

The Antichrist

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Strong & Ready! (Books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians)

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Introduction: Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 5. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: “The Antichrist.”

With a title like this, we could become fanatical and distracted with conspiracy theories. Tonight’s lesson is about keeping a level head and living faithfully for Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ²not 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. ³Let 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, ⁴who 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. ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸And 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. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness..”

Outline

- Be Ready Anytime for Christ’s Coming (1 Thess. 5:2-6)
- Be Ready to Wait a Long Time (2 Thess. 2:1-12)
- Make Time for Long Term Planning (2 Tim 2:1-7)

I. Be Ready Anytime for Christ’s Coming (1 Thess. 5:2-6)

1 Thess. 5:2-6, “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of **the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** ³While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then **sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.** ⁴But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a

thief. ⁵For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.”

Rev 16:15, “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who remains awake and clothed, so that he will not go naked and let his shame be exposed.”

The point is not that he’s sneaky or wanting to rob people, but that it is unexpected.

No One Knows the Timing of Christ’s Coming

Matthew 24:36, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” Remember Christ did not know because He was submitted to the Father to set aside the independent use of His attributes while on His mission to save humanity on earth.

The Implications of the Sudden Coming of Christ

There are huge implications to this. Theologians call this “teleology” concern for how things happen in the end. There is something to wait for. We long for Christ’s return. We cannot hang on to anything on this earth.

As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 6:20**, “Lay not up treasure on earth... lay up treasure in heaven.”

We are to be Watchful

Don’t be alarmed that you have missed Christ’s coming. Instead be watchful. Jesus says in **Mt 24:5**, “**See that you are not alarmed**, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.” This means that we need to be ready at all times for Christ to come. Have different people read the following verses and talk about how they our daily lives should be affected by the Second coming.

- Jesus says, **Mark 13:33**, “**Be on guard**, keep awake. For you do not know when the time [of the Second coming] will come.”
- **2 Peter 3:11-13**, “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness**, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”
- Jesus says (**Mt 24:42**), “Therefore, **stay awake**, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”
- Paul says: “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it **we await** a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (**Phil 3:20**).
- **2 Timothy 2:4**, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.”

Christ Will Come Suddenly

Mt 24:29-31, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of

heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Uniformitarianism

What is uniformitarianism? It is a system that teaches all things continue as they are. There is no singularity of the Lord’s return. There is no coming of Christ. We see it in **Peter 3:3-4**, “...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Peter says, don’t forget, God doesn’t mark time as we do.

2 Peter 3:8-13, “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

A thousand years look like a day to God. We don’t know when Jesus is coming, but we don’t know when he’s not coming.

II. Be Ready to Wait a Long Time (2 Thess. 2:1-12)

2 Thess. 2:1-3, “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... [certain things].”

THE SUBJECT: THE DAY OF THE LORD

Vs. 1, Paul speaks of the Day of the Lord – our being gathered to Jesus at His Parousia (His divine visitation). This is referring to the Second Coming.

THE CONTEXT: A FALSE LETTER IN PAUL’S NAME

Vs. 2 Thes. Some of the Thessalonian believers are unsettled because of

- some prophecy or
- some letter or report ascribed to Paul (though Paul hadn't given it). Some found it helpful to write in the name of Paul. These are Pseudepigrapha – these are spurious or pseudonymous writings. People are writing falsely in the name of Paul.

“With My Own Hand”

Paul often would authenticate that he had written a letter by writing something “with his own hand.” This is why in 2 Thess 3:17 Paul says, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.” This is how you can distinguish it from a fake.

Paul does the same thing in 1 Cor 16:21, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.”

THE COMMAND: BE READY TO WAIT

What is Paul teaching? In verses 1-3 he is teaching at least **two things** that must take place before the last day or otherwise they cannot come.

Two things must take place before Christ comes back.

1. The rebellion or apostasy or “falling away” of a great part of the church
2. The revelation of the man of lawlessness

Be Faithful if He Tarries His Coming

These two things were fulfilled early on and continue to be fulfilled in each generation. We will come back to these two things, but the point Paul is making is we don't know the time. It could be that Christ comes today. Or it could be that He comes in another thousand years. We need to be ready at any time, but we need to be ready to be faithful if He tarries His coming.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

There could be a long delay in Christ's coming. Not only should we be ready – we should be faithful. This is the point of the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

The whole parable is based on the custom of having a two part wedding party. The first part is at the bride's home, kind of a private party for family. Then there is a more public party at the Bridegroom's home for everyone.

They would wait at the Bridegroom's home until he came, and then the party would really begin! Sometimes you had to be ready to wait a long time. You never knew if the Bridegroom would come immediately or later.

Mt 25:1-13, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

⁸And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going

out.’⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’¹² But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.’”

Their Preparation Distinguishes the Virgins

So five virgins wise and five were foolish. Their preparation is what distinguishes. The whole plot turns on the long delay. Are you prepared? Are you ready if the Bridegroom comes quickly or if He tarries. Be prepared to wait a long time if need be. Be ready to serve the Lord for the rest of your life faithfully.

It is true that we have been transferred to Kingdom Now theology - prosperity gospel. There is truly a sense in which we’ve transferred to the kingdom, but it’s an already / not yet idea.

There are certain things that have to happen before the Lord comes.

In 21 – Peter has been humbled by his own denial of the Lord, but Jesus says Peter is going to die a martyr’s death. Peter asks, “What about John?” And Jesus basically says “Mind your own business.” But this is a prophecy that took place 3 decades later. So there was a waiting period. Jesus didn’t specify a time. Christ couldn’t have come back nevertheless before Peter died.

