

Message #8**II Thessalonians 2:7-12**

It is very obvious from this second chapter of II Thessalonians that Paul wants the church very precise in its understanding of Biblical prophecy. He wants the church to know that it was not in the Tribulation but will be raptured before the Tribulation, which is the first part of the time frame known as “the day of the Lord.” Paul was so intent on the church understanding this point that he carefully spelled out three events of the Great Tribulation that proved that the church was not in it:

Proof Event #1 - There had not been a worldwide revolt against Jesus Christ or an anti-God campaign. **2:3a**

Proof Event #2 - There had not been the surfacing of the specific evil lawless man. **2:3b-4**

Proof Event #3 - There had not been the restraining removal of the Holy Spirit. **2:6-7**

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know these facts because these facts proved they were not in the Tribulation.

Now in **verses 7-12**, Paul gives more factual prophetic data that is designed to further help cement this in this Thessalonian church.

THE KEY TO HAVING STABILITY AND SECURITY IN OUR FAITH IS TO PRECISELY UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE PRESENT PROGRAM OF GOD AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE PROGRAM OF GOD.

There are three more specific prophetic realities that Paul wanted these Thessalonians to consider:

REALITY #1 – The mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but not at the level of the Tribulation magnitude. **2:7**

Now a Biblical mystery is different from what we think of as a mystery. There are no mysteries when it comes to God, for He knows all, sees all and is sovereign over all. A mystery in Scripture is something God has not chosen to reveal until a certain moment. A mystery in Scripture is something God has not previously revealed until a certain moment of time. A revealed mystery is God deciding to reveal to His people something they did not previously know. The mystery here that is revealed is the fact that there is a Spirit of lawlessness at work, but the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit prevents it from busting loose at the level it will in the Tribulation. When the Spirit is removed, lawlessness will go to a whole other level.

There is no question that there is a spirit of lawlessness that is at work. This is true in every realm of law. There is a spirit of lawlessness at work in the arena of civil law, moral law and of course God’s law. There is a spirit of lawlessness that is against God and His Word.

We have seen this spirit at work in many ways. For example, we have certainly seen this in the development of the music of the world. Back in the 1950's a popular music developed here in the United States that was given the name "rock and roll." It was a music that centered around an electric guitar, bass guitar and drums. Most of the music was written in a basic 4/4 time. The golden age of this music was the late 60's and early 70's. Although most of the music did not promote things consistent with Biblical truth, the songs were basically innocent ballads and love songs. But as time went forward into the late 70's to 80's, the music started to deteriorate into a new evil. New genres emerged called progressive rock, heavy metal rock and punk rock. By the time we reached the 90's, there was a new form called grunge rock and from there it deteriorated more to rap rock and rap metal rock. The music became progressively worse and the subcultures that embraced this music were given over to a social and political lawlessness, Satanism and drug addiction. So it is clear that there is a spirit of lawlessness that has escalated. One more thing, I believe that the bringing of electric guitars, bass guitars and drums into the church to play a form of rock music in churches is an escalation of this spirit of lawlessness that truly does indicate this Church Age is just about over.

Another area where this spirit of lawlessness may be seen is in Television. The old TV programs like Father Knows Best, Andy Griffith, I Love Lucy, Dick Van Dyke, Roy Rogers, The Lone Ranger, Bonanza and Gunsmoke were good wholesome programs that featured decency and morals. They featured right and wrong and justice. Not today. We have many channels available to us today and sometimes things are so bad on all of these channels that we cannot watch any of them. We even have a channel that is designed to tell stories of rapists and murderers who get caught and this channel runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When I was a boy growing up, we loved to watch baseball games and I still do. But I never remember seeing players walk off a field cursing and swearing like Justin Verloser or Miguel Cabrera. Now we show it on TV.

There is no question there is a spirit of lawlessness that is presently at work in our world. We have seen it in our lifetimes.

However, as bad as one may think it is, it does not begin to compare to the time when the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the world at the Rapture of the Church. The Holy Spirit indwells believers today and when the Church is raptured, the restraining ministry that is in the world today because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in people's lives will be removed. The Holy Spirit will not be working the same way He did in the Church Age.

