

Message 9: God has a Plan, and it is Jesus

11.22.2020

2 Thessalonians 2:1–17 (CSB)

THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS

2 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, ²not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord has come. ³Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's temple, proclaiming that he himself is God.

⁵Don't you remember that when I was still with you I used to tell you about this? ⁶And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one now restraining will do so until he is out of the way, ⁸and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will bring him to nothing at the appearance of his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working, with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders serving the lie, ¹⁰and with every wicked deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved. ¹¹For this reason God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe the lie, ¹²so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but delighted in unrighteousness.

¹³But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by what we said or what we wrote.

¹⁶May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace, ¹⁷encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and word.

Introduction: Oh, No, I missed it.

A. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul taught regarding the Day of the Lord.

1. Sometime in between that letter and the second, some in Thessalonica had been convinced that they had missed it.
2. They had missed Jesus' coming.
3. They had missed the Parousia, and the suffering they were experiencing wasn't just ordinary suffering: it was the wrath of God.
4. And if Paul was right, that believers were not to experience God's wrath, then they must have missed it.
5. Hope was fading fast and despair and deception was setting in.

B. Paul had heard that the believers were upset and troubled.

1. The Greek here refers to being shaken or unsettled.
2. Some false teachers and prophets had shaken them in their understandings and beliefs and left them unsettled.
 - a. When you leave the firm foundation of truth, you will find yourself unsettled.
 - b. The unsettled believer will default to fear instead of faith.
 - c. Despair instead of hope.
 - d. The unsettled believer will then view prophecy and Jesus' coming as something to dread instead of something to hope for.

C. This unsettling and shaking serves as the basis for Paul's corrective teaching here in 2 Thess 2.

1. We live in a climate where many people are claiming and prophesying a word from God.
2. Not all Words proclaimed in the name of the Lord are from God.
3. Believers must discern the Word, the Spirit, and the Tone of the prophecy to make sure it is from God.
4. Today, we are going to look at Paul's advice and insight regarding Jesus' coming and some end-time events.

1. Thessalonica was experiencing Prophetic Paranoia.

A. True, real, prophecy does not always contain good news.

1. But if you will examine most of the prophecy in Scripture (and ¼ of the Bible was prophetic at the time of its writing) most of it had a redemptive purpose.
2. When God spoke through prophets or gave a word, much of prophecy either encouraged the sinful to repent or for the Saints to endure.
3. Therefore, **God's prophecy does not incite fear in the believer, but incites faith, hope, trust, and repentance.**
 - a. Repeatedly, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians "Encourage one-another with these words".
 - b. The message that Jesus was coming soon, with judgment in hand, was a message that brought hope not despair to the believers.
4. But these prophets had sown confusion which led people to question, doubt, and despair.
5. They were obviously not from God.

B. **Let me bring this to our day:** We have the mandate to not despise prophecies. But we don't accept all of them either.

1. We are to desire the real Word of God.
2. When we crave the genuine, we will not tolerate the fake.
3. When we crave truth, anything short will make us sick to our stomachs.
 - a. Just because someone says, "God told me" it doesn't mean that God did.
 - b. As believers we have a responsibility to Try them.
 - c. Test them.
 - d. Ask: Are they a person of honor and integrity?
 - e. Do they have a history of loving and serving the Lord?
4. It is possible for the Word to be right and the prophet to be wrong. Like Balaam.
5. But in this day of Spirit filled and Spirit led people, God isn't using Donkey's anymore he is using people.

C. We must keep in mind that God desires to speak to us through His written Word and also through the Spirit, which includes prophecy.

1. As the Lord desires to speak to His people through His written Word and His prophetic Word, *we have to anticipate the counterfeiting of the genuine.*
2. Did you know that the devil can do miracles, signs and wonders?
3. Paul said he could in 2 Thess. 2:9.

⁹The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working, with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders serving the lie, ¹⁰and with every wicked deception among those who are perishing.

- a. We know the Beast and False-Prophet of Revelation will be given power to do miracles.
- b. The presence of the miraculous is not proof of God's blessing.

3. Jesus said there were those who did miracles in God's name and yet God does not know them (or recognize them). "Depart from me, I never knew you..."

D. Don't be looking for miracles as the only evidence of God's provision, power, and presence.

1. If you are only looking for a sign, you will open yourself up to deception.

2. Humanity as an intense desire and fascination for supernatural things.

a. And the Enemy will prey on this desire and fascination by offering up counterfeit signs.

b. They will look real and they won't be smoke and mirrors.

c. They will have the appearance of being divinely ordained.

d. They will have the characteristics of the genuine and of the holy but there will be no truth to them.

