

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; “Proof of the Parousia” July 16, 2023

I. Welcome & Review

A. Good morning! Ohaiyogozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni.

1. How wonderful it is to be here with you all to praise and worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School classrooms.

1. As well as the bible English class (Second Service)

C. As they make their way out, will the rest of you please open up your Bibles and make your way to the book of 2 Thessalonians.

1. Last week we started our study of this small but important epistle from Paul that he wrote to the young church in Thessalonica.

a. At the beginning of our time last week we noted the basic background information about this letter. And we highlighted the main reasons for why Paul wrote this letter.

b. We noted how this letter really had three main purposes.

i. One, it was written to help encourage the Thessalonians as they continued to face all sorts of persecution and trials. Paul praised them for their perseverance, and he reminded them of certain promises they could cling to and he prayed for them that God's grace would enable them to do all that He had called them to.

ii. Two, he also wrote to further explain things that he mentioned in his first letter, specifically regarding what he wrote about in 1 Thessalonians

chapter 4 regarding the rapture and what he wrote about in chapter 5 regarding “the Day of the Lord”.

iii. And three, he wrote this letter to exhort some in the church who had become disorderly in the church. So, he wrote to confront those who were doing so and exhorted them to repent.

2. Last week we covered Paul’s encouragement that was found in chapter 1. Today, we’re going to look to the explanation regarding the coming of the Lord and the concerns the church still had regarding this event.

a. Our text this morning is going to be 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 vs. 1-12 and the title of our study is going to be “**Proof of the Parousia**”.

b. Now, if you’ve never heard of the word “Parousia”, don’t worry, I’ll explain what it is in our text today. It’s a transliteration of a Greek word that is found in the opening verse of our text.

c. Speaking of which, let’s go ahead and rise to our feet in honor of God and His Word. I’m going to read our text from my Bible, I want to encourage you all to follow along in your own Bible.

d. Paul continues his second letter to the Thessalonians with the following in verse 1 of chapter 2... (*R & P*)

II. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2;

A. In our opening verses we see that Paul is writing to the church concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.

B. The English word “coming” is the Greek word “Parousia”. “Parousia” is a transliteration of the Greek word that we use in English to refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

1. The word “Parousia” is used 24 times in the NT. 22 of those 24 times it is translated as the English word

“coming”. And of those 22 times, all but 5 either directly refer to or allude to the coming of Jesus Christ.

2. So, 17 times this word is used to refer to or speak about the coming of Jesus Christ. But the problem for us is that it is used in connection with different events and times.
 - a. The term “Parousia” refers to the Second Coming of the Lord, but the Second Coming is not just one event taking place at a particular time.
 - b. Rather it is made up of a series of events. And the only way to understand which event is being referred to is through a careful examination of the context in which the term appears.
 - c. The word is used to describe His coming to remove His disciples from the earth to be with Him in the event we know of and refer to as the rapture.
 - i. This was something Paul wrote about in his first letter to the Thessalonians, he wrote, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15-17)
 - d. The word is also used to describe the days of God’s judgement, a time of great suffering for those unbelievers who remain after the rapture of the church; we often refer to this time as the Tribulation or “the Day of the Lord”.

- i. Jesus said in Matthew 24, “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (**Mt. 24:37**)
 - ii. In Noah’s day those that rejected God were taken away in judgment. So too will be the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be a time of God’s wrath being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.
- e. But the word “Parousia” is also used to refer to His physical return to earth after the Tribulation. The culmination of the Tribulation will see Jesus Christ return in flesh and bring judgment upon the world.
- i. Jesus’ physical appearance will be an event that everyone on earth will see and know of. His coming will be like a flash of lightning that comes from the east and flashes to the west according to Matthew 24:27. (**Mt. 24:27**)
 - ii. In our text, Paul describes it as a destructive brightness at the end of verse 8.

3. And so, we see that the “Parousia”, or the coming of the Lord consists of several comings which are in reality stages of a continuous process related to events associated with the end of the age.

