

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Gospel of Matthew

The Final Judgment (Part 2)

June 14, 2020

Sermon Text: 2 Thessalonians 2

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 15

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 ESV Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

(3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (5) Do

you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

(6) And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. (7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

(8) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

(9) The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, (10) and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (11) Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, (12) in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

(13) But we ought always to give

thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (14) To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(15) So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. (16) Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, (17) comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

We have just studied Christ's words at the conclusion of Matthew 25 – the subject of which was the final judgment. The sheep and the goats. One group loved Christ as evidenced by their love for His sheep. The other hated Him, even though they deny it. When they saw His flock in need and suffering, they did nothing and thereby their true nature was revealed.

John 21:17 ESV He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love

me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

We are seeing this played out in this church's ministry which the Lord has called us to, are we not? What do you suppose the Lord is going to say to professing Christians and churches who have oppressed women and children who have called to them for help? Don't miss this: the abused, oppressed, needful people the Lord leads us to daily are HIM. Our response tells us whether we love Him or not.

Let's look in more detail then at the final judgment. And one of the best ways to do this is to go to this passage in 2 Thessalonians that we have just read. I hope that the unsettled events we are seeing in our nation and the world right now are causing all of us to look even more for Christ's return. He is coming, and He is going to render perfect justice. He is going to judge the world and put evil away once and for all. He is going to give us our inheritance – the new heavens and earth – that He has been preparing for us. And we are going to see Him in His glory.

Don't be Duped

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a ESV Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (3) Let no one deceive you in any way.

Have you noticed how often this warning is repeated? We heard these same warnings from Jesus in Matthew 24-25. False Christs. Many will come in His name. Many will tell us to come and follow them and they will show us where He is. And here we have it again from Paul – *let no one deceive you in any way*. Already at Thessalonica deceivers were at work, apparently telling the people that Christ had already returned. To make this claim, they would have had to redefine what His return was – and so we have the same thing today.

“Oh no. That’s foolish. Jesus is not going to come back literally – don’t be so naïve. He has returned in our hearts, spiritually.

Don’t listen to such lies, Paul says. This is how it is going to go down and you won’t miss it! And neither will the

believers who have already “fallen asleep” (ie, died).

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 ESV For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

The Lawless One

Paul gives the Thessalonians, and us, still another “sign of the times.” He says that Christ will not return until Satan’s “messiah” is openly revealed:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 ESV Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless **the rebellion** comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) **who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.** (5) Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

The Rebellion – Paul does not explain this because the Thessalonians knew what it was – Paul had taught them when he was with them. The word behind “rebellion” that Paul uses is *apostasia*. The KJV renders it “a falling away,” and the NASB has “the apostasy.”

If we check out its meaning in the BAG lexicon, here is what we find:

“Defiance of established system or authority, rebellion, abandonment.”

What will this rebellion be against? What authority will be abandoned? I think verse 4 tells us:

(4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

This lawless one, this “man of sin” is one and the same that John talks about:

1 John 4:1-3 ESV Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in

the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

What is this rebellion that is already happening in an increasing degree? It is the rebellion against Christ. And more specifically, it is a falling away from Christ. It is the great deception, which is preparing the way for the lawless one, who John calls the antichrist, to declare that HE is God and that all people are to worship Him.

Matthew 4:8-9 ESV Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (9) And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

We can know with certainty that the spirit of the antichrist is already at work, laying the groundwork for this ultimate and open rebellion *against Christ*. Paul says it also in vs 7 –

(7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

What can we know about the increase of violence and rebellion against the Lawful authorities God has established? It is the work of the antichrist. It is the spirit of the man of sin – the lawless one.

Riots in the streets are not the only manifestation of this apostasy however. ALL philosophies, ALL actions, ALL charismatic personalities that set themselves against Christ are part of it too.

1 John 5:19-21 ESV We know that we are from God, **and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.** (20) And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (21) **Little children, keep yourselves from idols.**

Understand what John means? The realm of the lawless one is *the world*. It is his kingdom. And he is always working, always driving toward his ultimate goal: to set himself up in the place of God, to be worshipped by all men. *This is why he promotes idolatry and false religion, and that is why John ends his epistle here with “keep yourselves from idols.”* Idols are

manifestations of the devil’s desire to be worshiped. NOTE: This is why the Reformers and Puritans made such a big deal out of being forced to use the prayer book in the Established Church. They knew that Roman Catholic elements had been introduced into it and they knew these things were idolatry, promoted by antichrist.

Let me give you a bit more on this idea of “apostasy.” Sometimes you can get some excellent insights into a word by simply pulling out the Oxford English Dictionary. No Greek required:

Abandonment or renunciation of one’s religious faith or moral allegiance.

Historically, this nation and western Europe have been Christian nations, if we use the term to include Roman Catholicism.

- Americas
- England
- Ireland
- Scotland
- Germany
- Italy
- France
- Scandinavian countries
- Russia and other Slavic nations

The gospel was taken into these nations and the church was established. Certainly not always truthfully, but nevertheless Christ was acknowledged to be the Son of God and Savior of the world.

But it is obvious that in these days, for years now, there has been an increasing apostasy from Christ even in these nations. In fact, if we think carefully about the world “apostasy,” we realize that this *rebellion* Paul speaks of has to be fundamentally a rebellion which occurs *in the visible church by people who personally or whose culture and nation generally professed Christianity as their religion*. I mean, you can’t rebel against something that you never embraced in the first place.

So the light of the gospel has come to these places and the kingdom of darkness is doing all it can to extinguish it. Satan of course will never succeed, but he will certainly deceive many.

We Must not Fear

2 Thes 2:6 And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. (7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

(8) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

Satan’s false messiah is going to have a very short reign. Christ will come and kill him and bring him to nothing.

Psalms 2:1-12 ESV Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? (2) The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, (3) “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

(4) He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

(5) Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, (6) “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” (7) I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. (8) Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. (9) You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

(10) Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. (11) Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. (12) Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Now, let's end with this amazing fact and be soberly warned by it:

He Sends a Strong Delusion

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 ESV The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, (10) and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

(11) Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, (12) in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Do you remember this?

1 Kings 22:18-23 ESV And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but

evil?" (19) And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; (20) and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. (21) Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' (22) And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' (23) Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you."

There comes a point of no return for the apostates. For the person who does not love God's truth. For people who loved and embraced wickedness, evil, and unrighteousness.

Just as the Lord sent a lying spirit to the King of Israel, so He will send a *strong delusion* to those who refuse to love the truth of Christ and be saved. In other words, the stage is going to be set for the appearance of the lawless one. He will appear, declare himself to be God,

in him.

and the mass of humanity is going to believe him, adore him, worship and serve him openly. They will give him all they have, they will obey his every command, they will do incredibly atrocious things and call it righteousness. They are blind. God actively prevents them from seeing the glory and truth of Christ, as a judgment for their evil. *He gives them exactly what they wanted.*

And they will be destroyed in a moment when Christ comes.

We do not know when, but we know with certainty that the world is moving closer and closer to that Day. I have no doubt that already there are people who have crossed that line and have been judged and given that “strong delusion” by the Lord.

This then is the sobering warning the Psalmist gives all who are rebels against Christ now, and the blessing to all who know and worship Him:

(10) Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. (11) Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. (12) Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge