

ENGAGE

- This week we focus on the age of rebellion and the man of lawlessness. This individual is known as the Beast, the Antichrist, and the Son of Perdition.
- I will spend time on this passage for the identifiers of this individual.
- I will also introduce the key to understanding the book of Revelation with known Jewish writing tools. Daniel gives the keys to identifying aspects and dynamics regarding the man of lawlessness.
- Though the message is a warning to watch for the coming of the Man of Sin, Our true intent is for people to watch for the Coming of Jesus, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

EXAMINE**The Coming of That Day****A. Instruction regarding the coming of Jesus.****1. (1-2) Paul's comfort to the troubled Thessalonians and their question.**

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

a. **Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him:** Paul here addressed questions raised by his first letter, where he instructed the Thessalonians about the catching away of the church to be with Jesus ([1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#)).

i. The challenge in understanding this chapter comes from the fact that it is a *supplement* to what Paul has already taught the Thessalonians in words, and we don't know exactly what Paul said to the them. Yet the ideas are clear enough if carefully pieced together.

b. **Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him:** Paul clearly wrote of the return of Jesus, but the wording here implies a difference between **the coming** and **our gathering**. This strongly suggests that there are essentially two comings of Jesus. One coming is *for* His church (as described clearly in [1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#)), and the other coming is *with* His church, to judge a rebellious world.

i. "They are two parts of one great event." (Morris)

ii. Hiebert shows how the grammar of the ancient Greek in [2 Thessalonians 2:1](#) shows this: "The government of the two nouns under one article makes it clear that one event, viewed under two complimentary aspects, is thought of."

iii. This is completely consistent with other passages of Scripture that indicate that there must be two aspects of Jesus' second coming, and the aspects must be separated by some appreciable period of time.

- Different world conditions are described ([Matthew 24:37-42](#), [Matthew 24:21](#), [Revelation 6:15-16](#)).
- Different manners of Jesus' return are described ([1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#), [Revelation 19:11, 14-15, 21](#)).
- Different scenarios regarding the predictability of the date of Jesus' return are established ([Matthew 24:36](#), [Daniel 12:11](#)).

c. **We ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled:** Apparently, a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching (or an incorrect application of it) had caused the Thessalonians to be **shaken in mind** and **troubled**. Here Paul used a strong wording, speaking of both a *sudden jolt* (**shaken in mind**) and a continuing state of upset (**troubled**). Their fears centered on the idea that **the day of Christ had** [already] **come**.

- i. "The word *to be shaken*, signifies to be agitated as a ship at sea in a storm, and strongly marks the confusion and distress which the Thessalonians had felt in their false apprehension of this coming of Christ." (Clarke)
- ii. A preferred manuscript reading of [2 Thessalonians 2:2](#) has *the day of the Lord* rather than **the day of Christ**. *The day of the Lord* is a concept with a rich Old Testament background, and was mentioned in Paul's previous letter to the Thessalonians ([1 Thessalonians 5:2](#)). It is not a single day, but a period associated with God's outpouring of judgment and the deliverance of God's people. A significant aspect of the *day of the Lord* is the Great Tribulation described in [Matthew 24:1-31](#).

d. **As though the day of Christ had come:** Some translations have *that the day of Christ is at hand*, such as the King James Version. But the translation in the New King James Version (and other modern translations) is preferred. The Thessalonians were not afraid that the **day of Christ** was *coming*, but that they were *in it*.

- i. "The verb does not really mean *to be at hand*, but rather *to be present*." (Morris) The notable Greek commentator Dean Alford translates the passage, "**To the effect that the day of the Lord is present**; not, '*is at hand*': the verb used here occurs six times in the New Testament, and always in the sense of *being present*; in two of those places, [Romans 8:38](#), [1 Corinthians 3:22](#), *the things present* are distinguished expressly from *the things to come*."
- ii. From this, it is obvious that the **day of Christ** had not been *completed*. Paul will go on to demonstrate that it also had not yet *dawned*, because the Thessalonians were afraid that they were in the Great Tribulation (the *day of the Lord*), and feared that they had missed the rapture. But Paul will demonstrate that they are not in the **day of Christ**; because if they were, then certain signs would be present.
- iii. It is important to notice that the Thessalonians would be **shaken** or **troubled** by the thought of being in the Great Tribulation *only* if they had been taught by Paul that they would *escape* that period through the rapture. Otherwise they would, in a sense, *welcome* the Great Tribulation as a necessary prelude to the Second Coming. But Paul had clearly taught them that they would escape God's judgment on this earth during the period known as the *day of the Lord* or the **day of Christ** ([1 Thessalonians 4:14-18](#)).

