

# UNIT 7 PART 1

## BF232 OUR FUTURE HOPE

### *THE PURPOSE OF 2 THESSALONIANS*

We're going to continue our study of Our Future Hope by looking at 2 Thessalonians. In the last session, we were looking in 1 Thessalonians. The purpose of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, because this is the chapter we will focus on, has to do with the Day of the Lord. The believers had confusion because somebody told them that they were already in the Day of the Lord.

**PAUL WROTE HIS LETTER TO CLEAR UP SOME CONFUSION THAT WAS CAUSED BY FALSE TEACHERS.**

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul said that they received a letter, and it was as if it was written by Paul. In other words, somebody wrote a letter to the church and they wrote Paul's name at the bottom of the letter. They deceived the believers. They wanted them to think that it was Paul's letter as an apostle, that it would be the word of God. But really, it was a false teacher. They were trying to deceive them. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to clear up that confusion.

**PAUL WANTED TO GIVE ASSURANCE TO THE CHURCH THAT THEY WERE NOT IN THE DAY OF THE LORD.**

The false letter that was sent to the church told them that they were already in the Day of the Lord. This was confusing to the believers because Paul had taught them that they would not be in the Day of the Lord, that God had chosen to deliver them from that period of God's wrath. It was important for Paul to write this letter to clear up this confusion.

**PAUL ALSO WANTED TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONTINUE LIVING BY FAITH.**

The purpose of 2 Thessalonians was also for

**PAUL TO GIVE PROOF THAT THE CHURCH WAS NOT IN THE DAY OF THE LORD.**

We'll look at this in just a minute. Paul says, "First of all, you can't say you're in the day of the Lord because the rebellion hasn't happened, the Man of Sin hasn't shown up and the Restraint has not been removed." These things have to happen before someone could say that the Day of the Lord had come. First, he gives proof that they're not in the Day of the Lord.

**HE SAYS CERTAIN THINGS MUST HAPPEN BEFORE SOMEONE COULD SAY THAT THE DAY OF THE LORD HAD COME.**

He also goes on to say that:

### **GOD HAS DIFFERENT PLANS FOR THE CHURCH**

than He does for the unsaved world. It's kind of like what we saw in 1 Thessalonians 5. God tells us what's going to happen to them, the unsaved world. Then, God tells us what will happen to us, the Church.

### ***PAUL CALMS THEIR FEARS.***

The first thing Paul does in this section is to calm their fears. They were afraid because of the false letter that they had received. Paul says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:1 Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him.*

He's talking about the coming of Christ. He's also talking about being gathered together to be with the Lord, the Rapture. Paul said,

*2 Thessalonians 2:2 Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun.*

You see that? The false teachers were saying that the Day of the Lord had already begun, and that's not true. Paul wanted to calm their fears. They were alarmed. Paul says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:2 Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us.*

That false letter had Paul's name on it. Paul lets them know that

### **THEY HAD NO REASON TO BE AFRAID.**

Sometimes believers are afraid when they don't need to be afraid.

One time, I was at the ocean with my daughter. We were standing on the shore of the ocean. There were a lot of big rocks, and the waves would crash against the rocks. The water would spray up in the air, and the wind was blowing the water on us. My daughter was very afraid. She was grabbing me and saying, "Daddy, I'm scared." I told her, "You don't have to be afraid because the waves can't hurt us. They're not going to touch us."

Paul is telling the church in Thessaloniki, "You don't have to be afraid because the Day of the Lord is not here, and God is going to rescue you anyway."

### **THEIR FEARS WERE BASED ON LIES.**

They were being confused by false teachers, alarmed by those who said that the Day of the Lord had begun.

Let me explain something to you. We know that Paul taught the believers that God would deliver them from the Day of the Lord. This is because 1 Thessalonians 5 says that God will deliver them from the Day of the Lord. The fact that they were confused by a letter that said they were in the Day of the Lord shows that they didn't expect to be in the Day of the Lord. It would not have been confusing if that's what they had always believed. If that's what Paul had taught them from the beginning. The fact that this false message confused them shows that this message did not line up with what Paul first taught them. Paul first taught them that they would be delivered from the Day of the Lord. So, their fears were based on lies.

Paul lets them know. He says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:3 For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God*

Now, he's going to list some

### **THINGS THAT HAVE TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD.**

Paul says, "Look, if you get a letter that says that you're in the Day of the Lord, you need to know that you can't be in the day of the Lord because these things haven't happened yet."

