

2 Thessalonians 02b

INTRODUCTION

We ended at v. 8 of ch. 2 last week, which is in the midst of Paul's description of end time events.

So let's do a little recap of what we looked at last week.

Word reached Paul in Corinth that the persecution that began when he planted the church there about a year before, had grown worse.

So severe was it, some began to say they were in the Tribulation.

This **added** to their distress, because Paul had made it clear the Rapture comes before the Tribulation.

So if they were in the Tribulation, that meant they'd missed the Rapture.

Paul wrote this letter to encourage them to stay faithful & to clear up the confusion about what they were enduring.

They weren't in the Tribulation; & they hadn't missed the Rapture.

The way they could know they **weren't** in the Tribulation was because the Tribulation is the **first phase** of **The Day of the Lord** – in v. 2 called "The Day of Christ."

When the Day of Christ commences, certain things will occur; things that can't be missed.

Those things had **NOT** occurred – so the Day of the Lord had not begun.

The things Paul says here will mark the arrival of the Tribulation is a massive falling away from the faith, as will certainly happen when all true believers are removed in the Rapture; all that will be left are the fakes & frauds.

Another major event will be the emergence of the antichrist who will rise to political power, then make a claim to deity in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

In v. 7, Paul said that **even in his day** the spiritual conspiracy to lay the platform for the antichrist was at work among the nations.

The Apostle John **echoes** that in 1 John 4:3. He too could see how the world was moving toward the day when the antichrist would emerge to lead humanity's final rebellion against God.

Paul says the antichrist **can't** emerge until the restraint that is holding him back is removed.

That restraint comes through the HS who's present in the world thru the Church.

But when the Rapture occurs & believers are removed, the spiritual salt & light departs, and there's nothing left to hold back the tide of evil that will sweep in.

That's a quick thumbnail sketch of what we looked at last week. If you weren't here & want a fuller examination of the first 8 verses of ch. 2 get a CD.

Let's pick it up at v. 5 & begin our study at v. 8 –

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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 the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

The antichrist can't emerge until the HS withdraws His restraint.

And even though the antichrist will do some amazing things & wield great power for a time, Paul wants to make it clear that his power is nothing compared to God.

The antichrist is going to claim deity and many will be fooled by his tricks, but he'll be exposed as the imposter he is when the REAL CHRIST shows up and puts an end to his shenanigans.

There won't be some kind of huge battle between the antichrist & Jesus.

There's not heavy-weight brawl here.

Jesus shows up and is so glorious, the antichrist falls over!

Now – Paul says the antichrist can't emerge until the HS allows it. **WHY will** He allow it?

Why will God withdraw His abeyance of evil & allow this satanic fraud to rise to power & begin his utterly wicked campaign?

The answer is because history has come to the place where God is giving rebel man **what he wants**.

He removes His people & turns Earth over to an uncontested rule by rebel man.

Humanity has rejected God, said it **doesn't want Him**; so God answers humanity's desire & withdraws.

You need to understand that while we know the antichrist is a satanically inspired & empowered fiend, when he first embarks on his path to power, he will appear to be the answer to everything humanity has been looking for. At the mid-point of the Tribulation, when the antichrist enters the temple & claims to be god, demanding all to worship him, it won't then be the claim of some nut-case everyone will laugh at.

On the contrary; his claim to deity will seem the reasonable next step in his amazing career path.

And far from people writing him off as a loon, **most people** will welcome his claim & gladly bow to him as their savior.

The reason for all this becomes clear as we read on.

⁹The coming of the *lawless one* is according to [attended by] the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

Here's a major reason why the world is fooled by the antichrist, he's empowered by the devil.

The antichrist will perform miracles. He will conduct supernatural signs – that is, they POINT to the proof of his claims.

The problem is, though they are indeed supernatural – the antichrist's message is a lie – look ...

¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Paul draws a sharp distinction between the lost & the saved.

Those who will follow the antichrist are lost, perishing.

The crucial issue that seals their fate is their rejection of Truth.

They heard it, it confronted them – **before** the Rapture, in the message of the Church.

After the Rapture, in the witness of those who will come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation & become the object of the antichrist's vicious hatred.

The lost who align themselves under the antichrist's agenda do so because they've knowingly rejected the Truth in favor of a Lie.

