

The Tribulation, the Antichrist and Apostasy
2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

One of the first places I lived when I moved out of my parents' house was a garage apartment on the north side of Ft. Worth. And several of the Hispanic neighbors there were known to enjoy a nice fiesta from time to time and those fiestas could get loud and last well into the early morning hours. Sometimes when that happened, my landlord who was a trumpet player, would get tired of it and break out his trumpet, go into the front yard and play jazz trumpet as loud as he could. Most of the time, the neighbors would finally get the hint and turn their music down.

But do you know what is worse than mariachi music at midnight while you are trying to sleep? Mariachi music mixed with jazz trumpet when you are trying to sleep is way worse! I didn't stay there long, as you can imagine. But while that jazz trumpet was a dreaded and obnoxious sound, I am looking so forward to hearing another trumpet one of these days.

1 Thessalonians 4 puts it this way: *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”* That is the rapture. We will meet Jesus in the air and go to Heaven forever.

And I pray it happens today. I'm ready. Are you? That sure would solve a lot of problems, wouldn't it? The problem that remains is the people that remain. Those that are left behind don't stand much of a chance. Which makes me change my prayer from, *“Lord, please come today”* to *“Lord, what about my neighbors? What about my friends who aren't believers? God help me to be bolder in my witness.”*

I say that because the rapture could happen at any minute. The time is short. How do I know that? What makes me think Jesus could rapture us at any minute? Well, scripture is full of things to be watching for. When you see dark, ominous clouds heading this way and the wind starts to pick up and you see lightning off in the distance, you know it's about to storm. It's the same with the end times. There are signs to watch for.

In my day, we got in trouble if we chewed gum in school. Now, if a boy says he identifies as a girl, he can go in the girls' bathroom. In fact, it's even gotten worse, in some schools kids

are now “identifying” as dogs and cats or other animals. And the school goes along with it. Just this past week there was a story on Fox News about a kindergarten teacher at Ft. Bragg school that was fired for showing up for class dressed as a wolf and claimed to be a wolf to the little kids. ([Kindergarten teacher who identified as transgender furry reportedly fired | Fox News](#))

I saw an online news article the other day where a woman was trying to legally marry a tree. And another woman wanted to marry a model airplane. They say that pedophiles don’t want to be called that anymore. They want to be called “minor attracted persons” because it sounds better and they hope to normalize that kind of sexuality soon. I’ve seen several videos of parents of school kids who go to the school board meetings and start reading a book that has horrible pornographic words. The board members are, of course, horrified and make the guy stop reading. *“You can’t read that kind of thing in here. What do you think you’re doing?”* And the guy says, *“It’s a book my child checked out of this school’s library!”*

I could go on and on but it’s just depressing and you all know what I mean so I want to show you in scripture where it says to expect this kind of world in the end times. Our text this morning is from **2 Thessalonians**. I’ll give you a minute to find it. It’s a short book towards the back in the middle of several other books that start with the letter “t.” The author is Paul and he is writing to the church in Thessalonica in Greece.

He is writing to comfort that church because some of them may have misunderstood what he wrote in 1 Thessalonians. There he told them that Jesus was coming soon and when it wasn’t as soon as they thought, they were concerned that they missed it. So, here Paul gives them (and us) some clues; some warning signs to be watching for.

In **chapter one**, Paul starts right in saying that, yes, Jesus is coming soon and will give relief of all our troubles. The church in Thessalonica had been persecuted and Paul tells them that it will be worth it and those that did the persecuting will be punished. Like the little kid on the playground being bullied who says, *“Just wait til I tell my big brother on you!”* And his brother is a Marine drill sergeant. Paul assures them that it’s going to be okay. Justice is coming. That should give Christ Fellowship great comfort as well.

Then in **chapter 2**, Paul starts describing what happens at the Second Coming of Jesus. Now, most of you remember that there is a difference between the Second Coming and the Rapture. What’s the difference? The difference is the Rapture could happen at any time and we will meet Jesus in the air. The Second Coming is when we come back from

Heaven with Jesus and He actually stands on the Mount of Olives and wipes out all the unbelievers left at that time.

In our passage this morning, Paul talks about the “man of lawlessness”. That is the antichrist who will come on the scene right after the rapture. He will have all the so-called answers to what happened to all the Christians who disappeared. He will know how to bring peace to the world. He will be well-spoken and good-looking, and everybody will follow him, even getting the mark of the beast on their heads and hands. Again, we won’t be here for any of that. The tribulation starts after the rapture and the antichrist will be the big king kahuna at that time. In fact, he will even claim to be God.

So, in this passage, Paul is warning them of things to come. Some of these things none of us will see but some of it we will. I’ll explain more after we read **2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 5 Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Did anybody watch the State of the Union address the other night. I watched that and thought, “Our government is messed up.” Their system of doing things is just broken. It shouldn’t be that way. You know, forty years ago, things were just easier and better. It was

far from perfect but the world today is just sick. It seems like for all our knowledge and all our creativity and all our resources, things today should be so much easier. All our problems should be getting lesser and fewer and the world should be getting rosier and sunshinier and rainbowsier. Is there anybody here that believes this world is a better place than it was forty years ago? Sure, some things might be better. Dos Chiles wasn't around forty years ago, so there's that.

But seriously, the morals and ethics and lifestyles of people today are getting worse and worse and that is to be expected as we get closer to the end times. Let's look closer at our text and I'll show you. In **verse 3**, Paul says, *“Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day (the Second Coming) will not come until the rebellion occurs...”* That rebellion is the falling away, the apostasy, the losing of family values, the decline of church membership, the overall decline of our way of life.

