



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12

Lesson 3

Summer 2020

"Antichrist Is Coming"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth. And good to be here with you. We are continuing our studies in the book of 2 Thessalonians. We're in chapter 2 this morning, which begins a very interesting text as you will see. 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses 1 through 12,

¹ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 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 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearing of His coming; ⁹ *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Heavenly Father, it is a blessing to be able to gather again with Your people and to do what we are doing in this hour; reading the Scripture together, Your Holy Word, and then spending time considering the meaning of this text. It's a blessing, whatever text we look at, because it's all Your Word. It is inerrant. It is authoritative. It is what gives us guidance in life. It's what gives us encouragement. It's the solid foundation of our lives. It's so essential that we come together as we study Your Word.

It's important that we do this routinely in our lives daily; weekly: That we study Your Word; that we read it and ponder it. For it is an instruction of Scripture that we come together and not forsake gathering together. And so it's a blessing to be here, and a blessing that we can do this in a virtual way through this live feed, and we pray that that will go smoothly this morning. But we are together, one way or another, and we thank You for the blessing and the privilege of this gathering, and pray You'd bless our time. It is a time to be instructed—and it is a time to be instructed, fundamentally, by the Holy Spirit. So we pray that His ministry will go unhindered in our hearts and minds, and that He will guide us and enlighten us and give us an understanding of the things that we've just read.

And in this particular text they are interesting, to say the least. It is a fascinating passage of scripture that Paul gave to the Thessalonians, and it is for us as well. And so I pray that we will gain the lessons and You will apply the lessons of this text to us, so that we are encouraged in this day and age in which we live, and we are equipped for it, to live wisely and well as witnesses for You, and lights in the midst of the world.

So Lord, bless us and build us up in the faith, and we pray not only for our spiritual condition and needs, but for our material needs as well. We live in a time of difficulty. The pandemic is upon us, and we're adjusting to it, yet we can't help but live with a little bit of anxiety—the thought that we might contract this virus. But we live and move and exist in You. And we need to realize that and remember to be wise about our behavior, and yet bold in certain respects, and certainly live with confidence, trusting in You.

And so we ask You, Lord, to bless us. We do live and move and exist in You, and pray that as You give us every breath of life, as we are told throughout the Scriptures, that it would be healthy, and that You would keep us healthy. We pray, though, for some of those who are particularly vulnerable at this time, to this virus, that You'd protect them. And we pray that You'd keep us all safe.

And we pray that You'd bless us in this hour. We do want to pray for our government and our leaders as they make decisions, that they'd make wise decisions, and that You would bless us and remove this pandemic. But even in the midst of it, Lord, we pray that You would bring great blessing, perhaps revival, as people realize how fragile things are, and how foolish self confidence can be when it's not grounded in You. May You use this in some way to bring light to our nation. We know that's Your work. Make us available to do that, and eager to do it, and wise to do it. Make us wise through our time of study this morning. We commit it to You, and pray Your rich blessing upon us.

Thank You for Christ. We thank you for His death. Bless this hour. Bless the time to come at the end when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. And we pray that all will be done to Your honor and glory. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

In his book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edwin Gibbon defined history as, "little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." Daniel might have agreed. In chapter 7 of his book, he recorded a dream he had, which is an apocalyptic vision of world history, with four great beasts coming out of

the sea. They were empires. The fourth one was the most dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong. It had iron teeth, and devoured and crushed and trampled down everything.

One of the strangest features of that beast is it had horns. And one of the horns was little, but it had eyes and a mouth and boasted great things. It became the dominant horn—or ruler. That ruler has not yet appeared in history. When he does come, he will fill up “the register” with “crimes, follies, and misfortunes” against God and the human race, as no one ever has.

The apostle John called him “antichrist”, and wrote in 1 John, chapter 2, verse 18 that he is coming. Before that Paul wrote of him. He called him “the man of lawlessness”—and he's the subject of our passage. It is prophecy, and very enlightening—but also challenging. Leon Morris in his commentary called 2 Thessalonians 2, verses 1 through 12, “a notoriously difficult passage”, because some of the agents and events Paul writes of are not identified specifically.

