

The background of the cover is a photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, a dirt path winds through tall green grass on a hillside. A wooden fence runs along the right side of the path. A large, dark tree stands prominently in the middle ground. In the background, a blue sea meets a rocky coastline under a heavy, grey, and cloudy sky. The overall mood is somber and dramatic.

The Lawless Man Called The Antichrist

A Teaching Outline

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

The lawless man called the antichrist

2 Thes. 2:1-17

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, [2] That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Paul describes the end of the world and Christ's second coming. He says that great suffering and trouble lie ahead, but evil will not prevail because Christ will return to judge all people.

Although Paul presents a few signs of the end times, his emphasis, like Jesus' (Mark 13), is the need for each person to prepare for Christ's return by living rightly day by day. If we are ready, we won't have to be concerned about the preceding events or the timing of Christ's return.

God controls all events.

2:1, 2 In the Bible, "the day of the Lord" is used in two ways:

1. It can mean the end times (beginning with Christ's birth and continuing until today), and
2. It can mean the final judgment day (in the future).

Because some false teachers were saying that judgment day had come, many believers were waiting expectantly for their vindication and for relief from suffering. But judgment day had not yet come; other events would have to happen first.

2:2 "A spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter" could refer to the fact that:

False teaching had come from

- (1) Someone claiming to have had a divine revelation,
- (2) Someone passing on a teaching as though it were from Paul, or

(3) Someone distributing a letter supposedly written by Paul.

[3] Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there comes a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; [4] Who opposes and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

2:3 throughout history there have been individuals who epitomized evil and who were hostile to everything Christ stands for (see 1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 1:7).

These antichrists have lived in every generation and will continue to work their evil.

Then just before Christ's second coming, "the man of lawlessness... the one who brings destruction," a completely evil man, will arise. He will be Satan's tool, equipped with Satan's power (2:9). This lawless man will be *the* Antichrist.

It is dangerous, however, to label any person as the Antichrist and to try to predict Christ's coming based on that assumption.

Paul mentions a man of lawlessness, not so we might attempt to identify him, but so we might be ready for anything that threatens our faith. If our faith is strong, we don't need to be afraid of what lies ahead, because we know that this lawless man has already been defeated by God, no matter how powerful he becomes or how terrible our situation seems.

God is in control, and he will be victorious. Our task is to be prepared for Christ's return and to spread the Good News so that even more people will also be prepared.

When Paul first wrote to the Thessalonians, they were in danger of losing hope in the Second Coming.

Then they shifted to the opposite extreme—some of them thought that Jesus would be coming at any minute and so they stopped being

productive for God. Paul tried to restore the balance by describing certain events that would happen before Christ's return.

[5] Remember you not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

[6] And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

[7] For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now (hinders) letteth will let hinder), until he be taken out of the way.

The Holy Spirit holds back the lawless one? We do not know for certain. Three possibilities have been suggested:

(1) Government and law, which help to curb evil;

(2) The ministry and activity of the church and the effects of the Good News; or

(3) The Holy Spirit. The Bible is not clear on who this restrainer is, only that he will not restrain forever.

But we should not fear this time when the restraint is removed—God is far stronger than the man of lawlessness, and God will save his people.

[8] And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

[9] Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

[10] And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

[11] And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

[12] That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Lawlessness is already at work.

"This lawlessness is already at work secretly" means that the work that this Antichrist will do is already going on.

Secretly means something no one can discover but something God will reveal.

Lawlessness is the hidden, subtle, underlying force from which all sin springs. Civilization still has a veneer of decency through law enforcement, education, science, and reason.

Although we are horrified by criminal acts, we have yet to see the real horror of complete lawlessness. This will happen when "the one who is holding it back steps out of the way."

Why will God allow this to happen?

To show people and nations their own sinfulness, and to show those by bitter experience the true alternative to the lordship of Christ.

People totally without God can act no better than vicious animals. Lawlessness, to a certain extent, is already going on, but the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed.

This evil man will use "counterfeit power and signs and miracles" to deceive and draw a following. Miracles from God can help strengthen our faith and lead people to Christ, but all miracles are not necessarily from God.

Christ's miracles were significant, not just because of their power, but because of their purpose—to help, to heal, and to point us to God.

The man of lawlessness will have power to do amazing things, but his power will be from Satan. He will use this power to destroy and to lead people away from God and toward himself. If any so-called religious

personality draws attention only to himself or herself, his or her work is not from God.

God does not cause people to be deceived?

To understand God's allowing such deception, we must first understand God's nature.

(1) God himself is good (Psalm 11:7).

(2) God created a good world that fell because of humanity's sin (Romans 5:12).

(3) Someday God will recreate the world and it will be good again (Revelation 21:1).

(4) God is stronger than evil (Matthew 13:41-43; Revelation 19:11-21).

(5) God allows evil and thus has control over it. God did not create evil, and he offers help to those who wish to overcome it (Matthew 11:28-30). (6)

God uses everything—both good and evil—for his good purposes (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28).

The Bible reveals a God who hates all evil and will one day do away with it completely and forever (Revelation 20:10-15).

God does not entice anyone to become evil.

Those committed to evil, however, may be used by God to sin even more in order to hasten their deserved judgment (see Exodus 11:10).

We don't need to understand every detail of how God works in order to have perfect confidence in his absolute power over evil and his total goodness toward us.

2 Thes. 2:13-17

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

[14] Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. [15] Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

[16] Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

[17] Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Paul consistently taught that salvation begins and ends with God. We can do nothing to be saved on our own merit—we must accept God's gift of salvation (see the note on Ephesians 1:4). There is no other way to receive forgiveness from sin. Paul is encouraging the Thessalonian believers by reminding them that they were chosen by God from the beginning. Being made holy is the process of Christian growth through which the Holy Spirit makes us like Christ (Romans 8:29). See the note on 1:11, 12.

God worked through Paul and his companions to tell the Good News so that people could share in Christ's glory. It may seem strange that God works through us—fallible, unfaithful, untrustworthy human creatures. But he has given us the fantastic privilege of accomplishing his great mission—telling the world how to find salvation.

Paul knew that the Thessalonians would face pressure from persecutions, false teachers, worldliness, and apathy to waver from the truth and to leave the faith.

So he urged them to "stand firm" and hold on to the truth they had been taught both through his letters and in person. We also may face persecution, false teachings, worldliness, and apathy.

We should hold on to the truth of Christ's teachings because our life depends on it. Never forget the reality of Christ's life and love!

An invitation is given to open your heart's door to Jesus

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart, please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