e. **Either by spirit or by word or by letter:** Perhaps the troubling word had come through a misguided prophecy (**spirit or by word**). Or perhaps some other leader wrote the Thessalonians a **letter** teaching that they were already in the **day of Christ**. Either way, they were upset at the idea that they had somehow missed the rapture.

i. “The teaching of the Apostles was, and of the Holy Spirit in all ages has been, that the day of the Lord *is at hand*. But these Thessalonians imagined it to be already come.” (Alford)

2. (3) Signs marking the coming day.

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,*

a. **For that Day will not come:** Paul will not describe events which must *precede* the rapture, but events that are *concrete evidence* of the Great Tribulation – **the day of Christ**. In this sense, one cannot be *certain* the **day of Christ** (the Great Tribulation) has come unless these signs are present.

i. This phrase is not in the original text, but is very appropriately added. Alford says of the phrase, **for that day will not come**: “So A.V. supplies, rightly. There does not seem to have been any intention on the part of the Apostle to fill up the ellipsis: it supplies itself in the reader’s mind.”

b. **Unless the falling away comes first:** The ancient Greek wording for **falling away** indicates a *rebellion* or a *departure*. Bible scholars debate if it refers to an apostasy among those who once followed God, or a general worldwide rebellion. In fact, Paul may have both in mind, because there is evidence of each in the end times ([1 Timothy 4:1-3](#), [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#) and [4:3-4](#)). Nevertheless, Paul’s point is clear: “You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen **the falling away that comes first**.”

i. **The falling away:** The article “**the**” makes it even more significant. This is not *a falling away*, but *the falling away*, the great and final rebellion.

ii. Some have suggested that the idea behind **falling away** is really *a departure*, in the sense of the rapture of the church. But *a departure* implies that the one leaving does so of his own accord and initiative, and this is not the case with the catching away of the church. In addition, the ancient Greek word in the New Testament ([Acts 21:21](#), *forsake*) or in the Septuagint, always implies something sinful and negative.

iii. The idea of a great end-times apostasy also does not contradict the idea of a great end-times revival. Some Christians doubt the idea of great revival in the last days, or even welcome apostasy believing it signals the end. But just as the Book of Revelation describes great rejection of Jesus during the Great Tribulation ([Revelation 9:20-21](#) and [17:2-6](#)) and great acceptance of Him ([Revelation 7:9-14](#)), the two can stand side-by-side.

c. **And the man of sin is revealed:** Before the Great Tribulation can be identified with certainty, a particular person – known as **the man of sin**, – must be **revealed**. Paul’s point is clear: “You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen **the man of sin ... revealed**.”

i. The most traditional understanding of this **man of sin** is to say that he is not an individual, but a system or an office. Historically, Protestant interpreters have seen the **man of sin** to be the succession of popes. Calvin thought this way: “Paul, however, is not speaking of one individual, but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan for the purpose of setting up a seat of abomination in the midst of God’s temple. This we see accomplished in popery.”

ii. However, there is *no* good reason to see this **man of sin** to be other than what the plainest meaning is here – an individual who will come to great prominence in the very last days. This was how it was understood in the earliest days of Christianity. “The *fathers* understood the *Antichrist* to be intended, but of this person they seemed to have formed no specific idea.” (Clarke)

· Daniel described an individual person: *The prince who is to come* ([Daniel 9:26](#)), the *king of fierce countenance* ([Daniel 8:23](#)), the *willful king* ([Daniel 11:36-45](#)).

· Jesus described an individual person: The one who comes *in his own name* ([John 5:43](#)).

· We are not surprised that Paul described this **man of sin** as an individual person, *not* as a system or an office.

iii. This **man of sin** is a prominent figure in the Bible, and the ultimate personification of the *spirit of the Antichrist* spoken of in [1 John 4:2-3](#). He will no doubt live many years before the Great Tribulation, but he will only be **revealed** as the **man of sin** during that period. The idea behind the title **man of sin** is that “Sin has such absolute domination over him that he seems to be the very embodiment of it.” (Hiebert)

d. **Son of perdition:** **Perdition** means *destruction*, the complete loss of well-being. It is really the opposite of *salvation*. To call him the **son of perdition** means his character is marked by this destruction. Moffatt says the phrase “**son of perdition**” essentially means *the doomed one*.