¹¹And for this reason [because they've willingly rejected truth] God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The key to all this lies in a small but significant word there at the end of v. 11.

It's the descriptor for word "lie."

In response to humanity's persistent & fierce rejection of Truth, God abandons them to a convincing deceit – to the end that they may embrace, NOT

Lies, or A lie; It's **THE** lie.

What LIE does Paul have in mind?

Well, using the principle of **First Use**, what's the first lie we find in the Bible?

The Principle of First Use says that the first time a word or subject appears in the Bible sets the pace for it throughout the rest of Scripture.

The first lie in the Bible is in Genesis 3, when the serpent told Adam & Eve they would be as god.

In Isa. 14 & Eze. 28, we read of an earlier TIME than Eden, when Lucifer was lifted up in pride & told himself the lie he could take God's place.

His rebellion failed and he lost his place & became the devil.

But he still thinks he can overcome God.

His self-deception is so complete he used it on Adam & Eve and they were fooled.

It's the deception that lies at the root of all sin – **independence** from & **equality** with God.

Put all that together and here's what we have:

1) The Church is raptured & the Tribulation begins.

2) The antichrist begins his ascent to power, using the tracks the mystery of lawlessness has laid for him since the Fall in Eden.

3) The Apostasy takes place in a now spiritually empty church because of the Rapture.

4) At the mid-point of the Tribulation, once his political & military power is secure, the antichrist reveals his ultimate agenda. He enters the newly rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and declares himself god, demanding everyone worship him.

To validate his claim to deity, he performs dramatic miracles that seem to prove his claim to being a god.

But this isn't the end of his agenda; there's one more step.

He repeats the lie – All Adam's descendants can be gods too!

That's how satan seeks to make war on God; by finishing what he started in Eden, & getting humanity to unite with him in rebellion.

Paul talks about a satanic conspiracy he calls 'the mystery of lawlessness' that was at work in his day.

That conspiracy has continued right on thru the ages & is in full swing today.

Many of you have heard my study on Transhumanism.

If not, I want to suggest you go on our website & look for the study on did on this fascinating subject.

Let me summarize tonight.

Even though the debate between evolution & creation rages on, **globally**, the idea of evolution has largely won out.

Even among those who believe in creation, most accept the idea that evolution is how life has developed. Even though the formal theory of evolution has undergone a radical transformation since Darwin, the popular idea of evolution is widespread; that life grows increasingly complex over time.

The idea of evolution has been expanded to include other things besides life.

It's used in economics, philosophy, sociology & religion.

The Nazis used evolution as justification for the Holocaust.

They claimed the Aryan race was the most evolved form of human beings and that it was their duty to help advance evolution by ridding the world of what they called the human weeds of the lesser races.

So they killed Jews, & Gypsies & the disabled.

The Communists used evolution as the basis of their campaigns to reform society, and caused the deaths of millions.

So it is with great interest we watch what many secular scientists & sociologists are saying today.

Several different disciplines, from psychology to biology to philosophy say the human race has reached the end of **this stage** of its evolution.

As you may be aware, Darwin's idea of slow, minute evolution over long periods of time has been replaced by the idea that evolution takes place in huge lurches & quantum leaps.

And it's claimed that now it's time for the human race to make a quantum step up to the next phase of our evolutionary progress.

This next step is into what we now would consider **deity**.

Of course, we'll still be humans, but with abilities that at present we'd call miraculous.

Now – there's so much **evidence** for this, & so much **preparation** for it, it's a bit surprising it's not something we're more aware of.

That's why Paul calls it "the mystery of lawlessness."

Again – go look at the Transhumanism study on our website.

The growing Transhumanist movement is a bit scary because they are loudly advocating the use of technological enhancements to speed up humanities evolution.

They say that the challenges facing our survival as a species are so great, we'll need to hurry evolution along by using implants – which lays the groundwork for the mark of the beast in Rev. 13!

Feed all of this back into 2 Thess. & what we have is this ...

