

The World's Reckoning

No big idea.

2 Thessalonians 2

APPLICATION

This morning, I hope you know Jesus, and if you don't, I hope and pray that you don't wait another moment.

This is God's world, and it's currently in a state of chaos created by humanity and satan, but God isn't going to leave it that way. But if you want to be part of the new creation He is bringing, you have to be on the side of Jesus Christ, the son of God, who came to earth, died on a cross for the sins of the world, rose victoriously from the grave, conquering death and hell forever, and is coming again as the rightful king of all of His creation.

If you think things are headed in a frightening direction right now on this earth, you have no idea... you have no comprehension of how devastating things are going to get in this world. I don't say that to be pessimistic for I am actually very optimistic. I'm optimistic because I know how the story ends, I know who wins the ultimate war, and I know that I'm on the winning team.

Many people are asking about the end of the world. It's funny how most people don't think apocalyptic thoughts until something crazy happens in the world, then even the atheist is thinking, "is it the end of the world?"

- Well, the short answer is no. The end of this world is very far away (as far as our timeline is concerned). Now, the end of this age of human rule and authority on the earth could be very close to its end, I believe that. But this world still has a very exciting future ahead of it after people are no longer in charge of it.

- There are still 1000 years coming on this world of peace and prosperity under the rule of Jesus. Strangely enough, at the end of that time, humanity, under the influence of Satan, still rebels against Christ, but for the one who trusts Jesus and wants to be part of His kingdom, the future is bright after this short time here.

OVERVIEW

Turn to 2 Thessalonians 2 and 2 Peter 3.

Last week we dove into this complex passage where Paul seeks to comfort and clarify the details of the events leading up to the Return of Christ. He addresses a church that is confused about the specific times they were living in... sound familiar?

- The church had been led astray by bad theology and rumors that the “gathering together” of the saints to Jesus, or what we call the rapture of the church, had already secretly taken place and they had been left by Jesus to endure the Day of the Lord, or what we have called “The Great Tribulation Period.”
- Or perhaps they were being taught that Jesus was not coming to rescue the church in the rapture and that the wrath of God was now upon them, and they would have to live through the judgment of God upon the earth.
- Either way, Paul exhorts them not to be shaken in mind or in spirit regarding these things.
 - Shaken in mind – a ship that has been loosed from its moorings. Get back to the anchor!
- Last week we broke down verse one, explain that Paul saw two distinct occurrences under the umbrella of the last days.
 - Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (one event – the 2nd coming) and our being gathered together to Him (a separate event, the gathering together of the saints to meet the Lord).
 - We spent the entire morning last weekend discussing the gathering together. I encourage you to go online and listen to that sermon if you missed it.
 - For the sake of our notes, we titled it **“The Day of Desire.” And today, we look at the other half of this, “The Day of Destruction.”**
 - This is the period of time the church thought they were experiencing, yet Paul wants to reassure them that there is NO WAY it is the wrath of God because, in order for the wrath of God to come to the earth, there are certain prerequisites that first must occur that hadn’t yet occurred.

- This wasn't the case for the rapture, which can happen at any moment, and is our hope and comfort that God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation in Christ.

BIBLE VERSE

[2Th 2:1-12 NKJV] 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 Christ had come. 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, 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? 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. 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.

1 - IS A DAY OF DESTRUCTION

[1Th 5:2-5 NKJV] 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

INTRO

The Day of the Lord – When we think of the term "The Day of the Lord"

- We shouldn't think of it as one literal day. This is referring to a period of time in which God's judgment is poured out. For example, John tells us that it is "the last hour." that doesn't mean

that John was implying everything could end within an hour of him writing that. It's a season of time.

THE DAY OF THE LORD – this was a term that the audience would have been familiar with both from an OT context and from what Paul previously taught them.

OLD TESTAMENT – the day of the Lord was associated with God's judgment. There have actually been more than one "Day of the Lord" regarding His judgment.