3. (4) What the *man of sin* does.

Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

a. **Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped:** The *man of sin* demands worship for himself that belongs to God only ([Luke 4:8](#)). This demand for worship is also described in [Revelation 13:1-6](#).

i. “He *stands against* and *exalts himself above* all Divine authority, and above every *object of adoration*, and every *institution* relative to Divine worship.” (Clarke)

ii. Understanding the strength and breadth of this statement shows us that saying that the Antichrist is the Pope is far too simplistic. He will sponsor a religion that does not tolerate the worship of anyone or anything except himself. The apostate Roman Catholic Church may be part of this end-times religion, but it will not encompass it.

iii. “Notice, that the meaning of these words cannot by any probability be fulfilled by any one who, as the Pope, creates objects of worship, and thus (by inference merely) makes himself greater than the objects which he creates: but it is required that this Antichrist should *set HIMSELF up as an object of worship*, above, and as superior to, ‘everyone that is called God or worshipped.’” (Alford)

b. **So that he sits as God in the temple of God:** The man of sin’s demand for worship will be so extreme, he will set himself up as God in the temple at Jerusalem, demanding this blasphemous worship from everyone ([Revelation 13:14-15](#) and [Matthew 24:15, 21, 29-31](#)).

i. **The temple of God:** That this is a literal temple is clear from the text, and has been understood as such by even the earliest Christians. “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom.” (Irenaeus, writing in the late second century)

ii. The literal understanding of Paul’s words is also supported by the fact that when he wrote this letter, something similar to this *almost* happened in the recent past. “The recent attempt of Caligula to erect a statue of himself in the Temple at Jerusalem may have furnished a trait for Paul’s delineation of the future Deceiver; the fearful impiety of this outburst had sent a profound shock through Judaism, which would be felt by Jewish Christians as well.” (Moffatt)

c. **He sits as God in the temple:** The specific ancient Greek word for **temple** indicates *the most holy place* and not the temple as a whole. “It is not that he enters the temple precincts: he invades the most sacred place and there takes his seat. His action is itself a claim to deity.” (Morris) This is the ultimate blasphemy that results in certain judgment, the *abomination of desolation* spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus.

i. The prophet Daniel told us the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and bring sacrifice and offerings to an end; that the Antichrist will defile the temple by setting something abominable there ([Daniel 9:27](#), [11:31](#), and [12:11](#)).

ii. Jesus said to look for an abomination standing in the holy place, which would be the pivotal sign that the season of God’s wrath was upon the earth ([Matthew 24:15-16](#) and [24:21](#)).

iii. “Any man may be satisfied that St. Paul alluded to Daniel’s description, because he has not only borrowed the same ideas, but has even adopted some of the phrases and expressions.” (Clarke)

d. **Showing himself that he is God:** The man of sin is truly an *Anti-Christ*. Satan has planned the career of the man of sin to mirror the ministry of Jesus.

- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a coming ([2 Thessalonians 2:1](#) and [2:9](#)).
 - Both Jesus and the man of sin are revealed ([2 Thessalonians 1:7](#) and [2:3](#)).
 - Both Jesus and the man of sin have a gospel ([2 Thessalonians 2:10-11](#)).
 - Both Jesus and the man of sin say that they alone should be worshipped ([2 Thessalonians 2:4](#)).
 - Both Jesus and the man of sin have support for their claims by miraculous works ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#)).
- i. Clearly, the man of sin is Satan’s parody of the true Messiah. Yet in the end, the *man of sin* can only show **himself that he is God**. The coming of Jesus and the judgment of God will make it clear that the man of sin is not God at all.

4. (5-8) What restrains the coming of this *man of sin*.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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. 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.