3. Just because there is evidence, it doesn't mean there is truth.

a. People are accused of crimes all the time with real evidence that is not truthful.

b. If you have ever watched shows like Pawn Stars, American Pickers, or Antique Roadshows, they are all the time being presented with things that appear to be genuine and real. They have great stories and testimonies.

c. But then they ask for proof of authenticity. Or they call in an expert who says that what is in front of them is not what it seems.

4. Folks, we are in danger of participating in false signs, false wonders, and false miracles because we have never tasted the genuine.

- a. Our Spirit knows what is real. Our Spirit know its creator.
- b. Just because someone's selling it doesn't mean you have to buy it!!!
- c. Do not be deceived!!!

2. The Man of Lawlessness.

A. What we know about this person or figure:

1. His appearance is connected with the great apostasy and lawlessness.
2. His appearance is before Jesus' Second Coming.
3. He is doomed to destruction which happens at Jesus' Second Coming.
4. The Man of Lawlessness exalts himself against EVERY God, and opposes EVERY religion except the worship of himself.
 - a. Years past, when people were scared of Islam, I heard some saying that Islam was the religion of the anti-Christ.
 - b. Absolutely not, because the Man of Lawlessness will allow worship of no one except himself and the religion of his making.
 - c. This is clear here and in Revelation.
5. Lastly, we know that he is presently restrained, waiting to be revealed and released in the right time. And the right time is always God's time. Vs. 6

B. Our understanding of this Man, and that what restrains him, is because Paul had taught about him in person to the Thessalonians and didn't include all of the information in writing.

1. He even said in verse 5 "Don't you remember what I taught you about him?"

2. Paul is frustrated they had been taught by him and was still led astray by false prophets.
3. As students of Scripture, we must confess that we don't know all of the details because Paul didn't include them all.
4. Even the Church Father, St. Augustine, wrote that he did not know what Paul meant.

C. What we do know is that the appearance of the Lawless Man was prophesied as far back as Daniel:

1. Daniel 11:36–37 (CSB)

³⁶“Then the king will do whatever he wants. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and he will say outrageous things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, because what has been decreed will be accomplished. ³⁷He will not show regard for the gods of his ancestors, the god desired by women, or for any other god, because he will magnify himself above all.

2. I remind you that nothing that happens in the future will catch God by surprise.

3. The Man of Lawlessness is, ultimately, a man of false-salvation.

A. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9 the word *Parousia* is used for the arrival of the man of lawlessness.

1. This is the same word used to describe Jesus' coming.
2. But the difference is that Man of Lawlessness has a false-coming.
3. "this is nothing less than the "anti-Parousia" of the Antichrist, an evil parody of the true coming of the genuine Christ, the Lord Jesus.¹

¹ Michael Holmes, [*1 and 2 Thessalonians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 235.

4. There is nothing of God's that Satan won't try to counterfeit, even the Parousia or coming of Christ.

5. Even Jesus warned: Mark 13:21–23 (CSB)

²¹“Then if anyone tells you, ‘See, here is the Messiah! See, there!’ do not believe it. ²²For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³And you must watch! I have told you everything in advance.

B. But God has a plan, and it does not involve the ultimate victory of the Man of Lawlessness.

1. Paul says that The Lord will destroy him with a Word from His mouth.

2. (vs. 8. And this will happen at “the appearance of his coming”) CSB.

3. The word for appearance in verse 8 can mean appearance but also glorious.

a. The word for coming is “parousia”.

b. *So you have two words, both meaning appearing stacked on top of each other. What this does is add incredible emphasis.*

4. So Jesus isn't only coming (because even this false-Christ has a parousia) but Jesus' coming is a Glorious Coming.

a. A Glorious Arrival.

b. An arrival without comparison.

c. Jesus' arrival will not be stopped, thwarted, or interrupted.

d. It is a glorious coming.

C. Satan can mimic, counterfeit, deceive, and disrupt. But he can't win.

1. Satan's best will never be enough to turn the tide and defeat God.

a. He can only do what God permits.

b. When will this Man of Lawlessness be revealed? God knows.

c. Who is it? God knows.

2. More than likely, the vision John had in Revelation 13 relates to Paul's teaching here in 2 Thessalonians.

3. It describes in further detail about the enemy's ability to deceive and mock and mimic God.

4. **Let me read this to you to give you as complete a picture as I can.** I'm fixing to mess up most of our understanding and theology so if you get offended, take it to Jesus.

