: Recognize deception and choose the truth about Christ's return.

Evangelism Emphasis: Now is the time for sinners to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Golden Text: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

At the time Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians, he was still in Corinth. It had only been a few months since he sent the first letter to them. Apparently, circumstances had not changed. In fact, the church was experiencing an increase in persecution. Questions about the time of the second coming of Christ were intensifying. So Paul wrote this letter to reassure them. He sought to correct their perspective about the Lord's return and to encourage them in their distress.

Paul also reminded the Thessalonians of the force of evil in the world. We hide our heads in the sand if we deny there is an evil power at work in the world. There is a constant battle being waged, and our confidence is based on the assurance that ultimate victory will come to those who identify themselves with Jesus Christ.

While reminding the Thessalonians evil exists, the apostle was careful to assure them God is in control. There may have been times when this did not seem to be the case, but they could rest assured that, in the end, nothing can stand against Him. The world of evil may have its day, but the time will come when God says, "It is enough."

1. DO NOT BE DECEIVED

A. The Great Gathering (2 Thessalonians 2:1)

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.

Having encouraged the Thessalonians in the first chapter, Paul proceeded to the main theme of the book. He wrote with the intent of correcting their thoughts about the second coming of Christ. He showed them what their attitude was to be and how they were to conduct themselves until the Lord returned.

The apostle referred to the coming of the Lord as “our gathering together.” This is the same expression used in Hebrews 10:25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” This passage is a reference to the present assembling of companies of believers on earth. Paul likened the catching away of the saints into the air, to meet and to forever be with the Lord, to our assembling together as a body of believers. But, in that final gathering there will be no separating.

This “gathering together” will be “unto him” (2 Thess. 2:1). Christ is the divinely appointed center of gathering for local companies of believers during this age, and He will also be the central figure for all who are His at His coming.

Meditating on Christ's Return

Careful reflection on Christ's return, sustained meditation on what it will mean in that moment and for all eternity, has a purifying effect on the soul. It turns sin sour in our mouths and serves to conform us ever more to the image of Jesus himself.—Sam Storms

B. Not Shaken or Deceived (2 Thessalonians 2:2-4)

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Paul called on the Thessalonians to be steadfast and unmovable in their attitude toward Christ and His coming (v. 2). Literally, Paul said they were not to be “out of their wits.” They were to behave like people in whom reason is supreme—not like people in a panic.

Paul also admonished these believers about misinterpreting what he had written, or accepting a forged letter purporting to have come from him. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, they were grief-stricken over the loss of loved ones. They feared these departed ones might suffer loss at the coming of the Lord. Paul assured them all the blessings of Christ’s second coming would be shared by them and by all who are to be gathered together unto Him.

Paul cautioned the Thessalonians not to believe the reports which placed the Day of the Lord ahead of the appearing of the Antichrist—“man of sin . . . the son of perdition” (v. 3). The apostle also said the Day of the Lord would not come until there be a period of rebellion, or apostasy—“a falling away.” In the last days, there will be an outstanding manifestation of the powers of evil arrayed against God. It will be as though Satan is throwing all his forces into one last, despairing effort.

The Greek prefix *anti* has two meanings: “against” and “instead of.” Satan not only opposes Christ, but he also wants to be worshiped and obeyed instead of Christ. Satan will one day produce his masterpiece, the Antichrist, who will cause the world to worship Satan and believe his lies.

—*What rumors or ideas regarding Christ’s return might trouble believers today?*

2. BEWARE THE SPIRIT OF LAWLESSNESS

A. Restraining Force (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7)

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

After Paul had presented his case for the rise of the Antichrist, he reminded the Thessalonians he had already taught them these things. He wanted them to see how they had misunderstood his teaching. This was their opportunity to correct their thinking about this aspect of the events of the end-time.

The Thessalonians were not alone in their need to be reminded about truth. When Peter wrote his second letter, he said: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2 Peter 3:1-2).

Paul said there was a restraining force at work in the world which would delay the appearance of the Antichrist until the time for his coming was fulfilled. Apparently the apostle had been more specific about who or what this force would be when he was with the Thessalonians. However, in both epistles he alludes to such a force but does not identify it.

Through the years, Bible scholars have speculated about who or what this restraining force is. Some have suggested Paul was referring to the principle of law and government which was illustrated in the Roman Empire. The Jewish law is another illustration of the principle, restraining the operation of sin. Some have concluded the reference is to some angelic being. The most plausible interpretation is Paul was speaking of the Holy Spirit in the church. The Holy Spirit is the real restrainer, and He indwells believers.

Paul made it clear the Antichrist will not appear until it is “his time” (2 Thess. 2:6) to be revealed. Then, and not before, the time will be ripe and the hour will come and the man with it. This is one of those prophecies about which we cannot set a date. It is something only God knows, and our speculations and calculations are in vain. We are well advised to leave these matters in God’s

hands. He works with exactness and will not be a minute early or late in allowing the appearance of the Antichrist.