- a. **When I was still with you I told you these things:** Paul was only with the Thessalonians a few weeks ([Acts 17:1-10](#)). But Paul thought it important to teach these brand new Christians about Biblical prophecy, and he taught them in some detail.
- b. **And now you know what is restraining:** For now, Satan and the *man of sin* are being restrained. The principle of their working is now present (**the mystery of lawlessness is already at work**). But at the right time, the Holy Spirit (**He who restrains**) who restrains their full revelation will be **taken out of the way**.
- c. **Taken out of the way:** We should not think that the Holy Spirit would *leave* the earth during the Great Tribulation. He will be present on the earth during the Great Tribulation because many are saved, sealed, and serve God during this period ([Revelation 7:3-14](#) and [14:1-5](#)), and this can't happen without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is **taken out of the way**, not removed.
 - i. "The phrase is used of any person or thing which is taken out of the way, whether by death or other removal." (Alford)
 - ii. Some see this as the end of a dispensation: "The special presence of the Spirit as the indweller of saints will terminate abruptly at the *parousia* as it began abruptly at Pentecost. Once the body of Christ has been caught away to heaven, the Spirit's ministry will revert back to what he did for believers during the Old Testament period." (Thomas)
- d. **The mystery of lawlessness is already at work:** This great principle of evil is already present in the world. It will be ultimately unveiled in the man of sin, but he does not introduce a *new* wickedness into the world, only an intensity of prior wickedness.
 - i. Right now, this **lawlessness** is a **mystery** – that it is, it can only be seen and understood by revelation. Otherwise it is hidden. "It is not open sin and wickedness, but dissembled piety, specious errors, wickedness under a form of godliness cunningly managed, that is here meant." (Poole)
- e. **And then the lawless one will be revealed:** Paul states two certain facts about the man of sin, here called **the lawless one**. First, it is certain that the **lawless one will be revealed** when the Holy Spirit removes His restraint. Second, it is certain that the **lawless one** will be destroyed by the mere **brightness** of Jesus at **His coming**.
 - i. Paul probably has [Isaiah 11:4](#) in mind: *He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked*. The Isaiah passage refers to the LORD – to Yahweh – but Paul freely used it of Jesus, recognizing that Jesus is Yahweh.
 - ii. Whoever the *man of sin* is, he has not had his career yet. We know this because at the end of his career, the *man of sin* is destroyed by Jesus Christ Himself.

5. (9-12) The character and strategy of the *man of sin*.

The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

a. **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan:** The Antichrist will come with **power**, with **signs** and with **lying wonders**. But all of this is according to the working of Satan, as described in [Revelation 13:13-17](#).

i. If someone has spiritual **power**, **signs**, or **wonders**, those are not enough to prove they are from God. Satan can perform his own powerful works, either through deception or through his own resources of power.

ii. "He is Satan's messiah, an infernal caricature of the true messiah." (Moffatt)

b. **Among those who perish:** However, the deception can only take root in those who **do not receive the love of the truth**. These people are ready for the deception of the Antichrist, because they *want* a lie, and **God will send them a strong delusion**.

i. **God will send them:** In the end, the Antichrist is only God's messenger. God has judgment to bring, and He will **send ... a strong delusion** through the Antichrist. God will not *force* this **delusion** on anyone, but those who **do not receive the love of the truth** will receive this **strong delusion**.

ii. Alford translates: *God is sending to them the working of delusion in order that they should believe the falsehood.*

iii. "They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion, and that is their punishment." (Poole)

c. **That they should believe the lie:** Specifically, God sends them **the lie**. This isn't just *any lie*, but **the lie**, the lie that has enthralled the human race since Adam. This is **the lie** that God is not God, and that we are or can be gods.

i. "His point is that the last pseudo-Messiah or anti-Christ will embody all that is profane and blasphemous, every conceivable element of impiety; and that, instead of being repudiated, he will be welcome by Jews as well as pagans." (Moffatt)

d. **That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness:** As God gives rebellious man the lie he desires, it isn't out of His generosity. Instead, it shows God's judgment on those who reject the truth. As [Romans 1](#) points out, in judgment God may give a man up to the depravity of his heart, to his **pleasure in unrighteousness**.

i. "They think that they are acting in defiance of Him. But in the end they find that those very acts in which they expressed their defiance were the vehicle of their punishment." (Morris)

QUESTIONS

- What is Satan's ultimate desire in deceitfully leading the world astray?
- What do you think the world will be like when the Church—true believers in Jesus Christ—are “raptured” (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) from this earth?
- What will the absence of Christ's Lordship working through the Church prove to the world?
- What three things did Paul say the Thessalonians should not be shaken in mind or troubled by? (2)
- What two things must take place before the day of Christ (Day of the Lord) can come? (3)
- What are the activities regarding this man of sin? (4,9-10)
- What is the force that "lets" or restrains the activities of the antichrist? (7)
 - Most believe the one who restrains the coming of the man of sin is the Holy Spirit. What does it mean that the one who restrains is removed?
- What does this chapter say regarding the doom of the man of sin? (8)
- What are the reasons given why God sends some people a strong delusion that they should believe a lie? (10-12)
- What are the only two things a person can believe? (11-12)
- What could make you think that we may be living in the last days?