

The Second Coming in Thessalonians #6: Apostasy and the Antichrist

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, and then 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

2 Thess. 2:1-12 is the text for today.

It is obvious that there was confusion and concern in Thessalonica concerning the day of the Lord. They apparently were hearing different things, so Paul is clarifying the matter. Even today there is confusion, either from ignorance of the Word, or because there is still a wide divergence of interpretations and opinions. What we believe must be gotten from the Bible, and we should be able to logically defend our position from scripture alone. If people do not agree on the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture, or they think we are to allegorize even the plain statements of scripture, then it is no surprise that we will disagree on specifics. The return of Christ is one of the fundamentals of the faith.

Verse 1-2 - “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”

It is apparent that this passage is referring to “the day of the LORD” as his coming in judgment, as opposed to the rapture, where he takes up his people “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:51-52 and 1 Thess. 4:14-18). That alone can cause confusion, because with the rapture, we have many warnings to watch and pray, and not to be caught sleeping and unprepared, yet here he is saying that the day of Christ is not imminent, that certain definite things must happen first.

Verse 3-5 – “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”

The day of Christ (Rev, 19, 2 P. 3:10-12, etc.) will not come until certain things happen:

1. There will be a falling away first.

In the Greek it says “the apostasy” will be first. “Apostasy” is more than backsliding or lukewarmness. It is a total desertion or renunciation of the faith. There have always been apostates, but this is not occasional apostasy, but “the” apostasy, on a much greater extent than normal. Not onesy-twosy apostasies, but apostasy on a grand scale. They may not depart from religion in general, but certainly from the true faith, and want nothing to do with it.

Apostasy is used to describe believers who fall away. Someone who has never been saved can not be an apostate, because they have nothing to fall away from – they are simply unbelievers.

1 Tim. 4:1 – “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;”

2 Tim. 4:3-4 – “... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Some people apostasize over the LGBT-XYZ issue, and end up finding a “church” that encourages homosexual marriage and ministers. They often accuse us of “hate”, just for not acquiescing, or celebrating their blasphemies and degenerate perversions.

So it appears that apostasy can result from seducing spirits, from evil doctrines, and a desire to believe things that are not controversial.

Our warning is in Heb. 3:12-13 – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

2. The man of sin (Antichrist) must be revealed.

The Antichrist is described under many names in the Bible, but here is called “the man of sin” and “the son of perdition”. Perdition means the utter ruin of final damnation. That is to say, he is the very essence of sin, the epitome of sin, a man totally and supremely dedicated to Satan, and utterly opposed to God and to God’s people (Jews and Christians).

He is not only the enemy of God, but exalts himself to receive worship, as if he is in fact God. He will take up a place in the temple, which is rightfully God’s alone.

What are just a few of the other things we can know about the Antichrist?

1. He is called “the little horn” in Dan. 7, a king arising amongst a group of 10 kings, and who somehow removes three of them as he comes to power (7:7-8, 24). His “look was more stout than his fellows”, and had a mouth speaking very great things (7:8, 20).

He makes war with the saints, and overcomes them (7:21). He speaks great words against the most High, and thinks to change times and laws. This will continue for 3 ½ years (7:25).

Despite his rebellion, he will be slain by Christ at his coming, and his body destroyed by the burning flame (7:11, and Rev. 19:20, where he and his false prophet are cast into the lake of fire, also called Gehenna).

2. He is also called a little horn in Dan. 8, who advances on the holy land, “casts down and stamps” on some of the host of heaven and stars (?), and magnifies himself. He does away with the daily sacrifice (presuming a rebuilt temple), and casts down the place of God’s sanctuary. He casts truth down to the ground (8:12) and seems to succeed in all his evil deeds, treading down and defiling the sanctuary for 3 ½ years (1260 days), after which the sanctuary will be cleansed (8:11-14).

He is also called a “king of fierce countenance”, of evil wisdom and great power, but the power is “not his own” (8:23-24) - he is empowered by Satan. He is extremely destructive, especially against “the mighty and the holy people” (8:24). He causes craft to prosper by his policies, magnifies himself in his heart, and “by peace shall destroy many”. And again, although he stands against the Prince of princes (Christ), “he shall be broken without hand” (8:25 – by the sword of Christ’s mouth, Rev. 19:15?).

3. In Dan. 9:24-27 he is “the prince that shall come”, who destroys the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary. He will confirm a covenant with many for one week (7 years), but in the middle (3 ½ years) he causes the sacrifices to cease, and becomes the “abomination of desolation” in the temple for the remaining 3 ½ years
4. Rev. 13 reiterates much of what Daniel saw concerning this man (one of ten kings, great mouth speaking blasphemies, allowed to continue 3 ½ years, makes war against the saints and overcomes them). It also adds that he apparently and miraculously survives an assassination, that he is given world-wide power, and is worshipped by all except the saints, and is referred to as “the beast”.

He is accompanied by a “false prophet” who does wonders, causing the world to worship him. All must receive his mark just to be able to buy or sell. The number of his name is “666”.

5. In Rev. 19:19-21, the Antichrist and all the kings and armies of earth are gathered together to make war against Christ and his heavenly army, but he is utterly defeated and cast alive into the lake of fire.

6. There must be a temple (rebuilt).

This is the plain implication of the statement that the Antichrist will sit in the temple as God. This obviously cannot happen if there is no temple. I believe that certain Jews are even now preparing for the building of a new temple, and the resumption of temple worship. With modern building and design techniques, a new temple could be built quite quickly, compared to the ancient temples.