C. As I mentioned already, Paul had already taught the Thessalonians about these things when he was with them. He taught them about the rapture, he taught them about the Day of the Lord and God’s judgment, He taught them about the physical return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His rule and reign.

- 1. And we understand from Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians that the Church was waiting with great anticipation for the coming of Christ.
 - a. This was something that set them apart. Word about this church and their hope in Christ was

spreading to all the other churches throughout the area.

- b. The other churches testified about how they had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (**1 Th. 1:9-10**)
2. The church was very excited about the return of Christ. They looked forward to it with great anticipation knowing and understanding that His coming would be to save them from the wrath to come.
 3. The church however did have some questions about the coming of the Lord, and how it would impact some of their family members who had passed away prior to His return.
 - a. And that is what Paul addressed in chapter 4 when referring to the rapture of the church. How the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to be with the Lord.
 - i. The Thessalonians didn't have anything to worry about regarding their loved ones in the Lord who died while waiting for the Lord to come. They will rise from the dead and be with Him when He comes for His church.
 - b. Then Paul addressed the wrath that was to come in chapter 5; "the Day of the Lord". Paul wrote about how that day will come as a thief in the night; unexpectedly and unannounced. It will be a time of inescapable destruction for those on the earth.
 - i. But Paul assured the Thessalonians that this day would not overtake them as a thief in the night. He stated, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," (**1 Th. 5:9**)

- ii. The Thessalonians wouldn't be there to experience "the Day of the Lord" because they will already have been raptured.
4. These were the things that Paul tried to comfort the church with in his first letter. He wanted them to be assured that they would be caught up and gathered together to be with Him and that they would not be part of the coming of the Lord in regard to "the Day of the Lord"; God had not appointed them to His wrath, for Jesus delivered them from the wrath to come.
- D. So here in our opening verses, Paul is once again turning back to these events associated with the coming of the Lord and our gathering together to Him.
- E. He writes, "we ask you", your translation may read "we beseech you" or "we beg you". Paul, Silas, and Timothy were begging them, as if to plead with them, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled.
1. The idea here is that the Thessalonians were shaken in mind and troubled. The tense used in these verses suggests that this was so. That someone had gotten to them and had shaken them in their mind and had troubled them. They were in great distress.
 2. And this only after a few short months. The time between Timothy's visit and the writing of his first letter to the writing of the second letter represents a very small timeframe. Paul and his companions were shocked to hear that they had been troubled so soon after the last time they corresponded with them.
- F. The end of verse 2 gives us a hint as to what may have happened there in Thessalonica.
1. Paul wrote how they had been shaken in mind or troubled by either spirit, by word, or by letter, as if from them, as though the day of Christ, or "the day of the Lord" as it is written in most translations had come.

2. The church was distressed and shaken by the idea and notion that they were living in the Day of the Lord; the time of God's wrath as Paul spoke of in his first letter.
 - a. And we understand why this would shake them. Paul had taught them about the Day of the Lord. He had taught them about how it was a time of great destruction, a time where God's wrath would be poured out upon the world.
 - b. And Paul had assured them that they would not go through that time. That they had not been appointed to wrath, that the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross delivered them from the wrath to come.
 - c. Not only that, Paul had explained how they would be raptured to be with the Lord prior to the Day of the Lord.
 - d. If they were living in the Day of the Lord that would mean one of two things. Either Paul was wrong about them not being appointed to wrath, or the church in Thessalonica had somehow missed out on the rapture. That they had been left behind.
 - e. Both of those things would be terrifying to realize, and we can understand the idea of them being shaken in mind and troubled. Those are two very troubling conclusions to come to.
3. This thought or notion that the Day of the Lord had come and that they were living in it, was something that had spread through the church. Paul isn't sure exactly how it came to be but gives a few possibilities.
 - a. One possibility was that someone shared something claiming to have been given spiritual insight, a prophetic word, or utterance regarding the idea that they were living in the Day of the Lord.
 - b. Another possibility was that someone shared something by word; meaning that they delivered a

message, a teaching, that they said was from the Lord.