- There was a Day of the Lord against Egypt. There was a Day of the Lord against unbelieving Israel when they were destroyed by the Babylonians.
- But there is also "THE Day of the Lord." The one that will not come against a single nation, but upon the entire earth, ultimately designed to deal with Israel and ultimately save them as they receive their messiah.

Here are some of the OT adjectives that describe "The Day of the Lord" (***Zephaniah 1, Joel 2, Zechariah 14, Malachi 4***)

- Destruction, distress, anguish, ruin, anger, wrath, fire, vengeance, devour, great and terrible, awesome, darkness, bitter, dreadful...
- Sound like a party you want to be invited to?

NEW TESTAMENT – Describes a time of great tribulation.

- Jesus – **[Mat 24:21 NKJV] 21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."**
- In Revelation 3, Jesus calls it, "the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world."
- The book of Revelation goes even further in describing this as seven years in which judgments and wrath will be poured out from heaven upon the world.
 - **Seven seal judgments** – Warfare, famine, plagues, massive global earthquake, and astronomical upheaval.
 - **Seven trumpet judgments** – Hail and fire, most plant life destroyed, most aquatic life destroyed, sun and moon darkened, a demonic army that kills 1/3 of all remaining humanity.
 - We are talking probably somewhere around 2 billion people. COVID has currently claimed the lives of about 4.5 million worldwide

- **Seven bowls of wrath** – Deadly sores, the death of every living sea creature, all freshwater sources contaminated, Intensifying of the sun’s scorching heat on earth, giant hail, and a global earthquake.
- 1 Thessalonians 5 tells us that those who are caught in the Day of the Lord will, “by no means escape.”
- 1 Peter tells us that the day of the Lord will culminate at the end like this, “[2Pe 3:10 NKJV] **10 ...the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**”

YIKES!

BIBLE VERSE

[Rev 16:5-7 NKJV] **5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.” 7 And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous [are] Your judgments.”**

2 - IS A DAY THAT IS DETERMINED

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 Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for [that Day will not come]... (Better “Day of the Lord is upon us”)

New Living – [2Th 2:2-3 NLT] 2 Don’t be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don’t believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us.

Do not be deceived as if the Day of the Lord is upon you. Why? Because that day will not come until determined, prophesied events line up and take place.

Timeline of the Day of the Lord:

- ***Begins – Falling away (Departure)***
 - ***The restrainer is taken out of the way***
 - ***Antichrist (man of lawlessness) is revealed***

- *The Antichrist blasphemes*
- *Christ's second coming*
- *Antichrist is destroyed and Satan is bound*
- *Christ's reign on the earth*
- *The Great White Throne Judgment*
- *Ends – The destruction and/reconstruction of heaven and earth*

Let's quickly run through these determined events, then we will look at their characteristics.

A. THE FALLING AWAY (DEPARTURE)

Now, quickly, let me present another thought. Look at the word for “falling away.”

Apastasia – two times in the New testament.

Here, it's translated as “a falling away from the faith” coming first. THIS IS CERTAINLY A VALID TRANSLATION and doesn't change the context other than it would mean that before the antichrist is revealed, many professing Christians will drop off the map and turn from the true gospel. In many ways we see this happening today, and it seems to be happening at an alarming rate.

- In other places, Paul does talk about those who will fall away from the faith in the end times. It's been happening for 2000 years!

But interestingly enough, when you begin to research other ancient Greek manuscripts for this same word, it's more frequently translated as “departure.” To leave one destination for another. It's all dependent on the context. Some scholars suggest that because the context is the “gathering of ourselves together with the Lord” and the second coming of Christ, that it should be translated here as “departure.”

- In other words, “That day (Day of the Lord) will not take place until the departure happens first, then the anti-Christ is revealed.”
- But the word here has a definite article (GREEK) in front of it— “Literally: THE apastasia...” It denotes a specific event of departure.
- When Paul describes apostasy in *[1Ti 4:1 NKJV] 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...*

- He uses the word *aphistēmi* instead of *apastasia*. Just some food for thought...
Regardless, there will be a great rebellion and turning away from Jesus the close beget to the end.
- But here in the timeline, Paul could very well be saying the departure (the rapture of the church) will happen first before the antichrist is revealed.