Dr. John Walvoord wrote: "There is little evidence that believers will be indwelt by the Spirit during the Tribulation. The possibility of a universal indwelling of all believers in the Tribulation is opposed by the revelation of 2 Thessalonians 2:7, that the one restraining the world from sin, i.e., the Holy Spirit, will be 'taken out of the way' during the Tribulation. Unrestrained evil characterizes the Tribulation, though the lack of restraint is not total (cf. Rev. 7:2; 12:6, 14-16). The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the saints in itself would contribute to the restraint of sin, and it, therefore, is taken away" (*The Holy Spirit*, pp. 151, 230).

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to realize that it is true there is much evil and sin in this world, but it is nothing compared to the time of the Tribulation when God will pull His Spirit's restraining ministry out of this world and let evil dominate in every way, shape and form.

An actual description of what the world will be like is found in **Revelation 9:20**, which says that the entire world and everyone in the world will be given over to evil works like "demon worship, idolatry, murder, sorcery, immorality and thievery." This will be a terrible time in world history, which will feature a worldwide anti-God, anti-Bible lifestyle the likes of which has never been seen. The Church will be gone and not here to see it or experience it.

REALITY #2 – The man of lawlessness will be revealed and destroyed after the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit has been removed. **2:8-10**

The Antichrist will not be revealed until after the Rapture of the Church. Now Paul is very clear to point out that this man of sin who leads the world in a lawless revolt against God and His Word and His people, will not surface until the Church has been raptured. This man is obviously a key figure of the prophetic program of God.

Now there are three key facts that Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know about the Antichrist:

Fact #1 - The Antichrist will be destroyed by the Word of Jesus Christ at His second coming. **2:8**

Daniel is very specific to point out that he will reign over the world for 3 ½ years and then will be completely destroyed by Jesus Christ (Dan. 7:25-26). Daniel also predicts that no human will be able to destroy him (Dan. 8:25). During the Tribulation, murder is rampant so killing or assassinating a political leader would be nothing. It probably would not even be considered to be wrong by the majority of people. However, no human agency will be able to drop this man. Jesus Christ Himself will do it.

The Apostle John gives us more data about this in that he says that when Jesus Christ comes at the end of the Tribulation, He will literally cast this Antichrist's body and all into the "lake of fire which burns with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20).

Now the Greek in **II Thessalonians 2:8** uses two specific articles before the words "appearance" and "coming." So what this means is that this refers to a very specific coming of Jesus Christ. This is the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is not the Rapture, in which all believers are gathered together to meet Christ in the air, this is the actual moment when Jesus Christ comes back to earth a second time and puts His feet on the ground of this world.

What Paul wanted these Thessalonians to understand is that at the second coming of Jesus Christ, He will literally speak the Antichrist into hell. He will simply pronounce this judgment on him and into hell he will go.

Fact #2 - The Antichrist will be a Satanic man with Satanic power. **2:9**

The Antichrist will have Satanic power to be able to perform signs and false wonders. His coming and his works are in total harmony with Satanic purposes. He will be a Satanic instrument who will be able to perform miraculous things that are Satanically supernatural and spectacular.

The signs will point to the fact that he is the Satanic man and the wonders will leave the world standing in awe of the miraculous things he can do.

In fact, the entire world will say, “who is like the beast?” (Rev.13:4). The implication of this is that this world has never seen anything like him or anything like the things he can do.

Fact #3 - The Antichrist will deceive the world not to salvation but to eternal condemnation. **2:10**

Through this spectacular Satanic display of power, the Antichrist will so deceive the world that most of the people in the world will take his mark either on their right hand or forehead (Rev. 13:16). This will so link the people with the Antichrist that this guarantees they will go to hell and burn forever and ever (Rev. 19:20). The language is that they will be cast into “the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.”

The Antichrist will promote a Satanic message contrary to a salvation message of grace and truth. In other words, the Antichrist will use his Satanic power to promote a Satanic message that will end up sending people to hell.

Since he can perform amazing miracles, the people of the world will believe him. They will love him and follow him all the way into hell. They will not believe the 144,000 Jewish missionaries who are proclaiming truth about Jesus Christ during the Tribulation (i.e. Rev. 7:1-8).

