

October 29, 2023

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 ESV

1 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.

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 143:12

Micah 7:8-9

“Paul characterizes this person as someone who is without law and whose character is therefore the personification of sin... he embodies all that the Lord opposes...”

-Gene Green



Peace

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

BIG IDEA: Big idea – My peace in the present and hope for the future rests in the One who speaks truth and ends all evil with the breath of His mouth.

Simply – Jesus calms the chaos.

OUTLINE

1. Unsettling Information

2. Unsettling Person

3. Peace and Hope

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“Seeing the comparison between Christ and his evil opposite, the man of lawlessness, reminds Christians of the larger battle going on around them. Yes, our individual lives as Christians are important, but they are part of a larger battle that has stretched backwards and will go forwards through redemptive history. These verses refer to the climax of the battle.”

-Bob Cara

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory and man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly stated in Scripture or by good and necessary inference may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or by traditions of men.”

-WCF Chapter 1,
paragraph 6.

The Thessalonians were shaken into mindless panic and were alarmed or frightened by the false claim that the Day of the Lord had already come. Though the source of the confusion was unknown to Paul, he suggested some possibilities:

- A spirit
- An alleged prophetic word
- A spoken word
- A word of teaching or sermon
- A forged letter circulating

Although some believe that the Thessalonians were thinking of a complex series of events that would lead to the second coming, Paul explains that the arrival of the day of the Lord and the second coming will coincide and that it will occur after "the rebellion" and "the man of lawlessness is revealed."

Praise to Jesus. Praise God for your Savior, Jesus, who has redeemed you from the unsettling things you confront in the present and the future, who brings to nothing the enemies of God's people and the lies that seek to disrupt their lives.

Repentance through Jesus. Repent of the many times you let the slightest things move you from the foundation of truth you have come to know and believe through the Bible.

Consecration for Jesus. Rededicate yourself to rely on the sufficiency of Christ, His truth, and His power at work, bringing hope for the future and peace to the present.

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What life circumstances come to mind when you think about chaos?
2. Refer to 2 Thess. 1:2. Another way to understand, “Not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed” is to think, do not be moved so quickly from your understanding. What shakes you from reasonable thought? What rocks your world? What posture is needed to remain firm in the face of chaos?
3. Refer to 2 Thess. 1:3, 4, and 9. How might the prerequisites of the Second Coming bring some relief to the Thessalonians? Can our understanding of the Second Coming serve as a foundation for hope in uncertain times rather than a cause of fear?
4. Refer to 2 Thess. 1:8. What will Jesus do to the “man of lawlessness?” Read 2 Thess. 1:10-12. What will happen to those who refuse to “love the truth and so be saved?” Read Psalm 143:12 and Micah 7:8-9. How does Jesus bring to nothing all falsehood?
5. How is your understanding of your present circumstances impacting your emotional health? How can the sufficiency of the Scripture bring truth, light, life, and peace?

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1 In this passage Paul once again writes to the Thessalonians about the 2nd Coming of Christ. Paul wants us as Christians to look forward to the return of Jesus. What does Paul teach in verse 2-3 about why he wrote to the Thessalonians about this? *(Paul wrote in verse 2 that he does not want them “to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed.” Then in verse 3 he wrote that he did not want them to be deceived to believe that they had missed Christ’s return.)*

2. Paul wrote about “a man of lawlessness” in this passage. How does Paul describe this man? *(This man is called “the son of destruction” who will oppose God. He will falsely claim to be God (verse 4). In verse 9 we read that this “man of lawlessness” is being led or guided by Satan.)*

3. It is easy to fear this mysterious figure who will appear at the end of time. It is especially easy for children to fear. Therefore, ask your children if this “man of lawlessness” is stronger than Jesus. From verse 8, how will Jesus defeat this man? *(We read in verse 8 that the Lord Jesus will defeat him “with the breath of his mouth”. Make sure to make a big deal about how easy it is for Christ to defeat him. Passages like this are great reminders of how great our God is. There are no beings anywhere close to God in His strength. Therefore, we can have peace even in our world that has lots of things that cause us anxiety. If it is helpful or if you need to bring some fun into this discussion, then have an arm-wrestling competition to see who the strongest person in your family is.)*

Scriptures for further study:

Revelation 1:17-18
(description of the greatness and strength of Jesus)

Mark 3:26-27 (Jesus is the One who is stronger than strong man.)

FOR STUDENTS

1. Is there any teaching that makes you feel “shaken in mind” and “alarmed” --whether it’s about the end times or anything else? Who could you talk to about your doubts or confusion?

