

## II THESSALONIANS 2

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Thessalonians chapter 2, as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we have seen in our study of II Thessalonians so far, in chapter 1 we saw Paul give them *Encouragement in Suffering* as these new believers were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul told them, **“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.”** II Thessalonians 1:3-4.

As we move into II Thessalonians chapter 2 this evening, we are going to see Paul give them *Enlightenment About the Day of the Lord*.

What was the problem? Was there a problem?

Yes, there was a problem. You see, doctrinal error regarding the Day of the Lord had crept into the church and was confusing them.

Some were so affected by this that it was manifested in their lifestyle and not in a good way. Paul will deal with that issue in II Thessalonians chapter 3.

But here in II Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul is dealing with this issue of believers in Thessalonica believing that they missed the Rapture of the church and that they were in the Tribulation Period or the Day of the Lord!

And Paul will clear that misconception up for them and for us.

Even today many are confused about this issue, thinking that the Rapture is at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period, or at the end of the Tribulation Period or not at all!

As we have seen in our study of I Thessalonians, I think the Bible clearly shows us that the Rapture of the church will occur prior to the start of the Tribulation Period, and Paul will once again show us that point.

And let me say this, because some feel it doesn't matter what we believe about the Rapture, if it is even real or not. I think it is important because I am looking for Jesus and not the Antichrist!

And some even come to the conclusion that if you believe in the Rapture of the church you are not saved and as you go into the Tribulation Period you will receive the Antichrist!

Foolishness and that is not Scriptural at all! What that says is you are believing in what someone is teaching you instead of what the Word of God is clearly saying, and we will see how clear this is in our study tonight.

And please understand that God does not want us to be confused about the Rapture of the church, it is something we should understand, it is something we should know about.

Remember what Paul said back in I Thessalonians 4:13 regarding the Rapture of the church, **“But I do not want you to be ignorant . . .”**

And that is exactly what we are seeing today, confusion about this issue.

My prayer as we go through this section tonight is that we would clearly see that the Lord comes for His bride, in the Rapture; and then He comes with His bride, the second coming, to set-up His kingdom on this earth and rule and reign for 1,000 years!

With that said, let's begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 2, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening.

## II THESSALONIANS 2

### VERSES 1-2

To understand what Paul is saying in this chapter, you must know the context! Remember what I have told you, ***CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!***

What is the context of this chapter?

Paul opens up by speaking of the Rapture of the church. Now some may not agree with that. Some may wonder where I got that from. But just listen to what Paul wrote and I think you will clearly see that he is speaking of the Rapture of the church or meeting the Lord in the air.

We are told, **“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him . . .”** II Thessalonians 2:1.

Let me break this down and show you how I came to that.

First of all, who is coming?

Paul tells us that it is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what is going to happen in this coming?

We are going to be gathered with Him.

Paul made this very clear when he said in I Thessalonians 4:17, **“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.”**

That means that the Rapture of the Church has to take place prior to the start of the Tribulation Period.

And here is the problem that came into the church in Thessalonica. Some false teaching and some misunderstanding of what Paul taught, the incorrect application of what Paul taught and that had caused the Thessalonians to be **shaken in mind** and **troubled**.

Here Paul used strong wording, speaking of both a sudden jolt (*shaken in mind*) and a continuing state of upset (*troubled*).

Their fears centered on the idea that **the day of Christ had [already] come**.

You see, this phrase, “**the day of Christ had come**” is better translated, “**the day of the Lord had already come**” as the NIV translates it.

As one writer put it, “The fact that the young Christians in Thessalonica had become so panicked to think that they were now in the Day of the Lord is evidence that Paul had taught them that the Rapture of the Church would precede the Day of the Lord judgments so that Christians would never see the Day of the Lord - if he had taught them the post-trib. position they would have been happy they were in the Day of the Lord because Jesus would be coming soon.” (Pastor Phil Ballmaier)

Also, keep in mind that the Day of the Lord is not a literal day but a period of time.

And thus, the Day of the Lord begins right after the Rapture of the Church through the Tribulation Period, the Kingdom Age and the creation of a new heavens and a new earth that will be eternal.

But this false teaching and misunderstanding had shaken their faith.

In fact, Clarke gives us this insight into what this word “**shaken**” means.

He wrote, “The word to be shaken, signifies to be agitated as a ship at sea in a storm, and strongly marks the confusion and distress which the Thessalonians had felt in their false apprehension of this coming of Christ.”

