

Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians



Lesson 9-Christ vs. Anti-Christ & Their Followers

Focus: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- **Introductory Ideas:** *The term “anti-Christ” can be found several times in the English New Testament of the Bible. Specifically, it can be found in 1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 4:3; and 2 John 1:7. It refers to a spirit that is antagonistic to Jesus Christ and His principles! According to John, there are many so-called “anti-Christ” in the world who have an antagonistic spirit to Jesus Christ. But, John also refers to a one specific “anti-Christ” who was going to come. A character who is very heinous in his principles and who exerts a very destructive influence against the true work and the true words of Jesus Christ—a very influential and destructive power! The Bible spoke of this very power within the prophecies of Daniel, under a different name, but with similar descriptions. Paul also speaks of this very heinous character who wields both political and religious influence which leads people astray from the true teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ. The word “anti” such as in “anti-Christ” can by definition actually denote a couple things, or have two basic meanings. One of them is to be against or opposed to, either subtly or openly. The other meaning we can find for the word is “rival”, “false,” “counteracting,” or essentially one who is trying to stand in the place or position of another (and falsely so). Both of these definitions would have application to this “Man of Sin” character in Scripture who is also pictured as the “Lawless One” here in 2 Thessalonians 2.*
- **The Coming of the Anti-Christ vs. the Coming of Jesus Christ Himself (v.1-3)**
 - Here the Apostle Paul speaks about the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “our gathering together unto Him” (v.1). This is the time when Jesus Christ comes to gather all of His beloved ones together. “Our” is including Paul, the Thessalonians, and all the other saints or people of God who will be gathered together at that time. This is the same exact gathering that Paul speaks of in 1 Thess. 4:16,17 with the trumpet sound and the raising of the “dead in Christ” and of our meeting the Lord in the air. Jesus spoke of this same gathering in Matthew 24:29-31 when He said, “He will send His angels **with a great sound of a trumpet**, and they will **gather together** His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (v.31).
 - Paul **then begins to establish the Divine order of things**. He told the believers not to be troubled or to think the “day of Christ had come” (v.2). No one should be deceived! (v.3). Paul, by the Holy Spirit, said “...**that Day will NOT come unless the FALLING AWAY COMES FIRST and THE MAN OF SIN IS REVEALED!**” (v.3). *Therefore, the Bible clearly establishes that **the man of sin** or “anti-Christ” will come **first** before Jesus Christ comes to gather His people with the trumpet blast! This means that the Rapture theory (as introduced in our lesson on 1 Thess. 5, and held by a number of Christian people today) is entirely faulty. The popular rapture concept says that Jesus Christ will gather his people first with the Trumpet blast, and then after that, within the next 7 years the anti-Christ figure should rise up. That is NOT what the Bible teaches! The Bible tells us here that Christ will not come to gather His people until after the Son of Perdition or Man of sin has been revealed! Rapture theory says, Christ gathers first, then anti-Christ. But, **the Bible says, the anti-Christ comes first, THEN Christ gathers us**. Therefore, **we have to be ready for what is coming!** The popular rapture concept is a deception from the devil because it leads people to think that they will never have to see or to deal with the anti-Christ figure if they are just “good enough Christians” today. Therefore, people do not look for the identity of this character, and they do not prepare to deal with him. That means, they will be easily deceived by Satan! They will easily follow this character without even realizing his subtle and wicked devices—after all, according to their theory, why should they even look for such a character, if they expect Christ first?*

- **He opposes and Exalts himself above all that is called God; even sitting up himself in the “Temple of God” and claiming to “be” God (v.4)**
 - That is the very same character as Satan himself from the beginning (See Isaiah 14:13,14). It is also the very same idea that Satan tempted Eve to get for herself by eating the forbidden fruit and disobeying the Law of God. (ref. Genesis 3:1-5).
 - Paul speaks here of the **“Temple of God.”** This character of figure would sit in the “temple of God” showing Himself to BE God! How terribly heinous and evil of him! Now, what “Temple of God” could Paul be talking about? Well, the New Testament mentions a couple. There was the old temple in Jerusalem, which has now been destroyed since AD 70, by the Romans. Jesus called His own body a temple once too, but that couldn’t be it (John 2:21). Paul himself mentions two other temples in his writings. *He reminds us that **we**, as God’s people are a temple for God—“our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). But collectively, **the church of Jesus, the body of Christ is “...a Holy Temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19-22).** It could be no other than this latter Temple! Jesus once told a Samaritan woman that the true worshippers of God would “no longer worship on the mountain [in Samaria] or in Jerusalem” (John 4:20-24). The true worshippers of God instead be those who worship Him “in Spirit and in TRUTH.”* Paul is telling us that this anti-Christ figure, this man of sin would rise up within the church of God—truly a most terrible and savage wolf! One who is both deceiving and being deceived! Paul warns of such dangers coming within the church in a number of places (See Acts 20:28-31; 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Satan would come so evilly and deceptively into the ranks of the church of God, appearing to be as an angel of light, but exalting himself even to the place of Godhood.
- **This Lawless Character was shortly to be revealed after the removal or the fall of another power who was restraining; Then he would eventually be destroyed by Christ at His Coming (v.5-10)**
 - (v.7) This power would be a “Lawless” power. They would attack the Holy Laws of God and try to undermine them. That is the very work of Satan himself!
 - There was now a waiting for one power to be removed, before this terrible one would come onto the scene. Paul is speaking of the prophecies here! He knew well the prophecies of the Bible, such as those in the book of Daniel.
 - **The power would have signs and wonders to deceive people into disobeying God! (v.9,10). Simply look at the Book of Daniel to discover this power being pointed out.**
 - **Daniel 7 gives us the background for this power.** Four symbolic Beasts arise in this chapter, each one representing a Kingdom. They represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (in order). The power to rise up after Rome (the one who was to be “taken out of the way” as Paul says in 2 Thess.2), was **the Little Horn** (See Daniel 2:37,38; 7:1-8, 17,23; 5:28; 8:20,21). The latter sequence is Rome, Little Horn, Then the second coming (See Dan. 7:8,9,10,14; 20-22; 25-27). Revelation 13:1-10 also points out this power. He is a “Lawless” power (Dan. 7:25; Dan. 8:25), and he attacks God’s people and his holy temple, claiming the power and place of Godhood in his proudness and blasphemy. In our next lesson we’ll learn the identity of this power exactly!! Come back for our next lesson!
- **Those who follow this corrupt power will be lost! (v.11,12)**
 - *Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). If we truly love Him, the “truth,” then we must obey His word, and keep His commandments, not another’s (John 14:15,21; 1 John 5:2,3).*

Question (s) for the Heart:

Is it your desire and prayer to follow and obey Jesus Christ and not the spirit of anti-Christ?