THE RESTRAINER IS REMOVED

Verses 6-7 indicate that there is a restraining force at work coming from someone (He) that is keeping the full expression of lawlessness and deception, and godlessness at bay.

- In other words, while many expressions of antichrist have come throughout history, they've all be restrained.
- I want you to consider all the mass wickedness that has taken place in our history (too many to try and list today) and realize that is a tamed down version of what's coming once the restrainer completely takes His hand off the wheel.

It's debated who or what is the restrainer.

- Many agree that Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit. The only reason that people are restrained today and that there is still some moral structure in the world is that the Holy Spirit is actively working, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (**John 16:8**).
- **Think about how bad things are now then imagine it if the Holy Spirit stopped working and sinful mankind was left completely to its own devices! Their consciences will be completely void of any righteous influence at all.**
- There are others who believe that the restrainer is the church. That the church is the greatest restrainer to Satan's work being accomplished in full force. If those pesky, dogmatic, fundamentalist Christians are gone, the world can embrace Satan's deceptive working without our voice of righteousness and truth.
 - Of course "He" the Holy Spirit resides and works through the church, so if the church is not present then the voice of the Spirit through the church ceases to speak.
- This also would be in line with the pre-tribulation rapture view.

THE ANTICHRIST IS REVEALED

Here, Paul gives him two specific titles: The man of lawlessness and the son of perdition.

INTERPRETATION: Some have interpreted the antichrist as a governmental or religious system. While I believe that government and religion will all play a part in the antichrist's future order, I believe biblically you must recognize this as a person:

- **Daniel's prophecy refers to him as an individual (Daniel 9:26, 8:23, 11:36)**
- **Jesus refers to him as an individual (Matthew 24, Mark 13:14)**
- **John refers to him as an individual (1 John 2:18)**
- **Revelation 13 refers to him as an individual.**

The totality of what we know about the antichrist tells us that he will lead a one world order, he will wield supernatural power, he will provide the appearance of world peace, he will even resurrect from the dead. Basically, Satan trying to mimic Jesus but with pure evil deception of humanity.

- This antichrist, According to Daniel, will broker a historic seven-year peace treaty between Israel and her enemies. He will be viewed as a messiah figure until the day, 3 1/2 years into it when he goes into the temple declaring himself to be God and all hell literally breaks loose.
- This means we need to keep our eyes on Israel. Rest assured, a third temple is coming and the Temple Institute in Jerusalem is committed to this task. **(Play video)**

So who is this? That is a silly question that none of the Apostles would even dare try to answer. Is it possible that he is alive today? Possibly. The world is in the most unique position to fulfill biblical prophecy than ever before.

WHO IS THIS?

Now, throughout history, attempts and predictions have been made as to the identity of the antichrist.

- [image] Antiochus Epiphanes (163 BC – set up a statue of Zeus in the temple and declared himself God), Roman emperor Titus, Emperor Nero, The Pope, Napoleon, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mikhail Gorbachev, Barney the Dinosaur, Michale Jackson, Barack Obama and soooooo many more!

Have some of these people done things that are indicative of antichrist? YES! Why, because Paul and John both tell us that the spirit of lawlessness (antichrist) is already at work. It is embodied in

much of the world system. 1 John 4:3 tells us the antichrist is coming, and the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world.

[1Jo 2:18 NKJV] 18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

But why do we believe that the anti-christ is still yet to come? Because of the prophecies that these men HAVE NOT fulfilled.

- ***“...whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”***

That hasn't happened yet! So we rightfully conclude that the antichrist is still to come. There are some other things here, including supernatural and spiritual deception that the antichrist will bring with him.

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING

The antichrist will ultimately be dealt with by Jesus Himself and will be consumed and destroyed by the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming.

