

2 THESSALONIANS

Lesson 3 w/Answers: The Day of Christ, The Rebellion, The Antichrist - Part 2

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 and 3:1-18

As we complete our study of 2nd Thessalonians, we conclude our look at what Paul tells us will be happening as we near the time of the return of Jesus. Paul gives us a "wake-up call" about our actions during that time, and the attacks that will come upon the Church and God's holy people, specifically the nation of Israel.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 and 3:1-18 and consider the following questions:

1. What does the word Apostasy mean?
 - a. ANSWER: The word apostasy means a "falling away," or backing away, from a religious or political belief. In this context, it means that the followers of Jesus—if they are followers at all—abandon the teachings of the church, the Bible, God's Holy Word; and they begin to accept the teaching of lies for the truth. Surely, in the beginning this apostasy will be subtle, a small compromise here, another over there. E.g., Mary was not a virgin when she was pregnant, Jesus wasn't really raised from the dead, and so on. If you read II Timothy 4:3, you will get a good description of apostasy and what will be going on in the church as it nears the second coming of Christ. Once you read II Timothy 4:3, ask yourself: "Are we there?"; "Are we getting closer?"; and "Is this what is happening inside the Church today?"
2. What will the apostate believe in? Look at the following verses and list each thing you learn about the specific time of apostasy that Paul is writing about, the falling away, the rebellion, the teaching of a lie for the truth, etc. What will they believe? See 1 John 2:21-22, 1 Timothy 4:1-3, II Timothy 3:1-5 and 4:3-4, and 2nd Peter 3:3-6.
 - a. ANSWER 1: In I John 2:21-22, John warns us that apostates deny that Jesus is the Christ. Denying the unique Father and the Son relationship is now seen within some "churches" that are considered mainstream. For example, in one organized religion calling itself Christian, the Mormons, it teaches that Jesus is a son of God, but, not the only son, of God.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In I Timothy 4:1-3, Paul warns us that in later times "some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." Paul tell us these things come from "hypocritical liars" who "forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods..." We need to be careful that we do not put our faith in satanic practices; some things may seem harmless at first, but be warned Satan is subtle. Believing in a lucky charm or Ouija boards or astrology, for example, are ways we abandon our faith and follow after "deceiving spirits." You can already see this creeping into the church today, just as it did during Paul's time.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Be sure to read II Timothy 3:1-5. Time and space constraints here do not allow for a complete treatment of everything contained in these verses. However, we can certainly see that everything Paul is telling Timothy about "the last days" is happening today, at this very hour. Take heed of Paul's warning, "Have nothing to do with such people."
 - d. ANSWER 4: The warning contained in II Timothy 4:3-4, as we mentioned previously, is also happening today, i.e., "...people will not put up with sound doctrine." Instead, "church" people who call themselves "Christian" will "...gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."
 - e. ANSWER 5: In II Peter 3:3-6, Peter warns us that in the last days people will brush off any thought of Christ returning, claiming that it has been so long that it is obvious that his ultimate return is fiction; it's not ever going to happen. Believing this, they will continue to follow their own evil desires. We see this all around us as the lost ignore Jesus and live out their lives as they see fit. Peter goes on to warn us that God's timetable is not ours; and that when Jesus does return, "the day of the Lord will come like a thief." (II Peter 3:10) Therefore, we are always to be on the watch for his return.
3. Based on our reading, then, we can begin to develop a list of apostate beliefs: Abortion is okay; homosexuality is okay; divorce is okay, etc. They will also teach that: God is not sovereign; Christ was not born of a virgin; Christ is not the only son of God; there is no literal hell; and that each human being controls his or her own destiny. Do you think these things are being taught and believed today?
 - a. ANSWER: Clearly today we live in a time when sin isn't sin; and in this post-modern era, there are no absolutes. You can't believe Jesus is the only way to God; universalism is the prevalent religious doctrine. We all get saved, no one is lost in the end and hell doesn't exist. Furthermore, in spite of what it says in the Bible, what you might believe is sin and is wrong may not be the same for others, who can have their own views for which it is not sin—despite the fact that it goes against God's Holy Word. More troubling is that this highly compromised doctrine is being taught in mainstream Christian denominations today. The church has become so compromised that the outside world, the lost, cannot see much, if any, difference between following Christ or living out their lives as they desire; as their intellect and their peers see the world, and not as God sees it.