That is exactly what false teaching, false doctrine does in a church and in believer's lives. It confuses them. It distresses them. They are tossed to and fro with these false teachings!

Now let me say this. If a teaching that you are embracing or has been brought into the church has caused confusion, it is not from God! God is not the author of confusion and Paul tells us this very thing in I Corinthians 14:33, "**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**"

And Paul tells these believers here in Thessalonica, not to be shaken in "**mind**" and the idea is to keep your composure, don't be swayed by these false teachings and teachers!

One writer put it like this, he said that Christians are "to keep their heads against error and fanatic notions." R. C. Lenski.

I like that and that is exactly what we are to do. Don't burry your head in the sand, ignoring false teachers and teaching, but rise above it. And the only way to rise above it is to bring it into the light of God's Word and the Word of God will bring it down if it is false!

Now notice how this misunderstanding came into play

First of all, Paul tells us that they were shaken as false prophecies were given that they were in the day of the Lord, "**by spirit.**" In other words, "*Thus says the Lord . . .*"

Not only that, but we also see false teaching that was spoken, telling them that they were in the Day of the Lord, "**by word**", and it shook them.

Also, they were shaken as this forged letter, supposedly from Paul, was being circulated stating they were in the Day of the Lord, "**by letter.**"

Now I think one of the reasons that they let these prophecies, these teachings, this letter confuse them was because of the persecution that they were facing. They thought they were in the Tribulation Period. They thought that they missed the Rapture and now it was too late!

All because of what they heard from these false teachers, false prophets, false letters, it caused them to move away from what they knew to be true and accept that which is contrary to what Paul had taught them and what he wrote to them in his first letter!

Now, as we read on, remember the context.

Paul is speaking of the Rapture of the Church and how it did not happen yet, they were not in the day of the Lord.

If you understand that, then what Paul says next will not be confusing. If you don't, then I think the next verse seems out of place and if we are really honest with ourselves, what Paul is saying would not help us at all.

### VERSE 3

This first point that Paul makes is important for us to understand because it flows out of what Paul was speaking of in the first two verses of this chapter.

And remember that Paul is admonishing them not to be blown away by this false doctrine that had come into the church.

And that false doctrine or teaching was that the Day of the Lord has come, and they missed out on the Rapture of the Church.

And to make his point, Paul says, "**Let no one deceive you by any means . . .**"

Paul's point is simple. Don't be deceived about the Day of the Lord and the Rapture of the Church, because "**that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first.**"

What is Paul speaking of when he says that there will be "**a falling away**" or APOSTASIA, (ap-os-tas-ee'-ah) has to come first?

The idea of this word is that of "rebellion; abandonment."

Now what are they rebelling against?

What are the abandoning?

Leon Morris tells us that it is a, “Rebellion against God’s rule.” And he goes on to say that “It is not so much forsaking one’s first love and drifting into apathy that is meant, as it does setting oneself in opposition to God.”

So this falling away must come first and then the church will be caught up to be with the Lord.

One of the problems is that ever since the church has started there has been apostasy! All you have to do is look at some of the letters that were written, and you can see the writers come against the false teachers with their false doctrine.

And when you think of a falling away or an apostasy, you think of it being general, broad, that there are many aspects to it!

But here Paul calls it “**the falling away**” or “**the apostasy.**”

So it does sound like something specific here.

Now I know that some feel that this is speaking of a departure from the faith and this departure is on such a large scale now, greater than at any other time in these last days.

And I think we can clearly see that there are many places in the Scripture that speak of this departing from the faith in the last days, but I don’t think that is what Paul is speaking of here, it does not fit the context of what he was just saying.

In I Timothy 4:1-3 we see this departure from the faith in the last days as we are told, **“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.”**

I believe we are in those days that Paul was speaking of and we see these doctrines of demons coming into the church and for many, they are embracing them instead of exposing them as false doctrine!

But again, I don't think that is Paul's point here in II Thessalonians 2:3. I don't believe that his point is related to this departure from the faith or this falling away from the faith!

Let me ask you this question.

What is the focus of this chapter?

It is the Day of the Lord and the Rapture and how the church was confused by false doctrine coming into the church and telling them that they missed the Day of Christ, the Rapture and were now in the Day of the Lord or this judgment of God upon a Christ rejecting world!

