

**Adult School of Ministry**  
**Summer 2025**  
**Lesson 13 – August 24, 2025**

**Be Informed on Christ's Return**  
**The Christian lives in the assurance of Christ's coming.**

**Scriptures:** (1) 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4; (2) 2 Thessalonians 2:5–8; (3) 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12

**The Lesson Overview:** In the Apostle Paul's second letter to the church at Thessalonica, he addressed the deception of false teachers who were spreading lies and errors concerning the second coming of Christ. The false teaching that Christ's return to earth for His church would be during their generation had caused some of the Thessalonian Christians to be concerned and troubled in their minds and spirits. Paul wrote to ease their troubled hearts by assuring them that although Christ indeed would return one day, specific markers in time would provide some forewarning.

**Historical Background:** In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul referred to "*that man of sin.*" Throughout much of church history, this individual has been associated with the Antichrist, an end-time figure who will seek to be recognized as divine and demand human worship. The term "*antichrist*" is used sparingly in Scripture (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). When it is used, it usually refers to anti-Christian spirits, people, and policies currently at work in the world. Christians operating in the Spirit of Christ will be able to recognize these imposters and refuse to embrace an agenda that will culminate with an end-time deceiver leading many nominal (in-name-only) Christians astray.

**THE LESSON OUTLINE**

1. DO NOT BE DECEIVED - 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4
  - A. Do Not Be Shaken or Troubled (1–2)
  - B. Do Not Be Led Astray (3–4)
2. BEWARE THE SPIRIT OF LAWLESSNESS - 2 Thessalonians 2:5–8
  - A. The Spirit of Lawlessness Currently at Work (5–7)
  - B. Future Destruction of the Man of Sin (8)
3. BELIEVE ONLY THE TRUTH - 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12
  - A. Rejection of God's Truth (9–10)
  - B. God's Rejection of Unbelievers (11–12)

## Discussing The Lesson

### 1. DO NOT BE DECEIVED (2 Thessalonians 2:1–4)

#### A. Do Not Be Shaken or Troubled - 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2

- 1) After describing what will happen to those who refuse to believe in Christ as Savior and Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12),
- 2) Paul turned his attention to additional matters concerning the Day of the Lord (2:1-12).
- 3) The way Paul addressed this reveals the Thessalonian church had questions and concerns about that day.
- 4) Apparently, false teachers and prophets were influencing and troubling the church by convincing some that *“the day of Christ [was] at hand”* (v. 2).
- 5) The false teachers and prophets were evidently teaching that the signs of Christ’s second coming were already taking place, and His return was imminent.
- 6) The basis of this false teaching was a supposed word from the Lord (*“by spirit ... by word”*) and even a forged *“letter”* attributed to Apostle Paul (v. 2).
- 7) Paul’s response to these false teachings and revelations was for the believers in Thessalonica to *“be not ... shaken in mind”* nor *“troubled”* about the imminence of the Day of the Lord (v. 2).
- 8) Paul knew the return of Christ was not at hand because certain signs that would precede His second coming had not yet occurred.
- 9) Unlike the false teachers, Paul’s teaching on this matter was based on the instruction of Jesus Christ to His disciples before His death and resurrection.
- 10) To help alleviate their anxiety, Paul reviewed some of the details he had previously taught the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2).
- 11) The Thessalonian church could and should have peace concerning the Day of the Lord by remembering what they had been taught concerning Christ’s return.
- 12) Paul taught that Christ’s return was not imminent then.

#### B. Do Not Be Led Astray 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4

- 1) In line with his desire that the church at Thessalonica *“not to be quickly unsettled or alarmed”* by false teaching concerning *“the day of the Lord”* (v. 2 Amp.), Paul issued a command for the church to *“let no man deceive [them] by any means”* (v. 3).
- 2) The deception by means of a *“spirit,”* a *“word,”* or a *“letter”* that was attributed to Paul, or *“any [other] means,”* was to be rejected (vv. 2-3).
- 3) False teachers and prophets in Paul’s day often traveled from town to town trying to gain an audience for their financial gain.
- 4) Paul was concerned that these false teachers might lead some, especially new Christians, away from the truth.
- 5) Seeking to provide clarity, Paul first noted that the day of Christ’s coming would be preceded by *“a falling away”* (v. 3)—meaning a significant defection by people claiming to have faith in Jesus Christ.
- 6) This major rebellion against faith in the One true God will be led by the *“man of sin,”* who is also called *“the son of perdition”* (v. 3), indicating he will be doomed to eternal destruction at the command of God.
- 7) The man of sin will exalt himself above false gods and the One true God, demanding worship that is reserved for God alone.
- 8) The description of this individual being seated *“in the temple of God”* (v. 4)—which was still standing in Jerusalem when Paul penned this letter—may have alluded to historical events of the time.
- 9) For example, the Roman emperor Caligula, who claimed to be divine, commanded his image to be set up within the walls of the temple mount around the time Paul wrote this letter.