The reason a restraining force is needed is because the “mystery of iniquity” (v. 7) is already at work. Wherever the Gospel is preached and believed, the spirit of lawlessness begins its active opposition. This evil force would be much more active if it were not for the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit.

The term *mystery*, when used in the New Testament, means “something which lies beyond human understanding and, consequently, can become known to us only by revelation.” It is never what cannot be known, or what is incomprehensible. *Mystery* is used with reference to God (Col. 2:2), to His ways (Eph. 1:9), to spiritual truth as revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 16:25), and to Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). Here it is used in connection with iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7).

The term *iniquity* is perhaps better translated “lawlessness.” “The rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12) seek to overthrow all the principles and truths of God’s law, which are recorded in the Holy Bible. However, the man of lawlessness will not be revealed until the restraining force of the church is taken out of the way.

Christian Responsibility

Remain at your post and do your duty—for the glory of God and His kingdom.—Charles Colson

B. The Wicked One (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

When the restraining force—the Holy Spirit in the church—is removed, the Wicked One will be revealed. The notion that he will be “revealed” suggests he will no longer be an influence working in

secret but will become known openly. He will personify the lawlessness of the age. But this passage does not deal with his being revealed as much as it does with how Jesus will conquer him.

When Jesus appears, He will destroy with the “breath of His mouth” (NKJV). Even by “the brightness of his coming,” the Lord will make the Antichrist completely powerless. The idea of splendor is suggested here. This passage has been rendered as “the glory of His presence” and “the radiance of His coming.”

The Apostle John rolled back the veil to give us a glimpse of the glory of His presence in the defeat of the Wicked One: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. . . . And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev. 19:11-12, 19-20).

—In John 6:63 and Mark 13:31, how did Jesus describe the power of His words?

3. BELIEVE ONLY THE TRUTH

A. Working of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Having shown his readers what the final outcome for the Antichrist will be, in verse 9 Paul brings them back to the hidden source of his power. He describes how he will manifest his power, and the effect it will have on people generally. The “coming” of the Antichrist refers to the period

of his supremacy, beginning with his revelation to the world, and ending with the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The working of the Antichrist is not by his own power. Daniel prophesied, “And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people” (8:24). If the working of the Antichrist is not by his own power, where is his source of energy? Paul said Satan will be behind his activity. Indeed, Satan is the instigator and energizer of all the evil which now works in secret, and which will be developed openly by and personified in the Antichrist.

Satan is said to give the Antichrist “power.” He also will give him “signs,” which are tokens of that power. Jesus said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). The same source at work in false prophets will be at work in the Antichrist, producing tokens of Satan’s power.

The Antichrist will be enabled to manifest “lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). *Wonders* carries the thought of something strange and exceptional which causes the beholder to marvel. *Lying wonders* are miracles calculated to deceive. They will be real, but designed to get people to acknowledge the Antichrist’s claim to deity. John gives us some insight into the nature of these wonders: “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do” (Rev. 13:13-14).

The Antichrist and his servants will use “every wicked deception” (2 Thess. 2:10 CSB) to capture people’s hearts and minds. And those who have closed their minds to the truth will be deceived. Having no love for the truth, they will be unaware of the danger they face and the way of escape.

The Side of Truth

Whatever mysteries confront us, however victorious the forces of evil may appear to be, we can rest assured that to be on the side of Christ is to be on the side of ultimate triumph and of eternal truth.—Charles Redman

B. Believing a Lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Because people have developed a distaste for truth, God will send them a powerful delusion so they will “believe a lie.” It is a solemn matter to hear the Gospel and definitely reject it. It can bring a person to the place where he will believe a lie and thus be judged with all those who have apostatized from the truth. The Word of the Lord says, “He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov. 29:1). God has presented His Word, but if a person turns away from the truth and refuses to believe it, then God himself may give them up to judgment that they will believe a lie and so be forever lost.

Those who find themselves the objects of God’s judgment will have no one to blame but themselves. By free and deliberate choice they have refused to believe the truth. It is because they have “pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:12). Their sin is not *intellectual*, unwillingness to exercise the reasoning powers; it is *moral*, the love of evil. Distaste for the truth leads to its rejection; God, in retributive justice, sends a strong delusion to those who love error.

God has given us the opportunity to believe the truth. What are we doing with that opportunity? Are we walking in the light of His Word? We must not be guilty of refusing His message and thereby putting our souls in jeopardy.

—*List the many ways false doctrines are promoted today. How can we know we are following the way of truth?*

FEARLESS AND PURPOSEFUL LIVING

If we are prepared for Christ's return, we need not concern ourselves with the Antichrist, for we will not be here during his reign of terror. Instead, we should concern ourselves with the fate of friends, relatives, and neighbors who are not believers, doing all we can to bring them into the Kingdom.

Daily Devotions

- M. Remember the Lord (Isaiah 46:3-13)
- T. Do Not Be Lazy (Proverbs 6:6-11)
- W. Wait for God's Revelation (Habakkuk 2:1-3)
- T. Endure to the End (Matthew 24:4-14)
- F. Jesus Is the Way (John 14:1-6)
- S. Put On Christ (Romans 13:11-14)