And now, since they are worried that they missed the Rapture, Paul wants to give them additional evidence to show them, to assure them that Jesus has not come yet for His Bride, the church!

And like I have said, here in II Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul is speaking of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for His Bride, the Church, in the first two verses and I believe that same idea is seen here in verse 3 of II Thessalonians chapter 2.

Remember; context, context, context!



Why do so many people believe that this is speaking of this falling away from the faith? It is because how the King James Bible translated this word.

Let me show you what I mean. Thomas Ice tells us,

The first seven English translations of *apostasia* all rendered the noun as either “departure” or “departing.” They are as follows: Wycliffe Bible (1384); Tyndale Bible (1526); Coverdale Bible (1535); Cranmer Bible (1539); Breeches Bible (1576); Beza Bible (1583); Geneva Bible (1608). This supports the notion that the word truly means “departure.” In fact, Jerome’s Latin translation known as the Vulgate from around the time of A.D. 400 renders *apostasia* with the “word *discessio*, meaning ‘departure.’” Why was the King James Version the first to depart from the established translation of “departure”?

Most scholars say that no one knows the reason for the translation shift. However, a plausible theory has been put forth by Martin Butalla in his Master of Theology thesis produced at Dallas Theology Seminary in 1998. It appears that the Catholic translation into English from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate known as the Rheims Bible (1576) was the first to break the translation trend.

“*Apostasia* was revised from ‘the departure’ to ‘the Protestant Revolt,’” explains Butalla. “Revolution is the terminology still in use today when Catholicism teaches the history of the Protestant Reformation. Under this guise, *apostasia* would refer to a departure of Protestants from the Catholic Church.”

The Catholic translators appear eager to engage in polemics [arguments] against the Reformation by even allowing it to impact Bible translation. By 1611, when then original version of the King James Bible came out, the translators changed the English translation tradition from “departure” to “falling away,” which implied “apostasy.”

Such a change was a theological response to the Catholic notion that the Reformation was a revolt against the true church; instead, Protestants saw Catholic beliefs as “the falling away” or “the great apostasy. This would mean that the shift in translation was not based upon research of the meaning of the original language but as a theological polemic against the false teachings of Romanism.

It is well established that E. Schuyler English is thought to be the first pretribulationist to propose that “the departure” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 was a physical departure and thus a reference to the pre-trib rapture. However, history records that at least a couple of men thought of this idea before English’s series of article in 1950. J. S. Mabie is said to have presented the view that “the departure” refers to the rapture as early as 1859 during a prophecy conference in Los Angeles. He later wrote his view in an article published in November 1895 in a periodical called *Morning Star*. Another pre-English proponent of “the departure” as the rapture was John R. Rice in a book in 1945.

- Thomas Ice, The “Departure” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3

Now, in saying that, does it fit the text and the context of this chapter?

I believe it does, much better than a departure from the faith.

Look at what Paul is saying here, **“Let no one deceive you by any means for that Day [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away [the Rapture] comes first.”**

Paul Lee Tan notes that, “The definite article ‘the’ denotes that this will be a definite event, . . . Paul refers here to a definite event which he calls ‘the departure,’ and which will occur just before the start of the tribulation. This is the rapture of the church.”

So the Rapture will take place and what happens after the Rapture?

**“... and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”**

In other words, it is after the Rapture of the Church that the Antichrist will be revealed.

Keep in mind that we, as Christians, are not told to look for the Antichrist, but Jesus Christ.

Why is that?

Because we will not be here when he is revealed, we will be with the Lord!

We are told here that the Antichrist is also called **“the son of perdition,”** and there was only one other person who was called by that name, and that was Judas, (John 17:12).

Also, Judas as he betrayed the Lord was possessed by Satan.

There is only one other person who we know of that will be possessed by Satan and that is the Antichrist! (Luke 22:3).

Keep in mind that the word ***“Antichrist”*** means both “against” and “in place of” because he is against Jesus Christ and as we will see, he wants to be worshiped in place of Jesus Christ!

Paul is going to fill in some more details of this son of perdition, but I hope you clearly understand the order of events that will take place before this man is revealed!

#### VERSE 4

The Antichrist is a mimic of Satan himself as he wants to **“... exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”**

What we see happening here is that at the 3½-year mark of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist will enter the re-built temple in Jerusalem and demand to be worshiped as God.