- i. Evidently there were some false teachers that had landed in Thessalonica and were spreading the idea that all of the persecutions and trials they were facing were evidence and proof that they were in fact living in the Day of the Lord.
- c. Paul even alludes to the possibility that someone could have forged a letter as if from him, Silas, and Timothy, claiming that things had changed and now they were living in the Day of the Lord.
 - i. This idea has further support based upon the way in which Paul ends this letter in chapter 3. He writes, “The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.” (**2 Th. 3:17**)
 - ii. Paul alludes to a way in which they could test other “letters” as if they were from him by looking at the salutation in the letter. Paul would write it with his own hand, and evidently it was very easy to discern Paul’s penmanship and signature.
- d. It very well could have been that all three of these things were taking place. That false teachers arrived spreading a false message, claiming to have been empowered by the Spirit of God, and claiming to have received letters from Paul himself stating that they were living in the Day of the Lord.

G. And so from verse 3 on through to the rest of our text, Paul is going to give evidence or proof that they are not, in fact, living in the Day of the Lord. Take a look at verses 3 & 4 again with me.

III. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4;

A. Paul starts off saying, “let no one deceive you by any means”.

1. The word deceive speaks of someone seducing them or someone coming along and leading them out of the right way into error.
 2. It didn't matter by which means they claimed to have had, what sort of support or evidence someone produced, Paul didn't want them to fall prey to these false ideas and teachings that the Day of the Lord had already come.
- B. In verse 3 Paul tells us that there are two things that must happen prior to the coming of the Day of the Lord, the day of God's wrath, and the time we know of as the Tribulation.
1. The first thing he mentions is that there must **be the falling away** that comes first, prior to the Day of the Lord.
 - a. The word "falling away" is one word in the Greek. It is the word "apostasia". It is where we get our English word apostasy from.
 - b. The word "apostasia" in the Greek is a noun that comes from the verb to depart. It speaks of a departure. It is only used twice in the NT, here in 2 Thessalonians and then again in Acts 21
 - i. In Acts 21 it is speaking about departing from the teachings of Moses. Where word on the street was that Paul was teaching all the Jews that were amongst the Gentiles to forsake the teachings of Moses; not to circumcise their children nor to walk in the customs of the Jews. It was a rumor that had gained some traction but certainly was not true. **(Act 21:21)**
 - c. Here in 2 Thessalonians it is translated falling away. Which on the surface seems to be speaking about people who would fall away from the faith, they would turn from the gospel and follow after lies.

- d. This idea of their being a falling away and a departure from the faith during the end times is something that is thoroughly supported in the NT writings.
- i. 1 Timothy 4 states, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” **(1 Tim. 4:1-3)**
 - ii. In 2 Timothy Paul proclaims, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” **(2 Tim. 3:1-5a)**
 - iii. In the chapter that followed Paul wrote, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” **(2 Tim. 4:3-4)**
 - iv. In speaking to His disciples about His second coming and the end of the age, Jesus spoke of how “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” **(Mt. 24:11)**

- v. Peter writes of how “scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.” (2 Pt. 3:3)
 - e. Will there be a falling away in the last days, people that will be led astray, people who will forsake the truth and receive the lie? Absolutely, there is no doubt about it.
 - f. But there is another way to interpret this falling away that is interesting to consider. Some bible teachers suggest that this falling away, this departure, could be referring to the rapture of the church.
 - g. That before the Day of the Lord can come there first must be the departure. And the definite article is used here. This isn’t just a falling away, or a departure; it is the falling away, the departure.
 - h. Some speculate that this departure is referencing the departure of the church from this world through the rapture. This is an interesting take and one that we will explore more in our text later on.
 - i. For now, we know for sure the Bible does speak of a falling away from the faith in the last days. It could be that this is what Paul is referring to. This is probably the safer of the two interpretations.
2. Back to our text. Paul said there were two things that must occur prior the Day of the Lord, one was the falling away and the second thing is **the man of sin being revealed**.
- a. The man of sin is a title referencing a specific person that is described in a number of different ways in the Scriptures. Here in our short text he is referred to as “the man of sin”, “the son of perdition”. Down in verse 8 he is referred to as “the lawless one”.
 - b. In the book of Daniel, he is referred to as the little horn that came up out of the fourth beast he saw in a vision. (**Dan. 7:8**)

