

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

### Remember What You Know

1

### **Introduction**

Satan has long opposed God and His people. Satan's drive is to replace Jesus and rule this creation. History is filled with evil rulers who have attacked and attempted to destroy God's people (both Israel and the Church). Yet there is one coming who will be more powerful and more evil than any who have come before. Scripture refers to this world leader as "antichrist". The prefix "anti" can be translated "against" or "in place of" Christ. Both meanings are true as he opposes the true Messiah (Christ) and wants to take Jesus' rightful place.

2

## Introduction

Persecution had become so intense in Thessalonica that “false teachers” had risen teaching that they had missed the rapture and were now living in the tribulation period. It appears that the believers were in great distress both physically and spiritually. Paul writes this letter to assure them that they are not in “The Day of the Lord” for that is God’s judgment on unbelievers. This passage is teaching how to prepare for “end times.” They are to remember!

3

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?

4

## The Request

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

The final Antichrist, as Scripture depicts him, has yet to appear on the world's stage. And since he must appear before the Day of the Lord begins, the Thessalonians' fears that they were already in that time of judgment were groundless. Based on that truth, Paul made an urgent request - "we ask you." He is asking them to properly comprehend the events surrounding the Second Coming.

5

## The Request

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

The Thessalonians were confused about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and believers' gathering together to Him. Though Paul used two expressions, he actually had one event in mind, not two. The Greek syntax used combines two complementary elements into one event. This is the sixth mention in these two letters of Christ's coming (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). In eschatology, Jesus comes to gather His church to Himself. This is the Rapture. He does not return to earth for we are caught up with Him in the air. This event will usher in the Tribulation period, also part of the "Day of the Lord" which will culminate with Jesus' return to earth in judgment.

In this passage, Paul is focusing on the first event where Jesus comes and gathers the church to Himself.

6

## The Concern

2 Thessalonians 2:2

we ask you, <sup>2</sup> 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.

Paul expressed his concern that the Thessalonians not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled ... as though the day of Christ had come. The Thessalonians are confused and believe they have missed the Rapture. Their hearts and minds have been **shaken**. The Greek word for **shaken** means to shake, waver, and/or destroy. The Bible uses it to describes a reed blown about in the wind. (Matt. 11:7), the shaking of the powers of heaven in the end times (Matt. 24:29), the shaking of the building when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 4:31), the shaking of the prison at Philippi during the earthquake (Acts 16:26). **Troubled** can be translated “frightened” (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7). The young believers had been shaken loose from their mental moorings and were adrift on a tossing sea of anxiety and fear, their faith, hope, and joy devastated by deception.

7

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This fear and anxiety was being filled by false teachers. Notice that **spirit** is lower case and most likely refers to a false teacher who had supposedly received some type of revelation (1 John 4:1-3).

**Word** refers to a sermon or teaching, and **letter** to a written authority for this doctrine. Some theologians believe that the false teachers had forged letters as if they had come from Paul – **“by letter, as if from us.”** This shows that the false teachers presented the marks of authenticity – divine revelation, proclamation, and the authority of apostolic writing.

It is important to see that the Thessalonians’ fear indicates that Paul had taught them that the Rapture of the church precedes the final wrath of God, including the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2–5; cf. Rev. 3:10). If he had taught them that they were to go through those judgment periods, they would have been rejoicing because being in them meant that the Lord’s coming was near. Paul had taught them that they would be taken up before those times, thus their confusion as they face such intense persecution.

8

## The Command – Do Not Be Deceived

2 Thessalonians 2:3a

Let no one deceive you by any means.

**Deception** easily leads to anxiety and fear, and that was certainly the case with the Thessalonians. The word deceive is a compound word and means “to deceive completely,” or “to delude.” Paul was saying, “Do not let anyone by any means or any method lead you astray in any way.”

A correct hope in the Lord’s return produces accountability, purity, and joy.

Fearing that they would experience the horrors of the Day of the Lord robbed the Thessalonians of joy. That fear also robbed them of the hope of the Lord’s promise to “keep [them] from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). To avoid losing the purity and joy of true hope the Thessalonians needed to remember the truths Paul had taught them.

9

## The Command – Do Not Forget

2 Thessalonians 2:3b-5

*for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?*

The key to this section is in the last sentence: **Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?** What Paul wrote in this section was not new to the church, he was merely restating what he had already taught them. That he taught prophetic truth in the few months he had with the new believers in Thessalonica shows that biblical eschatology is foundational to the Christian faith. Its purpose was not sensational but practical; had the Thessalonians remembered Paul’s teaching, they would not have lost their joy and hope.