This is known as the abomination of desolation spoken of in Daniel chapter 9 and Matthew chapter 24.

To me, here is the exciting thing. When we went to Israel in 2004 we visited the Temple Institute and they have all the implements needed for the Temple and the sacrifices, the priests and their garments are prepared, even the plans for the Temple are drawn up and they have placed in the Temple drawings video cameras, which is interesting to me.

You see, Jesus said in Matthew 24:15-16, **“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.’”**

The only way that could be possible is if they were showing a continual feed from the Holy Place. Keep in mind this was long before videotaping and television, but God knew and He told us that the Jews will see this and when they do they are to flee into the mountains, to Petra where God will protect them for the 3½ years until He returns to set-up His kingdom! Those that don't flee will be destroyed, a greater slaughter than what was seen in the holocaust!

Now here is the problem, the Palestinian Authority have control of the Temple Mount. On the Temple Mount there is Mosque of Omar and the Dome of the Rock.

The Dome of the Rock is that gold structure you see in the pictures of the Temple Mount, and the Dome of the Rock is the third most holy site for Muslims.

There is no way they will let the Jews take down those structures to rebuild the Temple nor will they let them build anything up there.

But in Revelation 11:1-2 we are told, **“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.’”**

What that is saying is that the Temple can be re-built to the north of the Dome of the Rock because John tells us that the Temple proper will be built again.

On the Temple Mount there is a spot called the Dome of the Spirits and when we were there several years ago we saw it, and this is the place, I believe, where the Holy of Holies stood and from this spot you can look out the Eastern Gate to the Mount of Olives.

In his landmark article in the March/April 1983 issue of *Biblical Archaeological Review*, Dr. Kauffman declares that while the Dome of the Rock has been assumed to sit on the sacred site of the Holy of Holies, the true location is actually one hundred meters north. What is one hundred meters north of the Dome of the Rock? A small gazebo-like structure, below which is the only other place the original bedrock of the Temple is exposed.

As opposed to the jagged rock in the Dome of the Rock, however, the stone one hundred meters to the north is flat - providing a much more likely setting for the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies. Not only more logical, this site seems more historical. You see, according to the Mishna - the highly esteemed book of Jewish oral traditions - when the priest stood in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he could look through the veil, through the door, and see the Eastern Gate directly before him.

The results of a secret excavation in 1970 confirmed that the original Eastern Gate is directly below the present Eastern Gate. This makes Kauffman's assertion even more intriguing. For if you stand one hundred meters north of the Dome of the Rock, the Eastern Gate is in plain view and when I was in Israel, I was able to do this!

Not only that, when the Muslims built the gazebo-like structure in A. D. 691, they gave it two names: The Dome of the Spirits, and the Dome of the Tablets. Thus, even Islam recognized this site as the spot where the tablets (the Ten Commandments within the Ark of the Covenant) and the Spirit (the *shekinah*, *chabod*, glory of God over the Ark of the Covenant) had been.

If the Dome of the Spirits or the Dome of the Tablets is the same place where the Holy of Holies was located, then the Jews could rebuild their Temple and the Dome of the Rock would not have to be destroyed or taken down.

Why? Because it will be in the outer court, a place that John was told not to measure for it has been given to the Gentiles! I believe that is the covenant that is made, to rebuild the Temple and to have these Islamic shrines still standing on the Temple Mount, but in the outer court!

Right now, there is no way the Palestinian Authority will let that happen but in Daniel 9:27 we are told, **“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”**

I believe that part of this treaty the Antichrist makes with Israel is to allow them to rebuild their Temple and Daniel tells us it will happen because in the middle of that 7-year period, at the 3½-year mark he will stop the daily grain and blood sacrifices, why?

Because he now goes into the Temple and demands to be worshiped as God!

Please understand that this is not a new thought. Listen to what Irenaeus wrote in the late second century.

We are told,

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple in Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom.

- Irenaeus, writing in the late second century

As we read on Paul will once again deal with some controversial topics, and I pray that as we go through them, that we will understand the point that Paul is making.

### VERSES 5-8

First of all, we see that Paul wants them to **REMEMBER!** Remember what?

They were to remember the truths that Paul had already taught them, these truths when he was with them but now, they let these false doctrines come into the church and confuse them.

What an important warning for us. As Pastor Chuck use to say, “If it is new, it is not true and if it is true, it is not new.”