TWO THINGS MUST OCCUR

TWO things must take place before Christ comes back.

1. The rebellion
2. The revelation of the man of lawlessness (The Antichrist)

THE REBELLION

Vs. 3a, “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first.”

I think it could be argued that this great apostasy was fulfilled in the first century and continues to be fulfilled in every generation. This could refer to many things, and probably refers to all of these things.

Consider **1 John 2:18-19** where he seems to say that the rebellion has already begun: “¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”

- The heresy of the “Christian” Gnostics who denied Christ’s deity (See **1 John 2:19**)

- The falling away of the church to Arianism (like the modern day Jehovah's witnesses)
- The falling away of many to the cult of Mohammad and Islam (who claim a false Christ)
- The falling away of the church to works in the Roman Catholic church (early)
- The modern falling away of the church into liberalism and secularism

This rebellion must take place first is what Paul says, so don't be alarmed. But there is something else that must happen.

THE ANTICHRIST

Vs. 3-4, "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."

Antiochus Epiphanies

This occurred even before Christ came. Antiochus Epiphanies. He made it against the law to own any part of the OT. He outlawed Judaism. The Maccabean revolt was the result.

In 168 BC Antiochus marched to Jerusalem, killed the high priest, and dedicated the Temple to Zeus, erecting an image of Zeus in his own likeness on the altar, and sacrificed a pig in the Temple. This is known to Jews as the 'great desecration' or 'abomination of desecration' (from Daniel 11:31 & 12:11).

Roman emperor Caligula

In 40AD (ten years before 2 Thess. 2 was written) Caligula (who was insane) designated himself as a god (he also divinized his horse). He made it a capital offense to be a priest in the Temple, and he had plans to sacrifice to the gods and be worshipped as a god in the Temple at Jerusalem, but he died before he could carry it out.

Nero

Nero had "Lord" and "God" put on the coinage.

The Roman Pontiff

Beginning especially at the Reformers, the pope was seen to be an antichrist. What does "temple" refer to? Could it be the church as in 1 Cor? The Reformers often saw this fulfilled in the Roman Catholic church.

Hitler

In 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany, and promised a thousand year Reich. Of course it lasted a mere 12 years ending with his suicide in 1945.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

Even today the Supreme **Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** promises a false christ to come in 2022. He is directing that true Christians everywhere (whom he calls infidels) be beheaded.

We could go on and on. But what shall we make of this passage?

CLARITY

1 Jn 2:18, “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.” It was established Christian belief that there will be a physical antichrist

The Beast of Revelation

Rev 12 – the devil is displayed

Rev 13 – two beasts, the first is antichrist. He wants to kill Christians. The second beast is the false prophet – he gets Christians by deceiving them.

You have the “unholy trinity.”

The Fatal Wound

Rev 13:3, “One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.”

One note on the antichrist is that he receives a fatal wound and then lives again. What do we make of it? It’s a very image driven way of saying, “There are many antichrists, he just keeps coming back.”

Caligula, the Caesars took on titles of Lord and God. Eventually the Caesars died, but the beast keeps coming back.

Pope Innocence III is a beast but he dies

Hitler comes along and promises a 1000 year reich, but in 12 years is gone.

The beast always comes back. There is a danger of being deceived, when authorities arise and claim for themselves things reserved for God.

Can you imagine how much Paul talked to the Thess in four weeks. He says, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” (vs. 5).

The Spirit Restrains Satan’s Work

2 Thess 2:7-10, “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. ⁸And 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. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

As described in Revelation we have a false trinity aping the true Trinity.

The beast (anti-christian government led by the antichrist), the false prophet (false religion), and the devil himself. Rev. 12, 13, 14

The “man of sin” is Satan’s own agent, working miracles and deceiving many people.

There are those who “refused to love the truth and so be saved”(10b).

God gives Lost People Over to Their Own Delusion

Vs. 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.”

There is a sense in which the truth itself blinds people who do not want to see. Jesus says, “But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me” (Jn. 8:45). It’s not **although** I tell the truth, but **because** I tell you the truth. In other words, it’s the truth itself that they find so repulsive that it guarantees their unbelief. Again, in other words, if you harden your heart to the truth so many times that you no longer can receive it, then it is the truth that condemns you.

As I’ve said before the old puritan saying, “The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.”

Judicial Blindness

By a judicial act of God, God says, “Believe your lie.” You want your lie, believe it! That’s what God does – he gives them over to a reprobate mind. Don’t play with God. The times comes when out of his judicial purposes you can only believe the lie. You always wanted to believe and he give you over to your own deception.

APPLICATIONS

Urge Unbelievers to Repent and be Ready

Be prepared to wait a long time. This means for those who are not believers, the judgment is coming. It could come now. He’s given us the Gospel where God sends his own Son for our sins. You trample on that and there is no hope.

Urge Believers to Live a Life of Accountability

All of us will give an account to God, and the question is “what have we done with the truth.” For those who have not responded, God sends them a strong delusion.

III. Make Time for Long Term Planning (2 Tim 2:1-7)

The point of the passage for Christians, is that we need built into our Christian discipleship, long term planning.

Good Example of Paul

2 Tim 2:1-7, “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

2 Tim. 2 – Paul told Timothy to keep training the next generation. That means we need to be

planning. Jesus may wait a long time. We don't know when Christ could come.

Bad Example of Hezekiah

A contrast is with Hezekiah. The prophecy is that judgement falls on the nation, but after Hez is gone. Hezekiah said, "The prophecy is good." This was wrong! He should have fallen on his face and said, no! Please have mercy not only on me but on my children and for the many generations to come.

Conclusion: We are honor bound to be thinking ahead, but also to be ready at any time!