Revelation 13:5–18 (CSB)

⁵The beast was given a mouth to utter boasts and blasphemies. It was allowed to exercise authority⁷ for forty-two months. ⁶It began to speak blasphemies against God: to blaspheme his name and his dwelling—those who dwell in heaven. ⁷**And it was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them. It was also given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation.** ⁸All those who live on the earth will worship it, everyone whose name was not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slaughtered.⁹

⁹If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.

¹⁰If anyone is to be taken captive,

into captivity he goes.

If anyone is to be killed with a sword,

with a sword he will be killed.

This calls for endurance and faithfulness from the saints.

THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH

¹¹Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. ¹²It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf and compels the earth and those who live on it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. ¹³*It also performs great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in front of people.* ¹⁴**It deceives** those who live on the earth because of the signs that it is permitted to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who live on the earth to make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵It was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could both speak and cause whoever would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶And it makes everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, ¹⁷so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark: the beast's name or the number of its name.

¹⁸This calls for wisdom: Let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, because it is the number of a person. Its number is 666.

Let me say something hard but necessary: **(READ ALL OF THIS)**

D. **In the last days, the devil will play on your ignorance and your fear in order to deceive you.**

1. *There are many well-intentioned prophets who, in the course of ministry, will get the interpretation wrong.*
2. *They will have the right word, but wrong application.*
3. But there are also false-prophets whose goal is to deceive you and cause you to fall away.
4. And your ignorance and your fear are the greatest tools in their toolbox.
 - a. The most crooked salesmen use tactics of fear, missed opportunities, and confusion to sell you something you don't need.

b. How much more does the enemy of your soul desire to deceive you by false signs, wonders, and prophecies!

E. **Outside of ignorance, the next great tool of deception is distraction.**

1. When people find themselves spending more time learning about the anti-Christ or man of lawlessness instead of learning about Jesus, you are distracted.
2. If you are more concerned about how God plans to unfold the Last Days, instead of focusing upon being present with God, you are distracted.
3. Jesus' Second Coming is not predicated upon our figuring this out.
4. Do not be distracted, because distracted believers are not faithful believers.

Conclusion: Through it all, Our interest must remain on Christ

A. Let me share with you an article, written in 1933, by a evangelical leader named Arno Gaebelein and then some brief comments from a fellow writer:

Keep the focus on Jesus! In 1933, as the storm clouds of war gathered and speculation about Antichrist rose accordingly, Arno Gaebelein, the noted evangelical leader and editor of *Our Hope* magazine, wrote:

The Editor has no use for day-and-year-setters, nor has he any use for figuring out the duration of the times of the Gentiles, nor has he any sympathy with men who prophesy that Mussolini, Hitler, Feisal or any other person is the Antichrist. It is a morbid condition which seems to suit certain minds. We wonder whom they will name next. At any rate why should a Christian have any interest at all in that coming man of sin? We have nothing to do with that lawless one. Our interest must be in Christ and not in Antichrist.

Today, decades later, at a time when interest in and speculation about Antichrist is, if anything, even more intense—a time when well-known Christian leaders are writing novels whose main

character is Antichrist—Gaebelein’s words are no less timely, especially his final sentence: “*Our interest must be in Christ and not in Antichrist.*”²

B. I remind you, just like my commentary writer said, that the main character is NEVER Antichrist.

1. The Man of Lawlessness possess the stage for just a moment, and then is swept aside by Jesus’ appearance.
2. AntiChrist is not the main character of Revelation or Scripture, and he should NEVER be your focus or the main character of your study or your story.

C. I end today with Revelation 14:1.

1. If you remember, Revelation 13 that we read is all about the beast, and the mark of the beast and all of that (BTW, I’m going to blow your minds with some insight on the mark of the beast when we resume our Exodus series in 2021).
2. But, right after, we are told about the Mark and to understand it for what it is, we find Revelation 14:1.
3. Rev. 14:1a “**Then I looked, and there was the Lamb...**”

D. The Appearance of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is all that matters.

1. His arrival will set right every wrong, and fix every justice.
2. He will reward those who loved him, and as we read in 2 Thess. 1-2, will send others to eternal destruction.

E. For you and I, no matter what we are facing, we need to have a vision of Jesus.

1. If He is not your focus, you will be deceived.
2. You see what you are looking for.

² Michael Holmes, [*1 and 2 Thessalonians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 244.

3. So many people are looking for Antichrist, and seeing him everywhere, and missing the Vision of Jesus.

4. Let us all take a moment and see Jesus and worship Him.