

2 Thessalonians 2
A Continuation of the Study of the Formation
Of the Church

Started February 10, 2007

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2Thes 2:1 “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,
2Thes 2:2 that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.
2Thes 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
2Thes 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”

As Paul told them in 1Thess 5:1, we must not become involved with discussions about when the coming of Jesus will occur. Since we have not been gathered together to Him, it has not come! He says that people may try to tell them that Jesus has already come but they know that is a lie because they are still here! So now we need to just be involved in living a life here to the glory of Jesus and not be concerned about the time of the second coming of Jesus. He does then remind them that are some events that must occur before He comes again and these also have not happened yet. The other two events to which Paul talks are the rebellion and the revealing of the man of destruction. The “rebellion” translates the Greek word “apostasia” from which we get our word “apostasy” and designates an event in which a person who previously had professed a religious belief forsakes that belief. This time of apostasy will be worldwide and of great magnitude as many will leave the true Christian teachings and revert to some religion that opposes Christianity or will be otherwise revealed as people who really never did believe.

1John 2:19 “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.”

Today we see many people refusing to believe and obey the commandments of Jesus and demand a man-centered religion.

1John 2:4 “The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;
1John 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.”

The great apostasy will not even be noticed by many people because they will think that they are being true to some god just as Paul thought that he was serving God before his

conversion. We see many people joining churches that preach god wants everyone to be happy and materially successful. We see other world religions growing and we see churches that demand the worship of God to be totally Biblically based are shrinking. It would then seem that we are seeing a time in which the great apostasy could be not far behind.

Regarding the man of destruction he could be referring to the sermon by Jesus in which He said:

Matt 24:15 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Matt 24:16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains;

Matt 24:17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house;

Matt 24:18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak."

Many attempts have been made by people to try to identify this "man of lawlessness" to someone who already lived like Nero but clearly Paul is referring to someone even yet to come from our perspective. He may probably be identified with the second beast of Revelation 13:11; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. His primary duty seems to be to reside over the great apostasy to lead a political rebellion against God. Certainly no combination of such happenings has yet occurred. We also must at this point remember Paul's admonition of 1 Thess 5:1 so that we do not become entangled in any searches to try to determine the time of these events. Again, Paul admonishes us to be content with working out our sanctification. There will be no doubt among God's people when this man of lawlessness appears for he will be an awesome power in the "new church" as he will be the culmination of Satan's war with God to take away the people into his service. We must all be constantly diligent to not accept all teachings but to always test the teachings with the word of God. We must then be diligent to study His Word.

2Thes 2:5 "Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?"

2Thes 2:6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

2Thes 2:7 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.

I sense a bit of frustration in Paul's writings as he reminds them that he had orally taught them all of this information previously so that they should not be easily led astray by some false teachers. Unlike some modern teachers of "End Times", Paul paid attention to his own wisdom expressed in 1 Thess 5:1, 2:

1Thes 5:1 "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.

1Thes 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."

He did not intend to elaborate on speculation about the “End Times” but he was only reiterating the basics of such times to relieve some anxiety of the people who had listened to some people giving them false information. Peter and John also taught Christians that a proper view of the end times led people not to great speculation about those times but to a life of purification or sanctification.

2Peter 3:11 “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

2Peter 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

2Peter 3:14 ¶ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,”

1John 3:2 “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

1John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

The Holy Spirit was very clear in teaching the children of God to have a proper relational understanding of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We are to look forward to that time but our looking forward to that time should have as a focus the amplification of the sanctification process in our lives.

In verse 6, “what” is a neutral word indicating a force of some sort but in verse 7, “he” is indeed a masculine word for the person involved in restraining the work of lawlessness. Since Paul did not elaborate on the meaning of these words it must be that the people knew from his previous teachings but many people have tried to give many interpretations and have sold a lot of books with their speculations. The “what” must be the work of the Holy Spirit for He involves many secondary supporters such as His direction of the church. Paul changes to the masculine word “He” to specifically tell Who is behind this restraining of evil. Such has been the function of the Holy Spirit throughout time.

Gen 6:3 “Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.””

Acts 7:51 “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”

People selling books on the End Times have used the phrase “**until he is taken out of the way**” to teach that the Holy Spirit will be actually taken away from the world but God in any nature is omnipresent, there is no salvation of people without the work of the Holy Spirit and Scripture teaches that people will be saved during the great tribulation time.

John 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Rev 7:14 "And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

So this maligned verse is just telling us that the Holy Spirit will be removed from His particular work of restraining.

2Thes 2:8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;
2Thes 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,
2Thes 2:10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."

When the restraining work of the Holy Spirit is removed the lawless one will be revealed but Paul is quick to tell us that even the work of this powerful person will be of no consequence to the work of Jesus. Of course people who did not accept the Gospel will be lastingly damaged by the coming work of this lawless one. The appearance of Jesus at his second coming will be enough to put an end to the work of Satan through this powerful person. The appearance of Jesus has always been enough to stop people in their tracks:

Rev 1:17 "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
Rev 1:18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Acts 9:3 "And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;
Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
Acts 9:5 And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,"

His very appearance as the Lion of Judah will immediately stop the work of this lawless man. These verses would have been very comforting to the church at Thessalonica and to us today. God is still in Plan A!!!

2Thes 2:11 "And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,
2Thes 2:12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

“For this reason” refers back to the previous verses concerning those who rejected the truth. God seals the hearts of people to mean that He allows the Adam nature to be complete. It is not that He does not allow anyone who wants to believe to accept the truth but that for those who choose to reject the truth he will give them even more reasons to reject the truth. Paul is clear to state that these people chose their path and that there is no tendency within them to accept the truth.

2Thes 2:13 “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

2Thes 2:14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Thes 2:15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.”

Paul has now reminded them of enough of his teachings about the second coming of Jesus so that he can now offer praises to God for those He has chosen before the foundation of the world. Similarly I give thanks to God for all of you who are reading my humble interpretations. God has chosen you also to be His children and you can also relax knowing that the second coming of Jesus has not yet come. We continue to wait for the perfect time of God for this culmination event. Although there are times when I wish that God would go ahead and allow the end to occur, I am also reminded of people whom I love who have not yet given any indication that they are His chosen people. I continue to pray for those people that they may not be the ones Paul mentions in 2 Thess 2:10. The end for such people will be total and forever and I certainly do not want the power to call the game!

2Thes 2:16 “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,

2Thes 2:17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

AMEN!!!!!!!!!!!!

References

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- 2.) “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 11”, Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 1978.
- 3.) “World Biblical Commentary, 45, 1 & 2 Thessalonians”, F. F. Bruce, Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1982.