- This is the final event that takes place before the rule of Christ on the earth. The antichrist, possessed by Satan himself, who was so impressive on the earth, will be nothing in the presence of the true God and King, Jesus Christ.
- **Isaiah 63 and Revelation 19** outline the glorious return of Jesus and His saints to the earth. He judges the earth with the sword of His Word that proceeds from His mouth, and he tramples the winepress (blood) of the wrath of Almighty God.
- According to Revelation 20, Jesus will then bind Satan in the bottomless pit, and throw the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire, and establish his righteous reign on the earth in order to fulfill every promise made to Israel. During that time, humanity, uninfluenced by Satan, will subject themselves to Christ and live in peace, harmony, and earthy bliss.

There's so much more that we will cover at another point in time, but all this to say that the Day of the Lord and its events are determined.

3 - IS A DAY OF DECEPTION AND DELUSION

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.

BIBLE VERSE

REGARDING SATAN. JESUS SAID: [Jhn 8:44 NKJV] 44 “...He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

One of Satan’s most effective tactics throughout history has been the ability to disguise despicable lies as attractive truths. Well, his final deception is a doozy. It’s his last-ditch effort to bamboozle humanity, and it works.

A. HE WILL DECEIVE THROUGH SUPERNATURAL ATTRACTION

God is not the only one who can perform miraculous signs. Satan too has supernatural power enough to cause unregenerated humanity to tremble and bow before him.

- Notice the word **“Lying wonders.” Psuedos – something that is not what it appears to be.** Or as Inigo Montoya would say, ***“I do not think that means what you think that means.”***
- There’s an idea that the wonders being done will look like they are for the good of humanity, but in reality, it’s bait into an eternal trap.
- I am saddened to say, that some of today’s false prophets utilize these same tactics to deceive people. There are many today who are using signs, wonders, and miracles, and trickery to control the masses. They even do it in the name of Jesus. It goes to show how prone we all are to deception through emotional manipulation.
- Jesus told us that when he returns there will be many that look at him and say, “Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name, perform miracles in your name, heal in your name?” His response, “Depart from me you who practice lawlessness, I never knew you.”

The Antichrist starts out appearing as humanity’s hero but turns into humanity’s worst nightmare.

- Ultimately, there is some sort of image created of the antichrist (be it a statue, digital image, or some other form of idol). the Bible says it causes anyone who does not bow to it and

worship it to die.

B. HE WILL DECEIVE THROUGH UNRIGHTEOUS DECEPTION

Unrighteous deception – something that looks just and right, but violates God’s justice and righteousness.

- Can you even begin to imagine a ruler and ruling system that undermines biblical truth, righteousness, and justice for their own version of social justice, morality, and secular humanistic philosophies?

Church, today deception is at an all-time high!

- We have deep fakes, so you don’t even know if what you’re watching on a video is real or invented.
- We have manipulation of data in order to politicize, deceive, and control the masses.
- We have utter unrighteous deception regarding human sexuality. In times past, when people perverted sexuality, at least they all agreed they were acting unnaturally and wickedly. Now it’s accepted as righteous!
- Recently the **American Medical Association (AMA)** recommended that a newborn’s gender be removed from the public portion of birth certificates as it might offend or come in conflict with that person’s future gender identity. Folks if our own doctors, who are setting the tone for medical and health policy, can’t even declare that there are chromosomal laws that define one’s sex, what hope is there for our medical future? **Thankfully the NIH still states the obvious truth**, but when will that change? ***A sex chromosome is a type of chromosome that participates in sex determination. Humans and most other mammals have two sex chromosomes, the X and the Y. Females have two X chromosomes in their cells, while males have both X and a Y chromosomes in their cells.***

C. HE WILL DECEIVE THROUGH ECONOMIC DECEPTION

According to Revelation 13, the beast (another moniker of the antichrist) implements a global economic system that forces everyone into its clutches. We read:

[Rev 13:16-18 NKJV] 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell

except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name... His number is 666.