- 10) The Jewish peasants, however, refused to let this happen, and about a year later, Caligula died without a statue on the mount.
- 11) This was not, however, the specific end-time event Paul was referring to.
- 12) The end-time man of sin will succeed at this in some manner, and by claiming to be a god, he will demand worship. God, however, will not allow this to continue.

## 2. BEWARE THE SPIRIT OF LAWLESSNESS (2 Thessalonians 2:5–8)

### A. The Spirit of Lawlessness Currently at Work - 2 Thessalonians 2:5–7

- 1) Verse 5 is an interjection by Paul in the middle of his teaching about events that must occur before Christ's second coming. In this verse,
- 2) Paul reminded the Christians in Thessalonica that he was writing things he had already taught them in person.
- 3) Nevertheless, he continued to provide further instruction, reminding them of what he had previously taught and correcting any false teachings concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- 4) The misinformation being taught was causing needless anxiety in the church of Thessalonica, which Paul did not want.
- 5) Paul addressed the "*mystery of iniquity*" ("*the mystery of lawlessness*," v. 7 NKJV) that was already at work in the world.
- 6) Paul noted the man of sin was being restrained ("*withholdeth*," v. 6) from coming into the world.
- 7) The Thessalonian church may have understood who or what was holding back this individual until it was time for him to be revealed.
- 8) However, there have been various proposals concerning the restraining force throughout church history—the people of God, the Holy Spirit, the Law, etc.
- 9) We can confidently assert that God, who orchestrates everything according to His divine will, is ultimately responsible for restraining this individual.
- 10) Regardless of the means God is using, this person has not yet been revealed.
- 11) We can be sure, however, that when the time comes for this individual to step forward, the restraining force will be removed so the Day of the Lord will commence as promised.
- 12) The paradox is that this wicked one must appear as part of the scenario for Christ's return.
- 13) Until that day, the "*mystery of iniquity*" is already at work in the world.
- 14) The spirit of lawlessness—the rebellious spirit against God and His church—is already active.
- 15) As Paul previously noted, this rebellious spirit was at work in false teachers who sought to lead the disciples of Christ in Thessalonica away from the Lord (vv. 2-3).
- 16) False teachers and prophets (not necessarily religious figures) attempt to entice and lead others to worship someone or something other than the one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ.
- 17) As the Apostle John warned, the "*spirit of antichrist*" is already at work in the world (1 John 4:3).

### B. Future Destruction of the Man of Sin - 2 Thessalonians 2:8

- 1) In response to the false teaching in Thessalonica that Christ's return was imminent, Paul stressed that this cannot be since "*the man of sin*" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) had yet to be revealed (v. 8).
- 2) However, the man of sin will be revealed before Christ's second coming.
- 3) Paul's language in verse 8 echoes that of Isaiah 11 where the righteous "*Branch*" (v. 1) will "*smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked*" (v. 4).
- 4) The righteous "*Branch*" was understood by Paul and his contemporaries to be a Messianic figure, whom Paul identified as "*the Lord*," Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:8).
- 5) When the Lord returns "*with the brightness of His coming*," the man of sin ("*that Wicked*") will be destroyed "*with the spirit of [Christ's] mouth*."
- 6) Christ's second coming will be one of judgment on His enemies.
- 7) There will be no reprieve for them.

- 8) The verb from the Greek translated *destroyed* means “to render completely powerless.”
- 9) Christ’s judgment will be inevitable and final over all who have continued in rebellion against Him.

### 3. BELIEVE ONLY THE TRUTH (2 Thessalonians 2:9–12)

#### A. Rejection of God’s Truth - 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10

- 1) After stating that Christ will render the man of sin powerless when He returns (v. 8), Paul turned his attention to what will happen to those who believe the false doctrines of this deceiver (vv. 9-10).
  - a. First, Paul addressed the means the man of sin will use to deceive the world;
  - b. Second, he identified the one whom the man of sin serves.
- 2) The means will be “*power and signs and lying wonders*” (v. 9)—counterfeit miracles and displays of power.
- 3) Jesus taught that many false messiahs and prophets would come into the world (Matthew 24:5, 11) and perform “*great signs and wonders*” so great that if it were possible, they would “*deceive*” the people of God (v. 24).
- 4) The one whom the man of sin serves is Satan himself (2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- 5) Paul does not say whether the man of sin knowingly or unknowingly serves Satan.
- 6) Regardless, Satan will be manipulating this man who will carry out his bidding.
- 7) After all, Satan is a “*liar, and the father of it*” (John 8:44).
- 8) Next, Paul described those who will be deceived by the signs and wonders Satan empowers the man of sin to perform.
- 9) Those who fall prey to Satan’s lies are “*them that perish*” (2 Thessalonians 2:10).
- 10) These are people on the road to destruction because they continued to reject “*the love of the truth,*” meaning the Gospel.
- 11) Had they believed the Gospel, they would have been saved.
- 12) But people who reject the truth of God’s Word willingly choose to believe lies, wishing the lies to be true.