- c. Also Daniel refers to him as the prince to come in Daniel 9.
- d. In the book of Revelation, he is referred to as “the beast” that came rising up out of the sea. (**Rev. 13:1**)
- e. But the name we most commonly associate with him and refer to him by is found in John’s writings. John speaks of this man of sin as the Antichrist. John writes, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.” (**1 Jn. 2:18**)
 - i. John speaks of many coming in the spirit of the Antichrist and refers to them as lowercase antichrists, foreshadows of the one who is to be revealed before the Day of the Lord.
- f. Now the prefix “anti-“ can be understood in two different ways. It can mean against, or it can mean instead of. Both are true of the Antichrist; he comes against Christ and all that names the name of Christ, and he comes instead of Christ, looking to take the place of Christ and to be worshipped as the Christ.
- g. So before the Day of the Lord can come, the Antichrist must be revealed.

C. In verse 4, Paul mentions a few things about what the Antichrist does.

1. First of all Paul says that he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped.
 - a. The Antichrist will come against every form of religion on this earth. He will stand in opposition to not only Christianity, but all other religions. Because he will come and exalt himself above all that is called God and all that is worshiped.
 - b. He will set himself up as the only thing that is worthy of worship. In Revelation 13, we read of how Satan,

the dragon, will give him his power, his throne, and great authority. He will have the ability to heal himself from a mortal wound and all will see this miraculous healing and marvel at him and follow him. **(Rev. 13:2b-3)**

- c. It continues in vs. 4 stating, “So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’” **(Rev. 13:4)**
 - d. So this beast, the Antichrist will exalt himself above all that is God and all that is worshiped.
2. Second we see that the Antichrist will sit as God in the temple of God.
- a. 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.
 - b. Now, this is interesting, because currently there is no temple in Jerusalem. So, how can the Antichrist sit as God in the temple of God? Well, the only possibility is that another temple will be rebuilt.
 - c. But some of you may object and say, how can that be with the Muslims being in control of the temple mount? You see, if you go to Israel today, there is no temple on the temple mount. Instead you will see the large Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
 - d. How will it be possible to build another temple on the temple mount when those structures are there? That’s a good question?
 - e. And I believe Daniel sheds light on a particular possibility. Daniel 9 speaks of the 70 week prophecy pertaining to the Jewish people.
 - i. And in Daniel 9 we come to understand that the weeks do not represent 7-day periods, but 7-year

periods. So, there are determined for the Jewish people 490 years.

- ii. Of those 70 weeks, 69 of them have already been fulfilled. Daniel prophesied of how there would be 69 weeks, or 483 years from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince. (**Dan. 9:25**)
- iii. From the decree given in the book of Nehemiah to rebuild the streets, the walls, and the city of Jerusalem we can count out 483 years and then anticipate seeing the Messiah. And that is exactly what happened. Jesus showed up during His first advent and presented Himself as the Messiah entering into the city on the back of a donkey at the culmination of the 483rd year.
- iv. But Daniel said that the Messiah would be cut off from the final week; he would be killed; the city would be destroyed along with the sanctuary. Daniel spoke of how desolations were determined for the Jews and its city until the very end. (**Dan. 9:26**)
- v. And at the end one will show up, a prince, a ruler. One I believe to be the Antichrist and he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of that week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate.” (**Dan. 9:27**)
- vi. At the end of the 69th year, the Messiah was cut off. And then subsequently the city and the sanctuary were destroyed. This happened in the year 70AD.
- vii. But later on when the Antichrist shows up and comes on the scene, he will make a covenant and there will be a temple. For half the week, 3.5 years, sacrifices will be offered up in the temple.