Paul refers here to the teaching he gave while among them in Thessaloniki, and felt no need to repeat the things that they already knew. For example, in verse 6, he speaks of that which “restrains” the man of sin from appearing. Paul didn't specify what that is, because he didn't need to. They already knew what it is—but we don't. So there are difficulties in this passage, but they're not so great that we can't understand Paul's instruction—which is some of the most sensational in the New Testament.

But Paul didn't write of this man and the events of his life to feed our curiosity, or to entertain, but to fix a problem. That's the main reason Paul wrote the letter, to correct an error. The church had been told falsely that they were in the last days, “the day of the Lord”, and it caused confusion. So Paul wrote to correct and restore stability to the church. The only way to do that is with sound doctrine, which Paul gives by showing that God is sovereign; He is in control; His plan and purpose cannot be stopped; His love for His people cannot be shaken. So he began with a request, that they not be shaken and disturbed by what they had heard about “the day of the Lord”, and the Lord's coming when His saints are gathered to Him.

The “coming”, Paul refers to, could be the rapture of the church. He wrote of that in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 17. The word “coming” here is the Greek word *parousia*, the word used of the rapture, and the word that's used here of the Lord's coming. But that word is also frequently used of the second coming, used of the rapture, (as I said), and also used of the second coming which occurs later at the end of the great tribulation.

Now that's the subject here in this book. It's the subject clearly in chapter 1, when the Lord returns with divine vengeance against the ungodly, vindicates His saints, and establishes His kingdom in righteousness on the earth. So some argue that this is when the rapture occurs, at the end of the tribulation, at the second coming, (rather than before the tribulation), because both comings are called a *parousia*, —so it's argued it must be the same event.

But that word is used of different “comings”. We see that here in our passage: In verse 8 it's used of Christ's “coming”. And in verse 9 it's used of the antichrist's “coming”. —Very different comings. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, in verse 17 it's used of Paul's colleagues, Stephanas and Fortunatus “coming” to him. So it can be used of different comings and the rapture is a different coming. Here it is of the Lord's second coming, at the end of the tribulation.

But according to verse 2, the Thessalonians had been told they were already in that, in “the day of the Lord”, the terrifying day of judgment. The persecution they were undergoing, (and remember that Paul has written to them at a time of great persecution and suffering for that church), that persecution must have seemed to them to support that idea, —that message that they had been given. So they were confused, as you can imagine they would be.

Paul told them in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, that they had not been destined for that, not destined for that day. He told them of the rapture of the church. But that had not happened, and all of Paul's teaching had been contradicted by what seemed, to them, an authoritative source. Paul refers to it in different ways; he refers to it as a “spirit”, (maybe that's to be understood as a false prophet or a teacher had spoken to them).

Or he speaks of a letter, said to have been from “them”. So they received this letter that was supposedly written in the authority of the apostle. So they naturally thought it was true, and they naturally thought, as a result, they were in the final days—that they had begun and that the end was near.

It completely unsettled them, as Paul describes here with the words “shaken” and “disturbed” which gives the picture, (because it's used in this way of a ship), and it gives the picture of a boat or a ship hit by a wind, and driven from its moorings, its anchorage—and set adrift. And so that was the church in Thessaloniki—set adrift, as it were. So Paul needed to steady them. He wasn't sure what the source of the disturbing message was, but he assured them it wasn't from him, and it wasn't true. They weren't in the final days. The end was not nigh.

He begins verse 3 with a strong statement. "Let no one in any way deceive you," then explains that a certain event must happen and a certain man must appear for “the day of the Lord” to begin and the second coming to occur.

Paul had told them all of this, and more, when he was with them in Thessaloniki. In fact, in verse 5 he corrects them with that fact, "Do you not remember?" he said—that they should have remembered some things that he had taught them—and they hadn't. They hadn't applied that teaching to the letter or the message they had received. Now that's the first defense against error.