2 Why is it so important to remember God’s sovereignty as we consider what will happen in the future?

3. How anchored are you in biblical truth? What steps could you take to become more certain of what you believe?

4. In what sense is God’s word our defense? Do you think this is true in your own life, or do you find you are easily confused by different teachings?

5. In what ways are you most tempted to worship created things in place of the Creator? How could you combat that temptation?

6. Who do you know who is struggling in their faith at the moment or who shows signs of having been deceived by Satan’s lies? What could you do to strengthen and encourage them in the truth?

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from 1 & 2 Thessalonians for You by Ligon Duncan.*

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. This passage (2:1-12) continues the theme from chapter 1 regarding the Second Coming of Christ. Notice again that when Christ returns it will be a day of judgment not only for the “man of lawlessness,” but also for those who “refuse to love the truth” (v.10), and who have “delighted in wickedness” (v.12). Conversely, those who do believe in Christ will be “gathered to him” (v.1), and will be with him in a close and personal way.

Question: If Jesus Christ returned today, which of the two camps would you be in? Will you choose today to be made right with him?

2. Paul encourages the Thessalonians not to become easily unsettled or “shaken from the mind” (v.2) by what they are hearing concerning (false) prophecies. Later, in verse 5, Paul seems surprised that they have so quickly forgotten the things he had already taught them. The key for us is to make sure we remember, and stick to, the teachings of Scripture we have already received, so that we are not swayed by false teachings.

Question: How grounded are you in God’s word? Are you careful in weighing all teachings you come across in light of what God has already clearly revealed in his word?

3. Though the “man of lawlessness” and all the events described in this passage have a future dimension to them, there is also a present reality to them as well. We already see a rebellion of humanity as a whole against God. We see many people who oppose God and exalt themselves above God and seek to attract our worship. There are always evil forces that are arrayed against God and attempt to dethrone him.

Question: Can you discern some people, institutions, “isms,” movements, or leaders today which are in direct opposition to God, or would seek to draw us away from worshipping God alone?

4. This passage is meant to give us great security in knowing that even when evil is strong and seems to have the upper hand, God is always in control. He will destroy the “man of lawlessness” with “overwhelming ease” (ESV Study Bible). There is no contest: he will “overthrow” (destroy) evil by his mere breath (v.8). Even the coming of the “man of lawlessness” will be “revealed at the proper time” (v.6), which is to say that his coming will be according to God’s timing and when God says the time is right. In other words, God is in complete control of all these end times events.

Question: Is there anything that is unsettling to your mind at the moment concerning either present circumstances or things that are yet to come? Submit these fears to God. Ask him to give you a stable mind that rests secure in his sovereignty.

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 24:36-51

2 Peter 3:3-13

2 Corinthians 5:10

A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica



Sunflowers, Vincent Van Gogh, 1888

About the artist and painting: In 1888, the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh moved to southern France with a dream. He wanted to establish an art community where painters could live, work, and inspire one another. One of his mentors, a man he deeply respected, Paul Gauguin, agreed to come and live in this community. As a symbol of his thankfulness and happiness, Van Gogh painted a series of sunflower paintings and hung them in his room. The sunflower meant to reflect his surprising joy towards achieving a dream.

The apostle Paul was probably not an artist but he did produce a letter expressing his surprising joy, his thankfulness, and happiness. This letter was his “sunflower” to the church Thessalonica. It’s Paul’s verbal painting of Gospel Gratitude. What are things you a most grateful for in your life? Has the Gospel taken root in your heart? If so, what fruits of gratitude are being produced and overflowing in your life as a result of Jesus?

In his opening words from Paul to the Thessalonians, he writes:

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,
3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same faith, hope, and love that made a difference in the lives of believers then can make a difference in your life now. **“I’m excited for what God has in store for us First Presbyterian Church, as the Spirit washes us in these words of Gospel gratitude. May Christ be our hope for the world to come, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime”** Pastor Bill Pardue

A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica

About 2 Thessalonians: Paul writes to express his GRATITUDE for the church's continued growth in faith and love. At the same time, he encourages them to stand firm amidst persecution, seeks to correct a false teaching concerning the return of Christ, and addresses an idleness problem.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to commend them for their continued spiritual growth while encouraging them to progress. He deals with misinformation about the 2nd Coming and an emerging problem of idleness. The letter's focus is eschatology, or the theology of end times. While this is a prevalent theme in 1 Thessalonians, instead of continuing a discussion about what will happen to the dead, the Thessalonians were confused and disturbed by false teaching that said Jesus had already returned invisibly and the church missed it. Paul provides much-needed clarity about when Jesus will return.

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May Christ continue to be our hope for the world, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime.

- Pastor Bill Pardue