4. In this portion of Paul's letter, of whom is he talking about? Who will rebel, who will believe a lie for the truth, and who will be falling away? (No, it's not the world around us; it's the Church!) Paul is telling us that in end times, the Church will rebel and will fall away from the truth. Do we see this happening today? It will be the mission of the Laodicean church to attract people "with itching ears," and to teach apostasy. By the time Christ returns, the church will have completely adopted world beliefs and philosophies and will have completely abandoned the Gospel. No wonder they will think that the Antichrist really is God!
 - a. ANSWER: As we have observed, Paul is writing not about the lost world around us, but the Church itself. Worse, he is telling us that the Church is the rebel, falling away from sound doctrine and following after false doctrine—compromising to fit in to the fallen world around it. No wonder that in the seventh letter in Revelation (Revelation 3:17-19), the letter to the church as Laodicea, Christ tells them, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."
5. Read again Daniel 7:23-27. You will see references to "changing times and laws." This refers to the Antichrist being allowed to actually change physical laws, seasons of the year, and so on. God will send a great delusion and allow the Antichrist to mislead all who have abandoned or rejected the gospel. What else can we learn about the Antichrist from this passage and Paul's letter? Who are the saints he persecutes, and how long does he persecute them?
 - a. ANSWER: In Daniel 7:23-27, we see that the Anti-Christ "...will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people..." Further, we read that, "The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time." These verses refer to God's holy people, the Jews, and specifically the nation of Israel. This oppression will occur during the second half of the seven year period of tribulation and will last three and half years. (A "time" = 1 year, "times" = 2 years, and "half a time" = six months.)
6. Now have a look at Daniel 11:21 through 12:13. While you may not understand it all, this refers to the reign of the Antichrist. List some of the main things that he will do. Can you find the mid-tribulation point in this story? Can you also find specifically what Matthew 24:14-16 refers to?
 - a. ANSWER: The prophecy contained in Daniel 11:21-12:13 is much too vast and complex to address in a single question, but we can see in this passage that the Anti-Christ comes to power through intrigue, and not through war. He deceives and convinces a few powerful people to put him in power and then turns the tables. We know from other studies that, in the beginning, the nation of Israel trusts the Anti-Christ and they sign a peace agreement; it will last three and a half years and constitute the beginning of the seven-year period known as the Tribulation Period. According to Daniel 11:29, as we near the end of this first half, the Anti-Christ will rebel against the nation of Israel and raise up a global hatred of the Jews, God's chosen people. In Daniel 11:36, it asserts that he will set up his image in the Temple, declaring himself to be God. A great period of war, famine, disease, and the loss of all hope then begins to enter the world. Some believe that the rapture will occur at this point, at the mid-tribulation point. We can also see that Daniel's prophecy is the same prophecy Jesus is referring to in Matthew, when the Anti-Christ attempts to replace God in the temple. We also note in these verses in Matthew that Jesus himself is validating the end time prophecies found in the writings of Daniel.
7. Paul states two things that we are to do in light of the end time information that we have been provided. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13 through 3:5. What are the two things we are to do? (see especially verses 2:15 and 3:5)
 - a. ANSWER: In light of what God is telling us about the coming return of Christ, Paul tells us that there are two things we are to do. The first of these is that we are to "hold fast" to sound doctrine. In order to do this, we need to be fully grounded in the Bible so that we can tell the truth from Satan's subtle lies. Secondly, we are to pray that "...the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." As we see the time approaching, we are going to need God's Holy Word and His love and perseverance in order to run the race that is set before us.
8. Make a list of the "teachings" or "traditions" that we are to hold on to. What are the teachings that are the most-likely to be challenged as the time of Christ's second coming approaches? What are some of the ways that we can stand firm? And finally, as you consider these questions, consider that if you do not know what the fundamental doctrines of the church are and what God's word teaches, how will you stand fast, and how will you know the truth versus a lie? If ever there is a time to study God's Holy Word, it is now.
 - a. ANSWER: While many teachings or traditions may come to mind, some of the most fundamental are: (1) Jesus is the ONLY son of God; (2) Placing our faith in Jesus is the ONLY way to be saved; (3) the Bible is God's inerrant and Holy Word, the sole source for knowing God's will; (4) Heaven is very real, as is Hell; (5) ALL of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; (6) All will be judged by God, both the followers of Christ as well as those who rejected him; and (7) All who reject God's grace, his gift of his son Jesus, will die an eternal death, and all who believe on the name of Jesus will be saved, and have life everlasting. Hold on to these truths as the days of Jesus' Second Coming grow closer. These teachings and others will be under sever attack, along with all those who hold to them.

Paul warns us, then, to be vigilant. Grounded in God's Holy Word and His love and perseverance, we look forward to His second coming. Furthermore, as followers of Christ, we look forward to living and reigning with Him. May this study encourage you as Paul encouraged the Church at Thessalonica.

Thanks for being faithful in studying with us. In Christ, **Wes**