REALITY #3 – God will send a deluding influence upon all unbelievers. **2:11-12**

At the present time, God is using His Word and His Spirit to draw unbelievers to Himself. There will be many people saved during the Tribulation, especially in the first part of it, but proportionately speaking it will be a small number compared to the population of the world.

When the Antichrist is on the scene, the primary ministry of God will not be convicting people to believe, but blinding people so they cannot believe.

Now there have been many who believe that **verse 12** refers to all who heard the grace Gospel during the Grace Age before the Rapture. It is clear from **verse 10** that those who are deluded did hear salvation truth at some point. The reason why God will cause this delusion to come upon them is because they refused to believe truth and be saved. Some have taken the position that if a person heard the Gospel before the Rapture; they cannot be saved after the Rapture because God will cause them to not be able to be saved.

Since it was easy to believe in Christ during the age of grace, those who heard but didn't sure won't believe in the Tribulation when most of those who do believe are being killed. **However, it is always best to let the verse stay in the context.** The context is the Tribulation and the revealing of the Antichrist. During the Tribulation, 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be proclaiming the truth that Jesus Christ will return and establish His kingdom and during the first part of the Tribulation, many will believe shortly after the Rapture and be saved. Most of them will be martyred (Rev. 6:9-10). This is why 144,000 must be sealed. Remember, after the Rapture, lawlessness elevates to a whole new level. Murder is nothing. Killing anyone who believes will not be viewed as something wrong.

However, if by the time the Antichrist arrives and starts performing his Satanic miracles and signs and wonders, the people who have not believed will not be able to believe because God will send a deluding judgment upon them so that they cannot believe.

These people will have seen the Tribulation judgments and yet still love pleasure and still love wickedness, so God will send a deluding spirit so that they will believe all the lies of the Antichrist.

There is a critical Biblical principle that is absolutely true and it is always at work: when a person hears the truth and refuses to accept the truth and respond to the truth, God can and will allow that person to be led into error.

Most people who are in false religions or who believe false things do so because at some point when they were confronted with the Truth, they said no. Many of us have personally shared the truth about Jesus Christ with people who are caught up in cults such as Jehovah's Witness, Mormons and even Muslims. When they hear the truth and reject the truth, what they don't realize is God may delude their minds so that they cannot respond to truth, in which case they will end up in hell.

At the point when God sends this deluding spirit guaranteeing that people will believe a lie and not the truth, the Antichrist is dominating the world.

Paul wanted this Thessalonian church to understand all of this prophetic truth. He wanted them to carefully know exactly how the future was to go down. Precise knowledge of God's Word is the key to stability.

Some have wondered if Paul simply wanted the church to know they will be raptured and are not going into the Day of the Lord or Tribulation, why did he not just say that, instead of taking the time to unravel all of these chronological, eschatological events.

First, he did start off this whole section by saying they were not in the Day of the Lord (3:2). He did tell them that the Day of the Lord had not come. He did specifically teach them in his first letter about the pre-Tribulation Rapture in I Thessalonians 4, which occurs before the Day of the Lord in I Thessalonians 5.

Apparently, Paul knew that proper precise knowledge of the events pertaining to the Tribulation would prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that they were not in the Tribulation and were not going into it ever.

It is true there has always been a lawless spirit at work in the world during the Church Age, but it is nothing like it will be in the Tribulation.

This passage teaches many things:

- 1) People need to believe in Jesus Christ to be saved and they need to hear this message and we are responsible to tell them.
- 2) People need to realize that this age of grace is the best time for them to believe in Jesus Christ because when this age is over, things will become horrible.
- 3) It is a very serious thing to see truth, hear truth and reject truth because God may permit that person to be deluded for the rest of his or her life.
- 4) God's people need to know that we will have some trouble in this world, but we will never go into the Day of the Lord or experience the judgments of The Great Tribulation.
- 5) God's people need to know that we are looking for the Rapture and when the final person in the Grace Age believes on Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ will come and we will be caught up in the air to meet Him.

Here is the key question to ask—Have you really trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Have you ever acknowledged to God that you are placing all of your faith in Jesus Christ to save you?