- The world will be in a state of chaos after the Rapture.
- It will be crying out for someone with answers & solutions – a perfect opening for the antichrist.
- He steps forward with an amazing set of proposals that stun the world with their brilliance.
- They're quickly implemented and the world turns it's collective attention to him, asking him to take over.
- He does, and implements more policies that bring about a new day of peace & prosperity.
- He even brings a resolution to the thorny problem of Israel & her neighbors.
- He allows the Jews to rebuild their temple.
- Once it's complete, and his power base is secure, he enters the temple – announces phase 2 of his agenda

- It's time to lead the human race out of it's infancy into it's destiny, as god-like beings.
- In fact **he's** already made that evolutionary leap; & proves it by performing miracles.
- The people of the world, having rejected the Gospel, are all set up to hear & yield to this ancient-new appeal.
- They accept the antichrist & his message and adopt his plan to take his mark which he says will position them to experience their transformation into gods.
- Those who refuse to take his mark, prove themselves to be unworthy of the glorious transformation that awaits humanity.

And as Hitler called for the Final Solution to remove the lesser races holding back human evolution, so the antichrist will call for the eradication of those who refuse the mark.

And just as millions of Germans looked the other way as the Nazis murdered some 6 million Jews, the billions of Earth will consent to hard but necessary slaughter of millions of Tribulation saints.

I am reading a book titled *Apocalyptic AI* written by a journalist who is **neither** a Christian nor a Transhumanist. It's a fascinating review of the Transhumanist agenda & compares it to the Christian idea of the End Times.

Satan creates nothing, he just distorts the truth & bends it into a lie.

So Transhumanists have their own version of the Rapture.

It's called the **Singularity**; the point at which humanity transitions to its next evolutionary phase, aided by technology.

They have their own **Millennium**, in which god-like, super-intelligent, human-machines inhabit the stars.

I realize all this sounds like far-out science fiction.

But this is a screenplay for a Hollywood blockbuster; it's a main topic of discussion and planning on the part of some of the world's greatest inventors, professors & sociologists.

It's the mystery of lawlessness, preparing the way for the antichrist.

In v. 13, Paul makes all this **practical**.

Prophecy for him wasn't merely **academic**; it was supremely **practical**.

Because Jesus is coming again, Christians ought to live **faithfully**.

The Thessalonians **were**, so Paul says . . .

¹³But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul again expresses his **joyous duty & beloved obligation** to be thankful to God for their salvation.

Look at v. 13 again . . .

¹³But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴to which He called you by our gospel, ...

When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, he didn't come as a slick promoter.

He didn't roll into town after an advance team conducted extensive market research to discover felt needs.

He didn't poll people to find out what they wanted in a church then design a program to give them what they wanted.

There was no *Apostle Paul Evangelistic Association*.

Following the Spirit's lead, he arrived in Thessalonica, & preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

He knew God's favor & power rests on the message of the cross.

To the Romans Paul wrote – [Rom. 1:16]

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for

the Jew first and also for the Greek.

What was true for Paul is just as true for us.

We need not be ashamed of the Gospel or hide it behind an appealing façade.

We don't need *make* it relevant. THE GOSPEL **IS** RELEVANT!

It's THE answer to human need. It's the power of God to salvation!

We simply need to *proclaim* it: It's the Spirit's job to *apply* it.

If we do our part, God's faithful to His.

¹⁵Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

They were to keep on in the pattern of faith Paul had shown them.

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

CHAPTER 3

¹Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you,

²and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

Paul had opposition to his work in Corinth & asked for *their* prayers, just as he was praying for them in the midst of their hardship.

³But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one. ⁴And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

Though Paul had spent only a month with them, he knew they'd follow through on what he'd written.

⁵Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

A great prayer – “May you grow in the love of God as you wait for Jesus.”

Paul closes out the letter by dealing with an intensely practical issue – the role of work in the Christian life.

Since we covered these verses in depth on Sunday I'll be much more summary with them tonight.

From what Paul says here & in the last ch. of his previous letter, it's clear there was a problem with some on the church at Thessalonica who were not working but living off the support of others.

Undoubtedly this came mostly from the Greek attitude toward work.

They despised manual labor! Saw it as fit only for slaves and the poor.

Another cause for some of the indolence may have come from their belief Jesus was coming back soon and it would be best to spend their last days in prayer & religious preparation.

Paul writes to rebuke this indolence, whatever its cause.

⁶But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; ⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, ⁹not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. ¹¹For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹²Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

¹³But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good. ¹⁴And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

[Sunday]

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all. ¹⁷The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

Paul often used what was called an *amanuensis*, a *secretary*, to write his letters.

Then at the end he made his mark to verify he was the *author*.

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

[preach grace]