- viii. Only after halfway through the week will he bring an end to the sacrifices and perform what is referred to as the abomination of desolation.
 - ix. This leads many to believe that the covenant will have something to do with some sort of peace treaty between the Jews and the Muslims that will allow the Jews to build their temple on the Temple Mount next to the Dome of the Rock.
 - x. If you go to the Temple Mount today you will see the large Al-Aqsa Mosque. And you will see the Dome of the Rock, but there is also another smaller structure called the Dome of the Spirit, or the Dome of the Tablets. It is referred to by these names based upon the idea that this was actually where the Holy of holies was at; the place where the Spirit of God rested, and the tablets of stone were kept in the ark of the covenant.
 - xi. Many believe that there is enough room on the Temple Mount to build a new temple for the Jews and have the Dome of the Rock undisturbed. And that this will be part of the covenant the Antichrist makes with many people.
 - xii. It's a very interesting theory, one that makes a lot of sense.
- f. Whether the covenant will be a peace treaty that allows for the Temple to be built next to the Dome of the Rock or not, doesn't change the fact that the Antichrist will be put in power for 3.5 years, 42 months and then after that time he will commit what is referred to as the abomination of desolation.
- i. Revelation speaks of this event. John describes the Antichrist as the beast "given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His

tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints [the Jews] and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”
(Rev. 13:5-8)

- g. Jesus said, “Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” **(Mt. 24:15-16)**
 - h. He continues a few verses down saying, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” **(Mt. 24:21)**
 - i. The final week of Daniel, the 70th week, is a final seven year period that we refer to as the time of Jacob’s trouble or the Tribulation.
 - i. The first part of the Tribulation will be nothing compared to the second half of the Tribulation, a time referred to as the Great Tribulation, a time where God will fulfill His wrath pouring out the seven bowl judgments mentioned in Revelation 16.
3. The third thing Paul speaks of regarding the work of the Antichrist is that he will show himself that he is God.
- a. The Antichrist will want to be seen and acknowledge as God. He will set Himself up as God in the flesh.
 - b. The Antichrist truly is Satan’s own attempt at presenting his own parody of Christ. The Antichrist will be an imitation Christ. He will come and desire the worship that belongs to Christ alone.
 - c. Just as Christ is God in the flesh, so too the Antichrist will claim to be God in the flesh. Just as

Jesus resurrected himself from a mortal wound, so too will the Antichrist. Just as Jesus had a prophet that came before Him to prepare the way and direct people to worship Him, so too the Antichrist will have a false prophet that leads people to his own worship. Just as Jesus is part of the holy trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so too the Antichrist will be part of an unholy trinity of the devil, himself, and the false prophet spoken of in Revelation 13.

- d. The Antichrist truly comes not only against Christ, but presents himself instead of Christ. He wants to set himself up as the Messiah. And he will trick many of the Jews into believing that he is in fact their long awaited Messiah.

D. Let's continue in our text and read a little bit more about the coming of the Antichrist and things associated with it. Read with me verses 5-8a

IV. 2 Thessalonians 2:5-8a;

A. In verse 5 Paul tries to jog the memory of the Thessalonians reminding them that he had spoken to them about these things when he was with them.

B. And in verses 6 & 7 Paul states, "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."

1. This is a very interesting and peculiar bit of information. Paul speaks of one who is restraining, one who is holding back the revelation of the lawless one, the Antichrist. There is someone that is keeping the desires of the Antichrist at bay, unable to be released fully. He is at work currently, but only in part, something or **someone is prohibiting him from doing all that he wants to do.**