We are all going to confront error in our life and that is the first defense against error—remembering what has been taught and recalling the truth of Scripture. Deception is always clever. If it's effective deception, it is. Holding on to the apostle's instruction is the only remedy. Holding on to the Scriptures, the Word of God is the only remedy. The Thessalonians bore some responsibility for the confusion, and the apostle corrects them here: Gently, he does, but firmly.

He had told them, evidently in some detail about these two signs that he refers to. The first is an event, “The Apostasy”, which has the idea of abandoning or turning from someone. It has been translated as *rebellion*. It is spiritual revolt, turning from the Lord and rejecting the Gospel. It is unbelief in a person who had, at one time, confessed

belief. Apostasy doesn't occur among other religions. The Muslims aren't apostate. It comes out of a profession of Christian truth, of confessing Christ, and then rejecting that—which shows that they had never really believed at all. They never truly trusted in Christ.

One great example of that is Judas. A man who walked with the Lord for three - three and a half years, and was very trusted by the apostles. So trusted that they trusted him with their money. He was the treasurer all the while, not knowing, as John tells us, that he was pilfering from the treasury—stealing all the time. Judas proved at the end of his life that he was no true believer at all. He was apostate. —And it's not uncommon.

But “The Apostasy” is unusual. This has the definite article—It is “The Apostasy.” So it is a worldwide rejection of the Lord, maybe from Christendom which gives lip service to Christ—but then will stop even the lip service. It's been translated “the great revolt.” It is unprecedented. As violent as things were in Paul's day and as secular and unbelieving as they are in our day, that has not happened yet. It will be the first sign of the coming day of the Lord.

The second, and probably connected with “The Apostasy”, is the appearance of a lawless rebel, a tyrant. John called him “the antichrist.” Paul calls him “the man of lawlessness.” Lawlessness is refusal to conform to, or obey God's law. It is spiritual rebellion, the refusal to be ruled by God. All sin is lawlessness. John tells us that in 1 John 3, verse 4. That's how he defines sin. “Sin is lawlessness.” And that is what will characterize this man. He will be the final and the supreme embodiment of evil. He will be a very significant figure. A person prophesied by Daniel.

So lots of attempts have been made to identify this figure down through history. Nero is one of those that people have identified as the antichrist—or some other Roman emperor, Domitian for example. And there are similarities. The Roman emperors were not only political and tyrants, they were religious men. From the time of Augustus on, they required worship from their subjects and persuaded those to do so by the threat of persecution if they didn't. But those emperors have come and gone.

Now that hasn't stopped the guessing into modern times. People have identified all kinds of people as the antichrist, from the time of the Reformation to the present: Popes and politicians, emperors, conquerors, dictators, people from Napoleon to Hitler. Again, there are similarities in 1 John 2:18, when John told his readers that antichrist is coming; he added the fact that, "...even now many antichrists have appeared..." And in a fallen world, we shouldn't be surprised by that. From the beginning, from Lamech in Genesis 4, and the giants of Genesis 6, to Nimrod, the mighty hunter and empire builder in Genesis 10; there have been antichrists—there have been tyrants with a cult following who set out to build a lasting kingdom to the glory of man.

Now, that's the nature of things in a fallen world. Men oppose God. They are in open rebellion against Him because they want autonomy—which means they want self rule. They want their lives to be guided by themselves and no one else. Now that is every unbeliever in the world. So we will always be able to recognize the characteristic of antichrist in people, especially in powerful people—it's characterized by that; by this rebellion; by this self-assertion; by this self-aggrandizement.

But guessing his identity is both wrong and futile. Now that's clear from Paul's statement. He said of this man, that he must be *revealed*. He hadn't been revealed in Paul's day. He hasn't been revealed in our day. He is a still future person, and will come just before the Lord's second coming. He will be *revealed*—suggesting that he will be in the world, hidden, when suddenly he appears—he is *revealed*.