#### B. God’s Rejection of Unbelievers - 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

- 1) Paul describes the final ending for all who “*received not the love of the truth*” and instead “*had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (vv. 10, 12).
- 2) These individuals believed the lies of the man of sin, so “*God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie*” (v. 11).
- 3) At first, this may seem to be unfair, but as previously noted, these are individuals who willingly rejected the truth of the Gospel and believed Satan’s lies.
- 4) Paul also wrote about people like this in Romans 1:18-32.
- 5) There, Paul said these people had willfully rejected God’s revelation of Himself in creation, so “*God ... gave them up to uncleanness,*” “*unto vile affections,*” and “*to a reprobate mind*” (vv. 24, 26, 28).
- 6) God will do the same to those who follow the man of sin.
- 7) The result of being given over to this “*strong delusion*” is that they would “*believe [the] lie*” (2 Thessalonians 2:11) and “*be damned*” (v. 12).
- 8) It is a solemn matter to hear the Gospel and stubbornly reject it.
- 9) Proverbs 29:1 says, “*He, that being often reproveth hadeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*”
- 10) Those who find themselves the objects of divine judgment will have no one to blame but themselves. God has given us the opportunity to believe the truth.
- 11) What are we doing with that opportunity?
- 12) Are we walking in the light of His Word?
- 13) We must not be guilty of refusing His message and thereby putting our souls in jeopardy.

### **Call To Discipleship**

People forfeit their joy when, like children, they pursue their own pleasures, which last only for a short season. As Christ's disciples, we seek ultimate satisfaction through faithfulness to Him.

### **Ministry In Action**

Encourage one another with the infinite joy of the Lord awaiting all who endure to the end. We may not know the day or hour of Christ's return, but we should know the times and seasons.

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Lesson 13

### PAUL'S TWO THESSALONIAN COLLEAGUES IN MINISTRY

**Likely as a result of his ministry in Thessalonica**, the Apostle Paul acquired two helpers or colleagues in ministry who were Thessalonians. These two men, Aristarchus and Demas, are not mentioned in the two letters Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, but they are mentioned in some other of Paul's letters.

**The first mention of Aristarchus is not in Paul's writings**, but in the Acts of the Apostles. Aristarchus is identified as a travel companion of Paul, who was present with Paul during a riot against the Christians in Ephesus (19:29). Next, it is told that Aristarchus was one of the Thessalonians who accompanied Paul on his return to Jerusalem after his Third Missionary Journey (20:4; spring AD 58). Then, in Acts 27:2, it is told that Aristarchus was with Paul on his journey to Rome, on the ship that was shipwrecked (vv. 41-44; late fall AD 60).

**In his own letters, Paul said of Aristarchus:** "*Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you*" (Colossians 4:10 NKJV). And, "*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers*" (Philemon 1:23-24 NKJV). When Paul wrote to the Colossians, and to Philemon, in the summer of AD 62, he was living in his own rented house in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30-31), in the protective custody of the Roman government, to keep the Jews from murdering him (see Acts 23:20-30; 25:9-12). It is likely that neither Aristarchus nor Epaphras were, literally, prisoners. But because they were keeping Paul company during his confinement, they were voluntary fellow prisoners with Paul.

**Demas, the other Thessalonian ministry colleague of Paul**, is mentioned in Colossians 4:14 as being present with Paul, and being one of his "*fellow laborers*" (Philemon 1:24) during Paul's two years of confinement at Rome (Acts 28:16, 30-31; AD 61-63). Later, during Paul's final imprisonment at Rome (AD 66-67), Paul wrote to Timothy, "*Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world*" (2 Timothy 4:10 NKJV). Possibly fearing persecution by Nero, and the loss of his life, Demas decided to return home to Thessalonica.

## ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Why should Christians not be “shaken in mind or troubled” regarding Christ’s second coming (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)?
2. How can we intentionally remind ourselves of Christ’s imminent return?
3. Compare the power of the Lord’s words described in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 with Jesus’ statements about His words in John 6:63 and Mark 6:31.
4. What does it mean to “receive the love of the truth,” and why is this vital (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)?
5. List various ways false doctrines causing “strong delusion” (v. 11) are promoted today. How can we know we are following the way of truth?

“Careful reflection on Christ’s return and sustained meditation on what it will mean in that moment and for all eternity has a purifying effect on the soul. It turns sin sour and serves to conform us every more to the image of Jesus himself.”

—Sam Storms