

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 – The Man of Lawlessness

I. Review of 2 Thessalonians 1

- A. 1-2 Thessalonians were, after Galatians, the first canonical letters of Paul (written approx. 50 AD) and, therefore, are among the earliest books in the New Testament.
- B. 2 Thess 1:1-12 – Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians and encourages their perseverance by assuring them of God's coming perfect justice for His people and against unrepentant unbelief.

[God will] "...grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance...¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed..." (2 Thess 1:7-10)

II. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 – Left Behind?

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?⁶ And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess 2:1-12)

1. What concern of the Thessalonians was Paul addressing, according to vv. 1-2? What event is described?

"Paul uses 'day' in his letters to emphasize the dual themes of future salvation for those saved by grace and future judgment for the ultimately unrepentant. He uses many slightly different expressions, such as 'day of the Lord Jesus', 'that day', etc...Amazingly, Paul reads the Old Testament texts about the 'Day of the Lord' (i.e., Yahweh) and concludes that Christ is the 'Lord' of whom the Old Testament speaks." - Robert J. Cara, Thessalonians, 137.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb 10:24-25)

2. What is Paul's overall logic to counter the Thessalonians' confusion? How does v. 5 make it more difficult to understand what Paul is actually saying here?

3. What, according to Paul, must take place prior to the Second Coming? How is the "man of lawlessness" described as a kind of "Anti-" christ (see 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7)? What do they have in common?

"Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (1 John 2:18)

"He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action." (Dan 11:32)

4. Who is the "restrainer" (the 'satanic counterpart of the mystery of God's purpose', F.F. Bruce)? Bueller?

On the Identity of the "Restrainer": • God the Father • Holy Spirit • good Roman government
• preaching of gospel • activity of angels • the Jewish state • mission to the Gentiles • generic evil
• Satan • sin • bad Roman government • the rule of government in general

"I frankly confess I do not know what he [Paul] means." - Augustine, *City of God*, 20.19.

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding... with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins." (Is 11:1-5)

5. How should this description of the future impact how we view our current life? What about the past? Future?

*"The idea of the Antichrist in general and that of the apostasy in particular ought to warn us, although this may not have been the proximate purpose of Paul, not to take for granted an uninterrupted progress of the cause of Christ through all ages on toward the end. As the reign of the truth will be gradually extended, so the power of evil will gather force towards the end. The making all things right and new in the world depend not on gradual amelioration but on the final interposition of God." - Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*,*

6. Who is responsible for the judgment upon unbelievers (see Rom 1:24, 26)? What should we do?

Q. How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives. (Westminster

"...Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." (Heb 9:27)