May we **REMEMBER** that!

The second point that Paul brings out here is **RESTRAIN!**

It is the Greek word KATECHO, (kat-ekh'o) and it speaks of, “to hold back, to hold down, to suppress.”

The words “restraining” (v.6) and “restrains” (v.7) both come from the same Greek word meaning “to hold in check.”

What is being restrained?

What is being held in check?

I believe it is not only the coming of the Antichrist, but it is lawlessness in general. Look at this world and you can see that lawlessness around the world is growing, especially in this country!

Right is wrong and wrong is right and people are willing to fight for what is wrong!

But there is also a **RESTRAINER** that is holding things back, at least for now. Without this **RESTRAINER** it would be much worse, if you can believe that!

And now the big question, “**Who is this RESTRAINING person or persons that is doing this? Who is the RESTRAINING one that is keeping things in check?**”

There are many ideas out there, much speculation regarding this person, but I don’t think it is that difficult.

But I will give you an example of the wrong idea.

Marv Rosenthal, who believes in a pre-wrath rapture or that the rapture of the church takes place sometime after the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation Period, believes that the restrainer is Michael the Archangel.

But if you just think about it, that does not make sense.

Michael the Archangel is a created being and he can in no way be in more than one place at a time, so it can’t be Michael.

Then who is this restrainer?



I believe it is the Holy Spirit working through believers as we are the salt of the world or the preserving force.

We are the light of the world to dispel the darkness.

Jesus told us this in Matthew 5:13-14, **“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”**

Thus, when the church is Raptured, the work of the Holy Spirit *in* believers comes to an end and we see the Holy Spirit come upon believers in the Tribulation Period to empower them for service.

You see, if we went through the Tribulation Period and the Holy Spirit was removed from our lives, it would go contrary to the Scriptures.

In John 14:16-18 Jesus said, **“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”**

Thus, the Rapture must be before the Day of the Lord for the Holy Spirit cannot be removed from us until the Rapture occurs and then, once the restrainer is removed, the evil that is in the heart of man will manifest itself far beyond what we could ever imagine!

We may think things are bad today, but when the church is gone, look out!

Now keep in mind that the Antichrist’s power only lasts for 7 years and then he hears, ***“You’re fired!”*** Sorry, Donald Trump imitation!

But we see that by the Word of God, by His holiness, Jesus will destroy this man and cast him into the Lake of fire with the False Prophet as we are told in Revelation 20:10, **“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”**

His reign of terror is short-lived, and he is then reassigned to the Lake of Fire for eternity!

#### VERSES 9-12

So this Antichrist will have power, signs and wonders but it does not mean he is God, not even close.

Satan, the Antichrist are created beings and thus, they are not eternal!

But let me also say this because deception is a big part of the last days scenario. What we see here is that these same Greek words used here to describe the working of the Antichrist are used in what the Lord did and we see this in Acts 2:22 where Peter said, **“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.”**

And in Hebrews 2:4 we are told, **“God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”**

Thus, we must be careful because not all signs, wonders and miracles are of God!

Let me also say this. Satan can't do anything he wants unless God allows him to and that goes for the Antichrist as well.

Then why does God allow it in the first place?

To test the hearts of His people.

In Deuteronomy 8:2 we are told, “**And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.**”

Isn't it amazing today how many Christians are running after signs and wonders, this miracle healing service over here or the one that is over there!

But the Bible tells us that signs and wonders will follow after those who believe in Jesus Christ. (Mark 16).

They have put the cart in front of the horse by following after signs and wonders. Instead of serving the Lord and allowing the Lord to work through them, they are looking for these signs and wonders and folks, these signs and wonders are all over the place today and many of them are not from the Lord!

Several years ago, in Chicago, people gathered to see a picture of Mary that appeared on a wall, the picture was made out of salt and supposedly miraculously appeared. How sad! The deception will be even worse during the Tribulation period as the Antichrist puts on a pseudo-resurrection from an assassination attempt on his life! (Revelation 13:3).

Now I want to focus on this point for a minute, where Paul tells us that “**God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.**”

Poole sums it up like this, “They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion, and that is their punishment.”

Now, in reading that. In hearing what this is all about. How can God, who is good, who is holy, there is no darkness in Him at all, do something like this? It does not seem fair, it does not seem right, so how can this be?