#### **THE REBELLION (APOSTASY) MUST COME FIRST.**

*2 Thessalonians 2:3 For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God*

Maybe you've heard people use the word "apostasy". Apostasy speaks about many people who turn away from the faith. This is the same idea. There will be a time period where there will not be many believers at all. Most people in the world will reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul says that rebellion has to happen first. The rebellion, or the apostasy, must come first.

Also, before the Day of the Lord can happen,

#### **THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS WILL BE REVEALED.**

The Man of Lawlessness is sometimes called the Man of Sin. He's called that because that's what describes him. That's what he is like. He is a person who rebels against the laws of God's Word. He is a person who rebels against moral truth found in scripture. He does not want anyone to tell him what to do. Sometimes, scripture calls him the Antichrist. That's the person that Paul is talking about. Paul says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:3 For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction.*

How will people know when the Man of Lawlessness is here? Or, how will the Man of Lawlessness be revealed? He will be revealed when he does the things that were prophesied about him, when he does the things that scripture said he would do. Then, people can say, “Aha, that's the Man of Lawlessness.”

Here are some of the things that he will do.

- 1) He will oppose God.
- 2) He will try to be worshipped as God.

Now, this is 2 Thessalonians 2:4. It says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:4 He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.*

That's one of the reasons why he is called Antichrist. He offers himself in place of Christ. He claims to be the Christ of God. He claims to be God Himself. The Man of Lawlessness will be revealed. He will be identified when he goes into the Temple of God and claims to be God.

This false letter was sent to the Thessalonians. It said they were in the Day of the Lord. Paul says, “You can't be in the Day of the Lord. There's no one in the Temple claiming to be God. So, you can't be in the Day of the Lord.” Now, this is significant. It is important because before the Antichrist is here, there has to be a Temple of God. No one will identify the Antichrist until there's a temple in Jerusalem. We know that the temple was destroyed in 70 A. D. That means that you and I can't be in the Day of the Lord right now either. The Day the Lord won't come until the Man of Lawlessness is in the Temple of God, claiming to be God. This person wants to be worshipped as God.

This passage here is Daniel 11:36. Daniel also prophesied about this coming Man of Lawlessness, this ruler who would make a covenant for one week, one unit of 77 years. In Daniel 11, Daniel said,

*Daniel 11:36 “The king will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god, even blaspheming the God of gods. He will succeed, but only until the time of wrath is completed.*

During that seven-year period, the Man of Lawlessness will claim to be God. Most people will believe him. He will deceive them. He will succeed in his deception, but only until the Time of Wrath is completed.

Once again, Paul is saying that no one can claim to be in the Day of the Lord until the rebellion happens and the Man of Lawlessness is in the Temple. Notice that Paul says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:5 Don't you remember that I told you about all this when I was with you?*

Some people say that talking about End Times is too hard to understand and that we shouldn't teach new Christians about End Times. But Paul taught the Christians in Thessaloniki about the End Times as soon as they believed in Christ while he was with them. You know why? He wanted them to know about their future hope. He wanted them to know God's plans so that they could have encouragement by knowing those truths. This is why Paul told them about all of this when he was with him. For that reason, Paul says,

*2 Thessalonians 2:6 And you know what is holding him back,*

They knew because Paul had taught them. Paul had taught them that something was holding back the Man of Lawlessness from being revealed. Did you know that God is the One who holds evil back from doing everything that evil wants to do? God has done this at different times in history.

In Genesis, Abimelech took Abraham's wife, Sarah. He was going to sleep with her; but God appeared to him in a dream. God said, "I held you back from sinning against this man." God can prevent evil from going crazy. He holds it in certain boundaries. God is holding back the Man of Lawlessness from doing what he wants to do until it is time.

*2 Thessalonians 2:6 for he can be revealed only when his time comes.*

Do you know what's encouraging about that? God is even in control of when the Antichrist comes. When Antichrist comes, he will fight against God. He will claim to be God. He will hurt God's people; but not even Antichrist can do anything unless God lets him do it first. It has to come in His time.

*2 Thessalonians 2:7 For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way.*

At some point in the future, when God is ready, He will stop holding back the Man of Lawlessness; and the Man of Lawlessness will come.

- 1) The rebellion must come first.
- 2) Then, the Man of Lawlessness will be revealed,
- 3) but only when the holding back, or the Restraint, is removed.

God has a plan for the unsaved world; and it will happen in God's time. It will happen in God's way because God is sovereign.