2. Now Paul does something here that I really don't like. He says, "Hey, you know what is restraining", but he doesn't bother to identify to us who or what that is. It was something that he had already spoken about with the Thessalonians and he felt that it didn't need further explanation here. So, we are left to try and figure out for ourselves what, or who, it is that is restraining the work of the Antichrist.
3. Now the translators and editors of the NKJV do us a little favor in helping to identify this person. In the NKJV the personal pronoun "He" is capitalized anytime it is referring to deity. And in verse 7 the NKJV capitalizes the pronoun "He" the two times it is used. It is plain to see that the editors and translators of the NKJV of the Bible, believed this person to be of divine nature.
4. But the capitalizations are not part of the inspired word of God. So we shouldn't base our interpretation solely on that.
5. There are other evidences to suggest the identify of this person. One thing worth noting is that in verse 6 Paul referred to what is restraining as something in the neuter, but in verse 7 he refers to him as "He who now restrains" in the masculine gender. This tells us very clearly that this is a person, a real being.
6. And this being has been restraining ever since the first century. He was actively restraining the Antichrist back then, and he continues to hold the Antichrist at bay even today.
7. There are no people that have been alive for the last 2,000 years keeping the Antichrist at bay, restraining Him. So, the only logical conclusion is that this restraining power is God.
8. But God could be Jesus, it could be the Father, or it could be the Holy Spirit. Paul gives us another clue

that tells us there will be a time where this restraining power will be removed.

- a. Well, by the time Paul wrote this letter Jesus had already been removed, He had ascended into heaven. So, it isn't likely to be referring to Jesus.
- b. But we do know that in His place, God the Father sent the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit has been here at work in the earth convicting people of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. He has been taking residence within each and every one of us the moment we receive God by grace through faith.
- c. The scriptures are quite clear that the Spirit of God dwells within all who have given their life to Christ.
- d. And so, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is at work today in and through the lives of all the believers in this world.
- e. But is there any evidence to suggest there will be a time when this work of the Holy Spirit through the church will cease or be removed?
- f. I believe this could be referring to the rapture. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through the church will be removed when the church is raptured to be with Christ.
- g. And so, it could be that the restraining force of the Holy Spirit is taken away when the church is raptured to be with the Lord.
- h. Now, I'm not saying that the Holy Spirit will be removed from the earth at the rapture and that He won't be around during the Tribulation for we know that He will be for there will be some who get saved during the Tribulation period.
- i. Some Bible scholars believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit will revert back to the way it was during the OT, prior to the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That He will come upon certain people

as people operate by faith. That is an interesting theory, but one that we really can't prove.

j. Nor can we say with complete confidence and assurance that the one who is restraining mentioned here by Paul is the Holy Spirit. It makes a lot of sense and seems to be the best solution to the identity of this restraining power, but we can't be 100% sure.

k. If it is referring to the Holy Spirit and his work through the church. Then when the church is raptured and out of the way, this will make room for the Antichrist to be revealed.

C. Verse 8 tells us that only after the restraining force is removed that then the lawless one will be revealed. Let's continue on in our text.

V. 2 Thessalonians 2:8b-10;

A. Here Paul speaks more about the Antichrist and his strategy and character.

1. Paul tells us that the coming of the Antichrist will be according to the working of Satan. The Antichrist comes to do the bidding of Satan. He is empowered by Satan and given the authority of Satan.
2. He will come with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish.
 - a. The ability to perform signs and wonders is not limited to God. Satan too has this power. Just because someone is able to perform what we would characterize as a miracle, does not mean they are from God.
 - b. Many people ask for signs and wonders, the Jews were especially known for this. People claim that if they see a sign then they would believe. If God would simply show them a miracle then they would surrender their life to Him and worship Him.

- c. The Jews saw more signs and wonders than probably any other people. They saw the Red Sea part, and the waters collapse on the armies of Pharaoh. They saw a mountain shake; and heard a voice from heaven. They saw food fall from the sky 6 days out of the week, they saw the earth open up and swallow people. They were led by a fiery pillar by night and a cloud by day. They saw water come forth from a rock and they saw people healed from poisonous snake bites. But the scriptures tell us that they did not enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief. (**Heb. 3:19**)
- d. Miracles do not produce genuine faith. They only produce an appetite and a desire for more miracles. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" according to Romans 10:17. (**Ro. 10:17**)
- e. Those who do not put their faith in Christ, those who would not receive the love of the truth, referring to the truth of the gospel, that they might be saved will end up perishing.
- f. They will have fallen victim to the tactics and lying wonders of the Antichrist and they will worship him and in the end they will perish for their refusal of Christ.

