

Home Group Helps

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Living in the Light of His Return: The Return of the King – Part 2

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you 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. 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, 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. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. 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. 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; ⁹ *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 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. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 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. ¹⁴ And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 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. 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, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

I. Confusion Regarding the Day of the Lord (v.1-2)

II. What Signs Precede the Day of the Lord? (v.3-4)

1. The apostasy comes first (v.3a)

2. The man of lawlessness is revealed (v.3b-4)

III. What Restrains the Day of the Lord? (v.5-7)

1. Launching Question(s):

- What do you most look forward to at Christ's return?

2. Observation Question(s):

- What confuses you the most about the events involved with the return of Christ?

3. Interpretation Question(s):

- The second great sign that must precede the Day of the Lord is, "the man of lawlessness is revealed." The Apostle John tells us in 1 John 2:18, "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour."

- So, this “man of lawlessness” is the final, ultimate anti-Christ who is to come just prior to the return of Christ.
- What are some examples of previous “anti-Christ” and how might their actions serve to inform us of the operations of the future anti-Christ to come?
- The sermon included various views of “what” and “who” might be the force that now restrains the Anti-Christ from appearing. These views are as follows:
 1. God or The Holy Spirit
 2. The Church & The Spreading of the Gospel
 3. Michael the Archangel
 4. Human Law Codes and Government
- Ponder the pros and cons of each of these views.

4. Reflection Question(s):

- There are four primary ways of viewing Eschatology (the doctrine of the end times). They include the following:
 1. Preterist
 2. Historicist
 3. Futurist
 4. Idealist
- What is your view? See below for a description of each.

5. Application Question(s):

- What might you do this week to better prepare for the coming of the Lord?

April 30th, AD 2023

Summary of Eschatological Views

According to Rick Phillips, when it comes to interpreting Christ’s signs, there are four general approaches that people take:

“One approach is called **preterism**, which comes from the Latin word *praeter*, meaning “past.” Under this view, virtually all the prophecies made by Jesus and the apostles were fulfilled in the first-century persecutions of the Roman emperor Nero (A.D. 64) and the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The strength of preterism is in noting the important ways in which some New Testament eschatology is rooted in first-century history, along with the reality that many New Testament prophecies do have events such as the fall of Jerusalem in mind.

A second approach to eschatology is the **historicist** approach, which notes that the apostles saw the signs of the end as characterizing the entire period between Christ’s first and second comings. Paul warned Timothy that “in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (2 Tim. 3:1). Then he described the very troubles facing Timothy’s church and common to our churches as well. Moreover, the apostle John explicitly took a historicist view when he wrote: “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come” (1 John 2:18). It was under this approach that the Protestant Reformers were virtually unanimous in declaring the pope as the Antichrist, since the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be fulfilling his role of false teaching and government-sponsored persecution.

A third approach is the **futurist** approach to eschatology, which understands virtually all New Testament prophecy to concern only future events that have not yet happened but will immediately precede Christ's return. The strength of this approach is its awareness that much of the New Testament's end-times teaching is associated directly with Christ's coming and the end of the age.

This brief survey makes the point that there are valuable insights to all three positions: preterist, historicist, and futurist. The problem occurs when each of these is made the only approach to eschatology. The error of preterism is in believing that all of the Bible's teaching on Christ's return refers to the fall of Jerusalem and the persecutions of Nero. The error of historicism is to so emphasize general historical trends as to deny their final amplification before the coming of Christ. The error of futurism is to extract eschatology from its first-century soil, as though the apostles had no concern for their own churches, and to divorce the dramatic events of the end from the pattern seen throughout the church age, starting in the first century.

The best approach **combines all three approaches (Idealist)**, realizing that the prophetic signs had a first-century fulfillment, establishing a trend that would typify the whole church age and would have a final concentrated fulfillment in the time immediately before Christ's return. A sensitive reading of the New Testament will see all three emphases—preterist, historicist, and futurist—in the biblical text."¹

¹ Phillips , Richard D.. 1 & 2 Thessalonians (Reformed Expository Commentaries) (pp. 320-321). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.