### *GOD'S PLAN FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD.*

*2 Thessalonians 2:8 Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed,*

Paul is going to talk about the things that the Man of Lawlessness does; but the first thing he wants to say, or for us to see is,

#### **THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS WILL BE DESTROYED BY THE LORD JESUS.**

*2 Thessalonians 2:8 the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendor of his coming.*

When Jesus comes back at the end of the Tribulation, and the Antichrist has everybody believing that he is God, Jesus is going to come back in splendor. By the power of His word, He will speak the word, and Antichrist will be done. He will no longer be deceiving the nations. Jesus will destroy him.

#### **THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS WILL BE EMPOWERED BY SATAN.**

*2 Thessalonians 2:9 This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles.*

He's going to be destroyed by the Lord Jesus; but the Man of Sin is going to be empowered by Satan. Notice how he says, "He will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles." In Acts 2, Peter says that Jesus came doing signs, miracles and wonders. They were signs because they signified, or they proved, that He is who He claimed to be. They were called wonders and miracles because they amazed the people that saw them.

#### **THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS WILL CONVINCЕ PEOPLE THROUGH HIS DECEPTION.**

When this Man of Sin comes, he's going to do power, signs and miracles; but they're not real. They are counterfeit. It could be that real things happen, but they're happening not by the power of God, but by the power of Satan. When the unbelieving world sees these signs, they will believe his claim that he is God. They will worship him. They will worship him because they believe a lie. So, the Man of Lawlessness will convince people through his deception.

Now, I want to show you two passages that are found in other places of the New Testament that talk about this deception. Matthew 24 is talking about the same time period and the same person, the Antichrist. He says,

*Matthew 24:24 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones.*

The miracles of Antichrist will be so amazing that even the people who come to faith in Jesus during the tribulation will be like, "Man, if I didn't know better, I would be deceived by that." They're so powerful that they deceive everybody except believers. Therefore, it's going to be very deceptive.

Revelation chapter 13 talks about the Antichrist and this false prophet that's working with him. John says this,

*Revelations 13:3 I saw that one of the heads of the beast seemed wounded beyond recovery—but the fatal wound was healed!*

It is an injury that looks like it killed the beast; and he'll be rescued, or healed, from this.

Look at what John says. It is so amazing that

*Revelation 13:3 The whole world marveled at this miracle*

They were shocked. They see this, and they can't believe it. They think that it has to be true. Because of that, they

*Revelation 13:3-4 gave allegiance to the beast. They worshiped the dragon for giving the beast such power, and they also worshiped the beast. "Who is as great as the beast?" they exclaimed. "Who is able to fight against him?"*

The Antichrist's signs during the Tribulation will be so convincing that everybody except believers will be deceived by him.

### **THE DECEPTION DURING THE DAY OF THE LORD**

**THE PEOPLE WHO ARE FOOLED BY THIS ARE THOSE WHO ARE ON THEIR WAY TO DESTRUCTION.**

*2 Thessalonians 2:9-10a This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction,*

The people who are fooled by this are those who are on their way to destruction. Those who are lost will be fooled by this deception.

**THEY WILL BE DECEIVED BECAUSE THEY REFUSED THE TRUTH.**

Look at what Paul says is the reason why:

*2 Thessalonians 2:10b because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.*

They were enjoying evil rather than believing the truth. When they heard the Gospel message,

**THEY HAD SO MUCH PLEASURE IN THEIR EVIL THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO RECEIVE THE TRUTH.**

They would rather live in lies and have the pleasure of sin than believe the Gospel of Jesus. Because of this, Paul says that they will be deceived because they refused the truth.

God is not being unfair with them. It's their own choice that is bringing their destruction. They did not want the truth to stand in the way of their pleasure. Because of this, God will cause them to be greatly deceived. When God causes them to be greatly deceived, it doesn't mean that God reaches down inside of their head and somehow confuses them or puts blinders over their eyes. The way that God causes them to be deceived is that because they rejected the Christ, God allows the Antichrist to come. He is the one who brings the deception. Therefore, because they reject the truth, God lets them have the Antichrist, the liar.

### *IN SUMMARY*

Well, what about the Church and the Day of the Lord? Now, Paul gives the transition. Let's look at this again. The church in Thessaloniki gets a false letter that says they're in the Day of the Lord. Paul says,

First, No, you can't be in the Day of the Lord because the rebellion hasn't happened.

Second, you can't be in the Day of the Lord because the Man of Lawlessness has not been revealed.

Third, you can't be in the Day of the Lord until the One who's holding back lets the Man of Lawlessness come.

Therefore, the answer is that you're not in the Day of the Lord.”

In this next section, we're going to see that Paul says that God has different plans for you anyway. Those plans are to deliver you from the Day of the Lord.