To understand what is going on here we need to look back at what Paul has just said. Back in verse 10 of II Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul tells us, **“because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”**

People fall prey to these deceptions, even today, because they have not received the love of the truth, they have rejected Jesus as their Lord and Savior and God gave them what they wanted, life without Christ by sending them a strong delusion.

You see, abandoned by God because of the choices they made to reject the Gospel!

Condemned by God because of the choices they made to reject the Gospel!

But God’s desire is for all to be saved but He will not force anyone into the kingdom, it is your choice.

Paul told Timothy of God’s great desire to see all saved in I Timothy 2:4-6, as he tells us that God, **“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”**

Also, Paul tells us in Romans 1:18-25, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed**

**animals and creeping things. Therefore 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.”**

You see, they will be judged for their rejection of Jesus and will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire apart from Christ where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth all because they rejected the love of the truth and believed the lie!

I believe that is what we see here with these people. It was not that they just rejected the love of the truth one time, but many, many times and they had reached the point where they were open to believe the lie!

And what I want you to see here is that it is not “*a*” lie. There are many lies out there that Satan loves to deceive people with. But that is not what Paul is speaking about here.

Paul is speaking of a specific lie and thus, he speaks of “**the lie.**”

What is “**the lie**” that is spoken of here?

I believe it is the same lie that was used in the Garden of Eden by Satan.

Let’s look at what took place in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:1-5 we are told, “**Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘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.’”**”

This blows me away because what Satan spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden, he is doing the same today.

Notice what we see Satan do first. He *challenged the Word of God* – **“Has God indeed said.”** And we do see that today. From redefining what God’s Word said, to adding to it and taking away from it. There is a challenge to God’s Word just as we see here in the Garden of Eden!

Now, from the challenge to God’s Word we see *confusion on Eve’s part*. And that is what false teaching, false doctrine does. It confuses people and out of that confusion we see Eve add to God’s Word – **“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”**

God never said not to touch the fruit but not to eat of it and yet, with the confusion brought about by Satan, she added to God’s Word and that is a dangerous thing to do!

Now we see Satan respond and he tells Eve not to worry because *there is no judgment* for what you do – **“You will not surely die.”**

In other words, do what you want because there is no sin and thus, if there is no sin then there is no judgment for what you do! Sound familiar? It should because it is what is being promoted today in many churches!

And this all leads to **“the lie”** that Paul spoke of – **“you will be like God.”**

That is the false teaching, the false doctrine, the doctrine of demons that the world, I believe, will embrace. And since we are Gods, at least that is what Satan was saying and many believe, then we will know **“good from evil.”**

In other words, we will decide what is right and what is wrong because we are God and we can do what we want!

And I think that Jesus makes that very point in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew chapter 24. He said in Matthew 24:4, “... ‘For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.’”

Make no mistake about it, there have always been false Christ’s, those that claim to be Christ and they deceive people. I don’t think that is what Jesus is saying here. I don’t think that is His point.

I believe there is something that He is hitting on that may blow you away. The Greek word for “many” is POLUS and it speaks of a very great number, as in millions and millions of people, not just a select few and they will claim to be god!

Yes, there are those few who claim to be Christ, claim to be God but this is far different than just a few. And as you look at what the New Age is teaching, as you look what other religions are teaching, when you look even at what some in the church are teaching, you will see this common thread of man being God, having the God consciousness in him!

That is a doctrine of demons and it is what was spoken of in the Garden of Eden to Eve by Satan and it is what is permeating our world today, “you will be like God.”

As Paul concluded this section he has shown the Thessalonian believers and us that the Day of the Lord has not begun yet because the departure or falling away has not come, the restrainer has not been removed – the Holy Spirit working in the believers life, and the emergence of the man of sin, the Antichrist has not come on the scene as yet. This must have brought them great comfort and encouragement.

VERSES 13-14

In these verses we see once again this dilemma of predestination and free will. God has chosen us, how do I know, because we have received Him into our lives as Lord and Savior. If you reject Him, then you are not chosen but it is your choice to make, God already knows your decision.

And please understand that the Bible clearly teaches that God chooses people for salvation. But also understand that the Bible never teaches that He chooses others for hell!

God has foreknowledge or He knows what is going to happen before it happens. That means He knew who would be saved before we were even born.

But we also need to understand that God does not send us to Hell or to Heaven, it is a choice on our part where we go, He just knows ahead of time!

