

53. Jesus in 2 Thessalonians

February 8, 2018

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

2 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

It is rather obvious – the apostle Paul wrote it around A.D. 51, within months of writing the first letter.

B. THE SETTING

As you can tell, there are many thematic similarities in this Book to the first. The apostle probably had received a second report from Thessalonica regarding continuing questions and problems for the end time prophecies.

Several of Paul's references indicate that some in Thessalonica were deliberately misleading these new believers, even to the point of false teachers forging letters to make them look as if they had come from Paul.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 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.

The apostle took extra care in this letter to make sure the Thessalonians understood not only his views on the end times, but also what his handwriting looked like, so they would be able to identify letters as authentically his.

2 Thessalonians 3:17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

C. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

This Book distinguishes itself by the detailed teaching it presents on the end times. So Paul explained to them that this future time of tribulation had not yet come because a certain "man of lawlessness" had not yet been revealed. Comparisons with other passages in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation reveal this man to be none other than the antichrist.

The apostle Paul, in concern for the Thessalonian believers who were trying to stand firm in their faith under pressure from false teachers, taught the Thessalonians in this letter that their hope in Christ's future return should serve as an encouragement to them in their suffering, motivating them to live responsibly for Him. Paul always connected his teaching on Jesus with the practical growth he expected to see as a result of such a deeply held faith.

D. THE STRUCTURE

His letter has three sections, which correspond to its three chapters.

Chapter 1: Paul affirms the Thessalonian believers' faith in the midst of affliction.

Chapter 2: Paul explains the prophecy they had been misinformed about.

Chapter 3: Paul clarified the proper response to the truth about Christ's return.

E. THE DAY OF THE LORD

Since we briefly studied about the rapture last week, it is only right for us to go over the eschatology that mentioned in chapter 2.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 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.

As I told you before, the purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a rapture calendar, nor to scratch our itching prophecy bones, but to build godly characters in us. The apostle Paul emphasized this fact in both of his Thessalonian letters, and our Lord warned us not to set dates for His coming since nobody knows. But guess what? Thousands of people go for that dumb idea. I agree with P.T. Barnum who said, "There's a sucker born every minute."

The rapture is one of the most important events in the eschatology. If you ignore the rapture, you have to ignore a good portion of the Bible and deny the power of God. In other words, anyone who ignores the rapture has no idea about the end-time prophecy.

Once the church is out of the world, satan and his forces will unfold their program. The Day of the Lord is the period that follows the Rapture of the church. It will be a time of Tribulation for the people on earth; satan and his hosts will be working on earth, and God will send righteous judgments from heaven.

1) The apostasy and the son of perdition

2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 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?

Paul did not use the term "antichrist" in this letter. This term is used in the New Testament only by the apostle John in 1 John and 2 John. But this is the name we use to identify the last great world dictator whom Paul designated as "that man of sin," "the son of perdition," and "that lawless one".

Satan has been at war with God ever since he, as Lucifer, rebelled against God and tried to capture God's throne in Isaiah 14. After that, he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden and, through her, caused Adam to fall according to Genesis 3.

Perdition means destruction, the complete loss of well-being. It is really the opposite of salvation. To call him "the son of perdition" means his character is marked by this destruction.

Satan will one day produce his masterpiece, the antichrist, who will cause the world to worship satan and believe satan's lies. The Greek prefix 'anti' has two meanings: "against", and "instead of". Satan not only opposes Christ, but he wants to be worshiped and obeyed instead of Christ.

Let's take a look at this antichrist briefly:

- **The peacemaker**

Revelation 6:2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

Certainly, this man will be on the scene before the Rapture of the church. He will be a peaceful political leader who unites ten nations of Europe into a strong power bloc.

By the way, I thought that it is almost impossible to have 10 nations out of 28 countries which are the current members of the European Union. Little did I know that the EU is divided into East EU and West EU with 5 regions for each.

The rider on the white horse imitates Christ. He goes forth to conquer peacefully; He has a bow, but without arrows. He will bring a brief time of peace to the world before he reveals his true identity in the middle of the Great Tribulation.

The world will marvel at this great leader who, with satan's power, will perform signs and wonders and deceive the nations.

- **The protector**

Daniel 9:25-27 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. 26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

We cannot examine the exciting details of this prophecy for now, but it is important to note several facts. First, the prophecy applies to Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple, and not to the church. Second, it announces the time when Messiah will come at His Second Coming and accomplish certain purposes for the Jewish people.

The antichrist will temporarily solve the Middle East crisis. Israel will rebuild her temple on the Temple Mount with the help of the antichrist and start to enjoy peaceful times. It is the signing of this covenant, not the Rapture of the church, that signals the start of Daniel's seventieth week, that seven-year period known as the Day of the Lord.

- **The peace-breaker**

Up to this point, the antichrist has been a peacemaking leader of ten European nations, promised to protect Israel. But after three and one-half years, he reveals his true character by taking over the Jewish temple and demanding that the world worship him. Our Lord Jesus called it "the abomination of desolation" in Matthew 24:15, a clear reference to Daniel 9:27.

- **The persecutor**

Satan will vent his wrath against Israel. He will also control the world's economic system that citizens must bear "the mark of the beast" to be able to buy and sell.

F. THE RESTRAINER

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 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.

Why is satan unable to reveal his "man of sin – the antichrist" sooner? Because God is restraining the forces of evil in the world today. Satan cannot do whatever he wants to do, whenever he pleases unless the Lord allows him. We find a great example of that in Job 1 and 2.

Who is this Restrainer? We can tell that it is the Holy Spirit who restrains satan and his demons in this world.

V7 brings much confusion among the believers of Jesus Christ, including myself before. Long time ago, I was taught by someone and I believed that when the rapture happens, the Holy Spirit will leave the earth with the believers. That was wrong. If He leaves the earth before the Great Tribulation, how do the people who are left behind after the rapture get saved? Without Him, no one can. He will be present on the earth during the Great Tribulation because many are saved, sealed, and serve God during this period.

The Holy Spirit will be getting out of the way of satan, so that the devil can bring all this havoc, but not removed from the earth.

G. THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 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.

With a mere breath from the Lord's mouth, the one-sided fight will be over. In the beginning, God spoke the world into existence out of nothing. Similarly, at the end time, God will merely speak the words and satan and his cohorts will be vanquished into the Lake of Fire.

Just because someone has spiritual power, signs, or wonders, those are not enough to prove that they are from God. Satan can perform his own powerful miracles, either through deception or through his own resources of power.

The deception can only take root in those who do not receive the truth from God's Word. These people are ready for the deception of the antichrist, because they want a lie, and God will send them a strong delusion. In the end, the antichrist will be also used for the glory of God.

H. APPLICATION

The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a raptur calendar, nor to scratch our itching prophecy bones, but to build godly characters in us.