APPLICATION: Can you agree that like no other time in history, we see the feasibility of forcing entire populations into an economic system that leaves them helpless if they don't comply?

- **This is important to recognize** – the system of antichrist is one that completely removes individual autonomy and liberty and forces everyone into global tyranny, but at least it seems equitable, right? Small, great, rich, poor, slave, free... just making everyone equal!
- I think this is what bothers me so much about increased government standards being imposed on people with less and less logical justification, to the point that noncompliance means the inability to function, work, support your family, and even pursue worship and service to God.
- NO, I don't believe that COVID related mandates are the mark of the beast, but I do believe that they are preparatory for a world that will ultimately welcome the complete loss of their freedom to be controlled by the antichrist.

ILLUSTRATION

It's interesting how many people get the creeps over the number 666...

- In 1979 Ronald and Nancy Reagan moved to a new home in LA. Their address was 666 St. Cloud Road. They had it changed to 668.
- US Route 666 was once known as the Devil's Highway, until officials changed the name to US Route 491...
- And many new moms went to great extremes to keep from birthing their babies on June 6, 2006...
- There's actually a term for the fear of the number six hundred, sixty-six, "Hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia."
- But here's the good news. Christians don't have to be afraid over 666! And this is Paul's point in 2 Thessalonians 2. We're not looking for the Antichrist, but for Jesus Christ. Paul is clear that He comes first.

APPLICATION

Do you want to know the most frightening thing about good deception? It appears right. Its progress is often slow, calculated, and patient.

- The enemy knows deception. He mastered it in the Garden of Eden. HE knows how to make something that's a lie attractive to human nature.
- Church, always beware if you're worldview always seems to agree with the one that is propagated by the secular, godless culture!
- Eve was the very first secular progressive woke individual. She wanted life her way, without God. She wasn't content being under God's authority and wisdom, she wanted to be like God and have her own solutions.
- And as we move closer to the final end of days, the Bible is clear that deception will only increase all the more.

BIBLE VERSE

[2Ti 3:13-15 NKJV] 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned...

BIBLE VERSE

[2Th 2:11-12 NKJV] 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.

APPLICATION

Some might perceive this as cruel of God. How could a loving God shut the door of invitation and purposefully allow people to believe a lie?

- First, notice that God does not deceive them, he sends them a strong delusion, but they are the ones who believe the lie.
- Notice second that this is a form of justice toward people who already made a decision to deny the truth when they had the opportunity.
- Notice thirdly that the reason they denied God's truth was that they took pleasure in unrighteousness.

- **Once a person rejects the truth, they will fall for anything.**
- In essence, right now God is patiently waiting in His mercy for those who will still hear and respond to His truth. But there will come a point when God in His righteousness will not allow people to have what they never wanted in the first place.

QUOTE

All who insist on being willingly deceived now will be unwillingly and irreversibly deceived then.

BIBLE VERSE

[2Co 6:2 NKJV / Isaiah 49:8] 2 For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

APPLICATION

So how should we respond to these truths?

- After all, as Christians, our comfort is that this list of things will not be part of our lifetime.
- Yes, here and now we will experience tribulations and difficulties, but nothing compared to what the unbelieving world has in store ahead of them.

This ought to both create within us heartache for those who think they have it all now, but will ultimately experience hell. It also ought to inspire us to a life of eternal focus.

BIBLE VERSE

TURN – [2Pe 3:10-12 NKJV] 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner [of persons] ought you to be in holy conduct and

godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Everything we see and know right now is getting dissolved. It's all going to burn. Global warming will be a real thing, but it's going to get hotter than anyone imagined.

- Keeping this in mind, we are to strive for holiness and godliness in this present time, and we are to “hasten” the Day of God.
- Hasten – to speed up, to hurry along. I believe we do this by spreading the kingdom and the good news of Jesus everywhere we go.

GOSPEL INVITATION!!!