Also, the Bible says that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; and that He is extremely patient toward man, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

But again, it is a choice for each person to make!

And here is the thing, we know we are eternally secure in Christ as Jesus said in John 6, **“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out . . . This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day . . . No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”** John 6:37, 39-40, 44.



Also, in John 10:27-29 Jesus said, **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”**

We are secure in Christ because our salvation is based upon His finished work and not ours! The work He has begun in us, our salvation, He will complete, our glorification!

(Philippians 1:6)

Peter tells us that our inheritance or salvation is secure in Christ. It won’t perish, it is undefiled, and it will never fade away because God has a place reserved for us in heaven and He will not cancel that reservation! (I Peter 1:4)

Peter also tells us that our salvation is kept by the power of God through faith and not by our power or our good works, or our keeping the Law or our anything, it is the power of God that saves us, it is the power of God that sustains us and it is the power of God that will take us to glory one day! (I Peter 1:5)

Now you may be thinking, “Hey, wait a minute pastor Joe. Paul spoke of our salvation being based upon our sanctification, so isn’t that a works-based salvation?”

Not at all for Paul said in Galatians 2:16, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”**

Then what does Paul mean here in II Thessalonians?

There should be the outward evidence in your life of what God has done on the inside. He is molding and shaping you into the image of God and if there is no evidence of this, you need to do a heart check because you are on shaky ground.

Sanctification doesn't save us; it just shows we are saved, and God is working!

And Paul tells us that this is done by the work of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the truths of God found in the Word of God.

It is as David said in Psalm 119:9-11, **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”**

Thus, they had no need to fear about their salvation, that the Day of the Lord had come because as believers they are not destined for judgment but for glory as we are.

Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:9, **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Also, remember what Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:23-24, **“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”**

#### VERSE 15

Here is the problem with this idea of traditions. Some have taken this idea of traditions spoken of here in II Thessalonians 2:15 to unbiblical ideas.

First of all, this idea of traditions means that it is the truth of God passed on from person to person.

How did this happen?

It was by word of mouth and by written letters or epistles. It is what God has inspired and it never contradicts itself or the Word of God!

And remember, the Word of God is complete, we do not have new doctrine or teaching! Please don't forget that.

The problem we see is that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that it means truth that didn't make it into the pages of Scripture. We might call it extrabiblical traditions that were given to the apostles and handed down through the centuries to the church through the popes. This is not from God!

So what we have from the Roman Catholic Church is doctrine that is not found in the Bible but which they affirm to be the oral traditions of the church which are every bit as inspired as that which is found in the pages of Scripture. At least that is what they believe!

What are these traditions?

They are things like the doctrine of purgatory, the infallibility of the popes, indulgences and the efficacy of the sacraments to purchase installments of grace that earn a person salvation.

These and many other Roman Catholic doctrines clearly contradict what the written word of God says and therefore are to be rejected as the "*traditions of men*" which Jesus condemned the Pharisees for when He said that by their traditions they had violated and broken the Word of God. (Matt.15:3)

We also see this in the Protestant church where people are getting new revelations from God and they are supposedly on the same level as the Word of God. No they are not!

I hope that is clear!

VERSES 16-17

To put this in our vernacular, Paul is saying, *“Hey guys, chill out man! God is on our side and He is coming back for us before He pours out His judgment upon a Christ rejecting world!”*

Remember what Paul said in Romans 8:35-39, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“Who shall ever separate us from Christ's love? Shall suffering and affliction and tribulation? Or calamity and distress? Or persecution or hunger or destitution or peril or sword? Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we are regarded and counted as sheep for the slaughter. [Ps 44:22.] Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers, Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Do you see how God’s Word can comfort us as Satan tries to bring his double-edged sword of doubt and discouragement upon us!

Also, as we look upon God’s past faithfulness to us it will help encourage us in the present situations that we are in.

You see, His faithfulness in the past is a promise of His faithfulness in the present and for the future!

Remember what Paul said in Titus 2:13, **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Thus, don't retreat but forge ahead in the work as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58,

**“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

May we do so and not fall prey to the lies of Satan but let the truths of God set us free!

I know, a lot of information tonight, but my prayer is that you would leave here and not be shaken in mind or troubled by things false teachers, with their false doctrines are saying and writing about. May we not let any deceive us. May we truly understand that before the Tribulation starts, the Church will be taken home to be with the Lord!

**“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

Revelation 3:10.