Now that word is used in chapter 1, verse 7, of Christ's coming from heaven. It will be sudden. It will be something that isn't anticipated necessarily. He will be *revealed* with His angels. So Leon Morris, in his commentary, suggests from that that there will be something supernatural about his coming, this coming of the man of lawlessness. People will know who he is when he makes his appearance. That seems obvious from the description Paul gives in verse 4 of his character, his ambition, and his behavior—which are brazen. He "opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."

He is an adversary. He opposes truth. He opposes the Gospel. But he also opposes people—opposes anyone who would challenge him and his exaltation above everyone and everything. He puts himself in the highest place. Now that is the essence of the natural man—self-centered and driven by selfish ambition.

We are studying eschatology, but in this study, in this passage, we learn a lot about anthropology. We learn a lot about human nature in a fallen world. And he's the epitome of it. So he is a man driven by self-ambition; but while that is characteristic of all unbelieving people, this man goes beyond most. In fact, he will be unique. He will demand worship—and he will get it. He will take his seat in the temple of God. The act itself is intended to display the only thing that it could mean, and that is, as Paul says, “he is God.” It is the ultimate act of blasphemy.

In verse 5, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he told them of these things, which is instructive. I've made this point before, but it's worth making again, because Paul was there, you'll remember, in Thessaloniki only briefly,—two, at the most three weeks. But he taught them on eschatology. He taught them on these very events. That indicates that these events are important. People today often dismiss prophecy as fanciful and impractical, sensational, and oftentimes avoid teaching it. Well this is sensational and fascinating, but not frivolous, —it needs to be taught. Paul's example proves that.

When he taught this, the temple in Jerusalem was standing. So there was no question to the Thessalonians what Paul meant—this man will enter the Holy of Holies, in the temple in Jerusalem, and he'll sit down in that place: The place where the High Priest could only go once a year; the place where God is symbolically dwelling. But in AD 70, the temple was destroyed by the Romans and the Dome of the Rock has been standing in its place since the seventh century, over 1300 years ago. It seems permanent. So modern commentators puzzle over what temple Paul meant.

Their ideas range from a reference to the church, that that's the temple that he's speaking of. This will happen within the professing church. Or perhaps this is simply a figurative way of expressing the opposition of this man. But Paul's statement is simple

and definite—it is "...the temple of God...". Since there's no temple today, I don't think it's fanciful to assume that there will be this temple that he refers to "in that day"... which would mean that there will be a temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. Now that in my mind is truer to Paul's language than any of the speculation that some of the modern commentators give.

In 1967, when the Israeli paratroopers took the Old City of Jerusalem, Rabbi Goren, who was the chief rabbi of the military rushed to the Wailing Wall, a Torah scroll under his arm. He said a prayer there, and then he blew the shofar. (He blew his ram's horn.) Then he proclaimed, "I, General Shlomo Goren, Chief Rabbi of the Israeli Defense Forces, have come to this place, never to leave it again." He spoke for the nation when he said that.

He also shared his idea with a commander that in preparation for the imminent coming of the Messiah, they plant explosives on the Temple Mount and blow up the mosques. The commander didn't think that was a very good idea, then. But who knows about the future? Paul writes of a temple, and the clearest meaning is a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

So, when will all of this happen? John said, "Even now many antichrists are in the world." Why is it then, that after 2000 years the antichrist, the man of lawlessness hasn't come? Paul gives the reason in verse 6—he's being *restrained*. And Paul reminds them that they knew what this restrainer was. He had taught it to them, so they didn't need to have him identify it again for them. They knew what it is. The problem is, we don't.

So various ideas have been offered, from human government, to the preaching of the Gospel. And it could be those. It could be a combination of things. But it seems to me, the ultimate answer is the Holy Spirit. For example, in Genesis, chapter 6, in verse 3, God gave the warning. "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever..." He would not restrain human evil forever. And that was a very evil age. He gave the world 120 years, and then the flood came.