10

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The Thessalonians had forgotten that Paul told them when he was there that the Day of the Lord **will not come unless the falling away comes first**. Paul is not saying that they would experience the “**falling away**” or the revealing of the “**man of sin**” but that these events will proceed the Day of the Lord. Since they had not taken place the Day of the Lord could not have arrived.

The term for “**falling away**” is the Greek word *apostasia* which can be translated apostasy. It means “**revolt**,” or “**rebellion**.” In its only other New Testament appearance it refers to forsaking the Law of Moses (Acts 21:21). The Septuagint uses it three times to express rebellion against God (Josh. 22:22; 2 Chron. 29:19; Jer. 2:19). Therefore, the word marks a deliberate abandonment of the Truth of God’s Word.

11

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There have always been apostate churches, but apostasy will reach its peak in the end times.

2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ... But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Peter 3:3–4; Jude 17–18)

12

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Paul's use of the definite article reveals that he has a specific event in mind. **The falling away** or **The apostasy** will be a blasphemous act of unprecedented magnitude. The apostle identified the apostasy by naming the key character connected with it – **the man of sin**. Understanding who that key person is is a prerequisite to identifying the event. The word **sin** here is "anomia" which literally means "**without law.**" This person will be the consummate lawless one; a blasphemous sinner, who will live in open defiance of God's law.

The tense of **revealed** points to a definite time when this man will appear. It implies that he was previously present and known, but his act of apostasy will unveil his true evil identity. He will drop all pretense and the wickedness of his character will be fully disclosed.

13

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The title **man of sin** has been identified with many different individuals, including Antiochus Epiphanes, Nero, and Hitler to name a few. But the close association of the **man of sin** with the Day of the Lord rules out historical persons; otherwise, the Day of the Lord might have come centuries ago. The **man of sin** cannot be Satan, for he is distinguished from the Satan in verse 9. Nor can this be a reference to an aspect of evil, for the text specifically identifies him as a **man**. He can be none other than the final **Antichrist**.

14

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Paul further described the man of sin as the son of perdition. The expression son of is a Hebrew expression indicating a close association, or of the same kind, just as a son shares his father's nature. Perdition carries the idea of destruction, or doomed to destruction. The Antichrist will be so completely devoted to the destruction of all that relates to God's purpose and plan that he can be said to be destruction personified. He, however, belongs to destruction as the one who will be destroyed. He is fixed for punishment and judgment and ultimate damnation.

The only other individual in Scripture named son of perdition is Judas (John 17:12). Both of these individuals are controlled by Satan (John 13:2; Rev. 13:2) and guilty of ultimate apostasy.

15

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Judas' apostasy pales in comparison to the act of future apostasy Antichrist will commit. Judas betrayed the Son of God; Antichrist will proclaim himself to be God. Judas desecrated the temple with the money he received for betraying Christ (Matt. 27:5); Antichrist will desecrate the temple by committing the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15). Judas acted alone, but Antichrist will lead the world astray and into destruction (Rev. 13:5–8).

16

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Antichrist **opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped**. Energized by Satan and aided by the false prophet, Antichrist will have immense power to successfully demand that the world worship him (cf. Rev. 13:1–17). Satan, who has always longed to be worshiped (cf. Isa. 14:13–14), will fulfill that desire vicariously through the worship accorded Antichrist.

17

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Antichrist will exalt himself **so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God**. The **temple**, the symbol of God's presence. Here Satan orchestrates the ultimate act of blasphemy—a wicked man **displaying himself as being God**. This is the apostasy, to which Paul refers and which Jesus called the "**abomination of desolation**" (Matt. 24:15). Daniel's prophecy tells us that this will take place at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27). It will initiate God's judgment on the world through Antichrist's reign of terror during the second half of the Tribulation. At the end of that three-and-a-half-year period, Christ will return in glory to destroy Antichrist's kingdom and all the ungodly. The Lord Jesus will cast him into the lake of fire along with his false prophet (Rev. 19:11–21).

18

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Paul's point is clear. **The apostasy**, Antichrist's blasphemous self-deification and desecration of the Temple, is a unique, unmistakable event that precedes the Day of the Lord. Since that clearly has not happened, the Day of the Lord cannot have arrived. And it never will for believers..

19

## So What ...

We need not fear the judgment of that Day. Believers are “not in darkness, that this day should overtake [them] like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:4). We are waiting for Jesus to return from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10) to gather us to Himself. We look for the true Christ, not the Antichrist. Only those who are deceived and forgetful risk losing the confident hope and expectant joy of Christ's return before the Day of the Lord.

20