

The Second Coming in Thessalonians #7

Probably the most consistent theme of the two books of Thessalonians is the second coming of Christ. So far we have looked at 1 Thess. 1:10, 2:19, 3:12-13, 4:13-18, 5:1-6, 5:23, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, and 2 Thess 2:1-5.

2 Thess. 2:6-12 is the text for today. In verses 1-5, we saw that the man of sin and son of perdition (i.e., the Antichrist) must be revealed before the day of Christ, and we looked at a few of his descriptions, from Dan. 7, 8, and 9, and from Rev. 13 and 19.

What we see in verses 6-12 are these major points:

- Even now there are antichristian spirits and activities in operation, but there is something preventing the Antichrist from being revealed. He cannot be revealed until this restraint is removed.
- When that happens, the Antichrist will reveal himself with mighty but Satanic power and lying miracles that will deceive the unrighteous.
- The reason these people are deceived by the Antichrist is:
 - From their side, because they did not love or believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
 - From God's side, because he sends them strong delusion to believe the Antichrist.

Verses 6-7 – “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

The mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) is already at work. Although it seems apparent to us believers, it has not become obvious to most people.

There is something presently keeping the man of sin from coming out. The old English word “let” meant “to prevent”. Until this hindrance is taken out of the way, the man of sin must remain hidden. So the big question is who or what it is that is preventing it.

It is obviously not an individual man because men die, but the mystery of iniquity and the restraint continues.

It could be the Holy Spirit, but it can hardly be thought that the Holy Spirit would be taken away in any absolute sense, because God is always omnipresent. However, it can be said that the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence in his people could be taken away.

Jn. 7:38-39 – “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”

Obviously the Holy Spirit was active in the earth prior to Pentecost, but it was not until Ac. 2 that he became a living presence in the believers on an ongoing sense. In the OT, the Spirit would temporarily move on people (Samson, Saul, David, etc.) to do specific feats or actions, but it was not until Pentecost that the OT promises of a Holy Spirit indwelling was fulfilled.

Ezek. 36:26-27 (“... a new spirit will I put within you ... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ...”)

Joel 2:28-29 (“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ... And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”) This was quoted in Ac. 2 as an explanation for what was happening.

Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been in the earth in a different way than merely his omnipresence. He is in his people, who have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This living presence in his people is not outwardly visible or audible most of the time, but it still exerts a restraining influence in the world, so much so that it is not appreciated or realized. If and when that influence is removed however (at the rapture), the devil will be allowed to run rampant through the societies of the world, and the time will be ripe for the Antichrist to make his appearance.

Verses 8-9 – “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,”

The man of sin will rise by the power of Satan, and will awe people into following him through power, signs, and lying wonders, and deceit.

Rev. 13:2-4 – “And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war against him?”

Rev. 13:11-15 – There is also another beast that arises, called the false prophet, who does wonders. “... And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”

The Antichrist will eventually be destroyed by Christ, “consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming”.

Dan. 7:11 – “... I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.”

Dan. 8:25 – “... and by peace shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

Rev. 19:20 – “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Verses 10-12 – “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

The unrighteousness of men is what lays them open to being deceived, and so in the end they will perish. People will willingly follow the Antichrist, being deceived, because they had not previously received a love of the truth and been saved. All these people who believed not the truth, and had pleasure in unrighteousness, will be damned.

Because of this, God will actually send them strong delusion that they would believe the Antichrist's lies! This means his judgment against sin is even now, in this life, not just at the final day of judgment. Perhaps this explains why some people believe the wacky things they do, and why they engage in such self-destructive behaviors – God gives them up to a reprobate mind. Rom. 1:21, 24, 26, 28

So the warning to us is quite clear:

- **Believe the truth** of the gospel, and then act on it by being converted (saved, born again, regenerated).
- **Love the truth**, and obey it. Seek it out in the Bible and in private prayer, and in holy fellowship with other saints.
- **Have no pleasure in unrighteousness**. Flee fornication. Guard your mind and do not let evil things in. Fill your mind with good things. Phl. 4:8

Summary of this series of teachings

1 Thess. 1:10 – We are to be actively and consciously waiting for Christ's return

1 Thess. 2:19 – There will be special blessings, and even crowns, to faithful ministers who will stand before Christ at his coming, in the presence of those they have ministered to in this life.

1 Thess. 3:12-13 – We are to increase in love for one another, and to have hearts unblameable in holiness, so that we can stand in confidence with Christ at his coming. Also, when the Lord comes, it will be “with all his saints” (as well as with all his angels). This is evidence not only of a resurrection of dead saints, but also of the rapture of living saints, before his return in judgment.

1 Thess. 4:13-18 – Those who are still alive will not “go before” those who have died in the Lord. There will be a resurrection of the dead saints, and a rapture (change) of the living, when Christ comes with a mighty shout and trumpet call to meet us in the air, and to receive us to himself. We (dead and alive) will receive new and glorified bodies, like his.

1 Thess. 5:1-6 – The “day of the Lord” is a phrase that is used not just here but a great many times in the OT prophets, to describe the great and cataclysmic events when God arises to bring swift, massive, and deadly judgment upon the earth and the sinners who have rejected him and his Christ. That day will come as a thief in the night (it will catch the world unsuspecting), but we are not in such darkness. Even though we do not know the day of hour, we know it is coming, and are to take measures to prepare for it, by watching, praying, and not being overtaken by carelessness.

1 Thess. 5:23 – God has given complete salvation (spirit, soul, and body) through Jesus' Blood on the cross, and we need to make sure we keep ourselves clean and holy, spirit, soul, and body till he comes. From God's side, he is preserving us, and from our side we are to walk in holiness and clean living.

2 Thess. 1:7-10 – God provides rest for his persecuted saints, but there is coming a day when Christ will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and obey the gospel.

2 Thess 2:1-12 – In contrast with the imminent rapture (meaning it could happen at any time), we should not be troubled in thinking that the day of Christ in fiery and bloody judgment is imminent. There are some things that must happen first -a great apostasy, the catching away of the saints (rapture) which makes way for the revelation of the Antichrist, the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem with the reinstitution of temple worship, and the rise and tyrannical world rule of the Antichrist receiving worship as if he were God. At his coming, Christ will defeat the Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire (Gehenna, Hell) for eternal punishment.