The Spirit of God holds back evil. He keeps human nature from becoming as bad as it could be. We think we live in an evil world—and we do. But it's not as evil as it could be. The Spirit of God is restraining that. But the day will come when He will stop restraining it, and the man of lawlessness will appear.

But even now, Paul says, “the mystery of lawlessness is at work.” Now that is an unusual expression. So what is it? What does it mean? Well a mystery is a secret, something that must be revealed to be known. And there is a secret about sin, about its depth and the way it works, that we really can't fathom—we cannot fully understand. But it is always working. How do you account for the fact that today people are so comfortable with sin, and how the words of Isaiah 5, verse 20 apply so readily to our own generation, as they have in so many in the past—men “call evil good and good evil”?

Well, I ask that question because sin is poison. Sin kills. It destroys. But the reality is, there's pleasure in it. In fact, as you look at verse 12, those who will be judged, (the unbelieving of the world when the Lord comes), they are described as those who “took pleasure in wickedness.” That's what men do.

But there's a mystery in that. If in fact sin is lethal, and it destroys, and it leaves wreckage in its wake, why are men, with their human nature in this fallen world, (I'm speaking of fallen men and women), so easily drawn away from righteousness? Seems there's a “mystery” somehow in all of that. And the “mystery”, Paul says, is at work today. It's been at work in the world since our first parents fell in the garden and it will be the mechanism for the rise of the man of lawlessness.

And people will be drawn to him. I think it's fair to say that he will be a charismatic figure, a heroic figure, appearing to be wise and true and good—perhaps, (and I think so), promising peace and prosperity and to some degree delivering it. But it will all be a deception. That's the mystery of lawlessness.

In 1 John 4, verse 3, John writes of “the *spirit* of the antichrist...”, and it is already in the world. It is the force that made the false teachers of John's day so appealing to people, so that they called “evil good and good evil.” So a secret occult force is at work

in the world today, as it was in Paul's day, that makes the appearance of the antichrist possible at any time—and in any generation. But that will only happen when the *restrainer* is removed, and the flood gates of evil are opened.

Now, if we identify this as the Holy Spirit, that doesn't mean the Spirit of God is removed from the world. That cannot be. He's omnipresent. He'll always be here. But He will relax, as it were, His restraint on evil. But what that shows is these things are not out of His control. Everything is completely under the Lord's control—then—as it is now. Regardless of how what restrains Him is explained, ultimately it is the Lord's almighty power that controls all of these events: His wisdom; His power; His person; He's sovereign. That is a glorious and eminently practical truth—the sovereignty of God.

The world is a dangerous, deceptive place. It is a battlefield, full of hidden land mines. It doesn't seem that way, but that's the deception of it. And there are deceptions and pitfalls everywhere. But the believer can and should live confidently because we are secure. With all of the dangers out there, all of the threats physically to us, (and I think Calvin is right), if we understood all of the dangers that are out in the world, we would not leave our homes for fear of what could happen. They are without number, the possibilities. But God is sovereign. And because He is, (and this is the point that John Calving makes in his *Institute*), because He's sovereign we have confidence to go forward and live with a sense of absolute security, because we are secure. We are in the Lord's hand—that's John, chapter 10—and we'll never be plucked out of His hand as His children. And He will bring all of this, that we're reading about here, to fruition and conclusion, gloriously.

Paul indicated that in verse 3, where he called this man “the son of destruction.” That's something we need to define, “son of destruction.” It could be one who brings destruction, and that's certainly true. But it can also mean that he's the one who will be destroyed in the end, doomed to destruction. Paul describes that reality, that fact, in verse 8. It's what Daniel saw and recorded in his book, in chapter 7, the rise of the beast and his demise, when he saw in his night vision “The Son of Man” receive the kingdom, and the beast slain. But that will not happen until his career unfolds, and his tyrannical

rule and blasphemous religion, his self-apotheosis, have run their course across the earth.