B. Before we move on, I think it worth noting that as powerful and influential the Antichrist will be, he won't stand a chance against Jesus Christ when Jesus returns to this earth at the end of the 7-year Tribulation period.

1. The Lord will consume him with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming.
2. He will be gathered together along with the false prophet and he will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented day and night for all of eternity according to Revelation. (**Rev. 20:10**)

C. Let's look at these final verses and wrap up our time together. Look at verses 11 & 12 with me.

VI. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12;

A. For those that didn't receive the love of the truth, for those that did not receive the gospel message of Jesus Christ and take advantage of the opportunity to be saved, Paul says that God is going to send to them strong delusion that they may believe the lie, that they have what their hearts truly wanted.

1. We talked a little about this on last Wednesday night when covering our study through the book of Exodus. God is described as hardening the heart of Pharaoh. But as we read the account of the Exodus we come to realize that Pharaoh's heart was already hard. Pharaoh had hardened his heart against God. And there came a time where God solidified Pharaoh's choice and gave to him what he wanted.
2. We see this in the book of Romans as well. There we read of how "God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;" (**Rom. 1:24-28**).
3. Do you see the pattern? Those that suppressed the truth and didn't want to acknowledge the Lord, those who would rather exchange the truth for the lie, He

gave over to uncleanness. Because they wanted to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator God gave them up to vile passions. Those that did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind.

4. God never forced these things upon them, or desired for them to be or act this way, but they were given over based upon their own choices, based upon their own desires, based upon their own rejection of God and His truth.
5. God doesn't force us to do anything. We have a free will. A responsibility to choose for ourselves how we will live our lives.
6. Those who took pleasure in unrighteousness and didn't want anything to do with God, will be given over to their heart's desire. God will send upon them a strong delusion that they will believe the lie.
7. And what is the lie? Well, I think it is the same lie Satan has been perpetrating ever since the beginning.
 - a. The devil came to Eve and said to her, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (**Gen. 3:4-5**)
 - b. The lie is that we don't need to listen to God, and we don't need to fear God, that we can be our own God. That we can do and act however we please and nothing will happen to us.
 - c. That is the lie of the enemy. It's the same lie he's been using from the beginning. And people are still buying it today. People don't want to have to listen to God, they think they can do however they please and it won't matter. But that is the lie.
 - d. The Antichrist will come on scene and oppose all religion and people will eat that up thinking that they can do and say whatever they want. That it won't

matter. But after the first 3.5 years, he will betray the people and he will demand to be worshiped as God. And by then it will be too late for most. They will have bought into the lie and fallen prey to the Antichrist.

VII. Conclusion

A. So, Paul writes all these things to explain to them that they are not living in the last days because if they were in the last days then these other things would have happened, and since they haven't happened, they could take comfort in knowing that they didn't miss the rapture, that they aren't going to have to go through the Day of the Lord.

B. And the **same applies to us today**. If the Day of the Lord has come we would have seen all these things take place that are described throughout the Bible pertaining to the falling away, the revelation of the Antichrist, and the coming of Jesus Christ to destroy the Antichrist, his false prophet and all the nations and people who worshiped the Antichrist.

1. Because these things still haven't happen in our day, we can have the same sense of confidence and assurance the Thessalonians had. We haven't missed the rapture yet, and we aren't going to have to go through the Day of the Lord. For Jesus Christ saves us from the wrath to come and we have not been appointed to the wrath of God.
2. The wrath of God we deserved was poured out upon Jesus Christ and when we placed our faith in Him, our sins were forgiven and our debt was paid.
3. Praise God for that. Amen? Amen! Let's pray.