We are seeing that right now like never before. Church attendance and church giving is at an all-time low, especially in the United States. And sometimes somebody will mention that we need to have just a good old-fashioned revival. That'll get 'em back. And I wish that was the answer but it's just not anymore. Years ago, they would have week-long revivals or even two-week-long revivals and people would come and get saved by the scores. But it just doesn't happen anymore. Do you know why we don't do that anymore? Because nobody would show up. It's hard to get some people to come on Sunday morning if there is a good game on or they have company or they have something else to do. That is the very thing Paul is warning about here in **verse 3**.

It is apostasy, a gradual falling away that makes the church and everything we stand for – namely the Kingdom of Jesus – irrelevant to unbelievers. It is because of this apostasy that unbelievers see Christians and say, *“Well, if church isn't that big of a deal to them, why should I even try it?”* This will continue until Jesus comes back and it is one of the things to watch for.

Okay, I have to move on. I'm going to run out of time and there is another phrase in here I want to really focus on. Let's start reading again in **verse 9** but the phrase is in **verse 11**. *“The coming of the lawless one (the antichrist) will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they 3 4 refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.”*

I hear people say sometimes that they can't believe in a God who would send good, moral people to Hell. But what they don't realize is that God doesn't send people to Hell and He doesn't want anybody to go to Hell. But they send themselves to Hell when they don't believe the truth that God has given them.

In this **verse 10** it says that they perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. How many of you were saved the very first time you heard the Gospel? Probably not many of you. But God is patient. He continues to put people in our path. He continues to make Himself known. He continues to allow us opportunities to repent and follow Him. But at some point, if you continue to say no, no, no...God gives you what you want.

In the Old Testament, in **1 Samuel 8**, the Israelites, who had been protected and provided for by God said, *"We want a king over us. We want to be protected and provided for by a king."* God knew that wasn't best for them but they insisted and finally God gave them what they wanted.

In the New Testament, **Romans 1** it says that the wrath of God is against people who suppress the truth that God has revealed to them and so therefore God gave them over to their sinful homosexual desires. It even repeats it in a couple of verses. God gave them over to their shameful lusts. It says it again. God gave them over to a depraved mind.

God doesn't force Himself on anybody and when somebody continues and continues to reject the truth, God says, *"Okay, you can have it."* That's the same thing God is going to do and I believe is doing right now like Paul talks about in **verse 11**. God sends them a powerful delusion.

Do you remember studying Genesis when it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart? First it says Pharaoh hardened his heart. Pharaoh hardened his heart. Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then it says God hardened his heart. Okay Pharaoh. If that's how you want it, that's what you'll get.

When it says that God hardened his heart, that phrase literally means to pull down tight on a rope like you are strapping down a pack animal or to push down on a wet sponge. What happens when you push down on a wet sponge? Whatever is inside that sponge comes out. That is exactly the same thing going on in **Exodus** and here in **2 Thessalonians**. It's not that God is the originator of their delusion. He is not forcing them to think a lie is the truth. It's just that that God is revealing what is deep down in their hearts and at some point, God says, *"Okay, if that's what you choose to believe, then I will let you."* And we see

the people then have this strong delusion and that strong delusion is leading them towards accepting the antichrist as their leader and ultimately their lord and savior.

Have you noticed today (of course you have noticed) how some people just don't seem to live in reality anymore? This whole transgender thing blows me away. Are we really supposed to play along with some guy who says he's a woman and so he dresses like a woman and maybe even takes female hormones and has surgeries? You know what he is after all of that? Well, he's not a woman. That's just not reality. But that guy truly believes he is now a woman. He's delusional.

As I mentioned before, young people especially are identifying themselves as animals and they are changing the pronouns they want used for them. You can't refer to them as he or she anymore. You have to call them some made up word. They are delusional. My nephew went to college and found out that the professors had to call you by whatever name you wanted so he chose the name "War Eagle" because he thought that would surely be too ridiculous. But no. The professors actually called him War Eagle! Those people are delusional.

Do you see how ridiculous that sounds? Just a few years ago, I couldn't have preached this message. If you said even five years ago that kids in middle school are switching their genders and the school is not only supporting them but enabling them and keeping their parents out of it, nobody would have believed you. But here we are and how else do you explain it than that God has already started giving them over to their desires? God is right now sending them powerful delusions. He has done it in the past and He will do it again. They won't believe the truth so God gives them what they want.

So, what are we to do? How should we live? First, live like Jesus may come back today. That means starting with your kids and grandkids and moving on to other loved ones and your neighbors and co-workers, you make sure everybody you care about knows the truth. You make sure your family – at the very least – knows Jesus and has a relationship with Him. You don't have to have all the answers. You won't have and that's okay. Just tell them what you know. Tell them what Jesus has done in your life. Tell them today, not tomorrow because we are not guaranteed tomorrow. We may die. They may die or Jesus may very well come back and rapture all of us. His return is imminent.

Music

Then tonight we are going to talk about some specific ways to go against this apostasy that leads to delusion. And we will see the benefits and the drawbacks of the different responses. I hope you'll be here tonight at six to talk more about this. This passage is exciting to me; exciting and motivating. It motivates me to make sure all my loved ones have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus. Do you have that relationship yourself? Have you asked God to forgive you of all your sins and then surrendered your whole life to Him? You can. Do it right now while you still have a chance. Do it now while the music plays.