There will be nothing normal about it. In fact, it will be paranormal-supernatural. In verse 9, Paul says that, "His coming will be in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders." Now all three of those words are used of Christ's miracles. Not the word "false", but the words, *power*, *signs*, and *wonders*. And I think Paul chose them for that reason. I think he chose them to make a point. And the point is to show the counterfeit ministry of antichrist. He is Satan's messiah. That's how he's going appear. That's how he's going be received by people, as the one that's going put it all together.

Maybe there will be a collapse of government, (and that is part of the restraint, somehow), and there'll be chaos and that will be the occasion for this man to arise and put it all together. He is Satan's messiah. But he's a caricature of that—a man with great power, though. Satan's energy will enable him to do his signs and wonders in order to accredit him as worthy of worship and following. But they're false wonders, intended to deceive. And they will be persuasive among the unbelieving, Paul says in verse 10, "...for those who perish because", he said, "they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." This is the reason they're deceived. They rejected the truth of the Gospel, which is saving truth, which is wisdom itself. And because they don't have the truth, they will have no defense against the lie.

I've read that people who are used to handling real money, like cashiers, can recognize a fake bill easily, just by touching it. And the reason is because they know the genuine so well that they can detect the counterfeit. Now that's probably an antiquated example, because not many cashiers are using cash anymore. It's all plastic. But nevertheless, I think there's a principle in there that's true. It's important for us to deal with matters of deception, and distinguish the true from the false, fact from fiction. And we do that first and foremost by knowing the truth. By knowing the truth to the degree that we know we'll be able to detect counterfeits.

Now that's not to say we're not to study the counterfeits and know the nature of the error of the age in which we live and what's going on. I think there's great value, and I think it's important to know the heresies that the church has faced—because those ancient heresies are always recurring in the present, and it's good to know the error to be able to recognize it when it occurs. But what's essential is knowing the truth; is girding ourselves with the truth and developing in it. And the person that does that is going to have the wisdom and the insight to know what's true and what's false—fact from fiction.

But these who rejected the truth rejected the Gospel, which is the world, that's who's rejected it. And they will be swept away in this grand deception. They will worship the antichrist. And worst of all, they will perish eternally. It's a great tragedy. And the emphasis that Paul puts here on the magnitude of the blessing they have rejected—salvation—highlights the great tragedy. Still, the guilt is altogether theirs for such willful sin. In fact, their deception was the penalty of their unbelief. Paul says that next in vs 11.

All of this is really only the outworking of God's plan for the world. And Satan is an unwitting participant in it. He has design, and will inspire “the deception of wickedness”, as Paul put it in verse 10, that will ensnare the world of unbelievers. So he, (Satan), is the one really working out this plan, ultimately, of God's that will end up in his own demise. And so we read in verse 11 that Paul says that “God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.” That is the just penalty for willfully rejecting the truth. —They will believe the lie.

It again shows the overruling control of God in the affairs of men. He's not a mere passive observer who steps in occasionally to change the course of events. He's in complete control. And again, the Lord's action is just. Paul begins the verse saying, it is “For this reason”, (referring to the rejection of the truth), for the reason they rejected the truth, that is why this deluding influence will come upon them. It is all according God's justice. It's not some whim, or some caprice that God is engaging in. He's acting according to justice. They will rebel, they will assert their authority, their independence.

And their very rebellion will be the means of their punishment. God will give them over to it. They choose to go a different way and God will give them over to that way. He will send the deluding influence.

And the purpose of doing that is given in verse 12. "...in order that they may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness." God is just. He governs morally and enforces penalties on the wicked. —And He can do that because He is God. He is the creator of the universe. He is the sustainer of it all. He is Holy; He is righteous; He is true; He is infinite and eternal. Satan, as powerful and cunning as he is, is only a finite creature, which makes him infinitesimally small compared to God. Luther called Satan, "God's ape", which means he only imitates God. And his imitations of the Godhead always fail in the end.

