

MAN OF LAWLESSNESS

Wednesday, November 5

Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

2 Thessalonians 2:7 *For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming.*

Like many today, the Thessalonians were confused about the end times. False teachers had unsettled these young believers by telling them that the persecution they were suffering was a sign that the Day of the Lord had already begun; the Rapture (“being gathered together to [Christ]”) had already taken place and they had missed it! To calm their fears, Paul describes two things that had to happen before the Day of the Lord and the Second Coming of Christ.

THE APOSTASY (2:3a) – We get our word apostasy from the Greek word translated “rebellion” (NIV) or “falling away” (NKJV). History is a record of humanity’s rebellion against God. But Paul is referring to a future rebellion like no other in history when mankind gives their worship and allegiance to Satan.

THE ANTICHRIST (2:3b-12) – This ultimate rebellion will be led by “the man of lawlessness.” We more commonly call him the Antichrist based on 1 John 4:3. The books of Daniel and Revelation give us a much bigger picture of what this final world dictator will do. Paul mentions that his arrival will mark the start of the Day of the Lord. He will take his seat in the temple and proclaim himself to be God (2:4). Satan will give him power to deceive the people of earth. They follow his lies because they “refused to love the truth and so be saved” (2:10-12). But his doom is sure! Paul mentions his destruction by Christ twice in these short verses (2:3, 8).

Who is the “one who now holds back” (2:6-8) the full manifestation of Satan’s power and the emergence of his Antichrist? Apparently Paul had taught them about this when he was with them, so he did not go into detail in his letter. Many theories have been presented through the centuries – everything from angels to human government. I believe the best answer is that it is the Holy Spirit through the Church that is holding back this final rebellion led by Satan’s ‘right-hand man.’ When the church is raptured to heaven, Antichrist will be revealed and take control. The Holy Spirit will still be active in individual lives during those last days but not as He works today through God’s people united in worship and service for Christ.

Paul mentions that “the secret power of lawlessness is already at work” (2:7). Satan’s lawless ways are seen in the wicked actions of people and the laws they make to distort God’s truth. Sometimes the suffering and persecution this causes makes us wonder if God really cares or if He is really in control. This is exactly what Satan wants. He wants us to doubt God’s love and His power. But none of Satan’s schemes has a chance against the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. While evil people may appear to succeed and God’s people will suffer at their hands, God is still firmly in control. We can take comfort in God’s sovereignty and rejoice that we serve the God who has already won the final victory.