And that should encourage us. It was intended to encourage the Thessalonians who were suffering persecutions and afflictions, as he said back in chapter 1, in verse 4, they were not in "the day of the Lord." The necessary events had not yet happened. But when they do occur it will all be in God's time, according to His plan, and He will end it decisively.

In verse 8 Paul says, "the Lord will destroy him," (this man of lawlessness), "with the breath of His mouth." That's Luther's hymn "One little word shall fell him." In fact He simply appears, Paul says, which will be an "*appearance*" of blazing glory. *Epiphaneia* is the word. It will be an epiphany; a glorious appearance of the Lord—and antichrist is gone. Effortlessly.

Now by way of application, that shows the error of millennialism. Not the doctrine of the millennium, but the idea that man, by his efforts, will establish Utopia on earth, that man will usher in the golden age—a "millennium."

Antichrist theology proves that false. Our hope is not in politicians and parties. Politics is important, and it shouldn't be ignored, (and I, perhaps, should emphasize that in this election year that we're in). It is important. If you're concerned about the daily affairs of life, and how they affect you, politics is important. I get annoyed, I guess, when

I hear preachers say, "A pox on both their houses." Well, that doesn't solve anything. Politics affects us, and it is important. But our hope is not in man—any man. Men will always disappoint. Our hope is in the Lord, and He will resolve it all some day. And He, the Lord Jesus, will bring in the millennium.

But also, by way of application, if the Lord will control those events and evil beings, the devil and the antichrist, Satan's messiah—and He will, He will control them, then He's now in control of our lives, in the worst of times. And His control is according to an all wise plan and purpose. And we can rest in that. The wicked will not escape justice. The saints will be vindicated. God is with us. God is just, but He is also merciful. What Paul covers in a few verses here in chapter 2 is described in detail in the Book of Revelation, much of it in chapter 13, with the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet; "The Infernal Trinity", as it's sometimes called. It's interesting to note that from chapter 4 to chapter 21, during the tribulation, the church is not mentioned. I don't know that we can make too much of that, but that's a fact. It's not mentioned.

But what is also a fact is it will be a time of widespread evangelism. And many Jews and Gentiles will be saved. In Revelation 7, John learns of the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel who are God's servants. And we assume they carry the Gospel across the globe, because he then sees a multitude in heaven. His angelic guide told John, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vs14). That's a vivid way of describing faith, and appropriating the sacrifice of Christ. It's by trusting in Him, trusting in His sacrifice, His person and His work. And when we do that, all sins that we have committed are forgiven—washed away as it were.

If you've not done that, if you're living in defiance of the Lord God, that cannot go well for you. He is patient, but His patience ends. It ends in justice. Receive instead, His grace. Come to Christ and be saved. Multitudes have, multitudes are, and multitudes will. God's grace is abundant. Come to Him. And may the rest of us, all who have, rest in that and rest in Him and be active in our confident service for Him.

Let's close with a word of prayer. And, as I do, I'm going pray for the Lord's Supper, and that we will prepare our hearts well for that remembrance of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this passage. It is an interesting passage. It is a fascinating passage. But it's not simply that; it is one given for correction. But to us, it gives us a sense of the direction that history will go, how it will conclude. And what we're reminded of in this is things will get worse before they get better, but they will get better, because You're in control, and You're going to end all of this, and bring about a glorious age, that glorious time on this earth. And then a new heavens and a new earth, world without end. That is our future.

And so while we face challenges in this day in which we're living, and in fact our souls are exercised by the things we see around us, we can rest confident from the things Paul has taught here, that You're in control, and You're guiding all things according to Your will. And we can rest confidently in You. We thank you for that and may we do that. Increase our faith, that we would live wisely and well, and be witnesses for You.

Now Lord, prepare our hearts as we prepare to take the Lord's Supper, that we would remember our Lord and Savior, and what He did for us. Thank you for Him, and it's in His name we pray. Amen.

(End of Audio)