

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 — The Slaying Of Satan's Superman

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In my freshman year of college, in the first week of school, I made a new friend. We often sat together in the cafeteria. We were on the wrestling team and spent time in the practice room later that fall. His name was Duane. He was a great guy. He loved Jesus and loved his Bible. The Bible was the topic of many of our conversations. It didn't take long for Duane to tell me he thought Jesus was coming back soon. I didn't have a problem with that until he told me Jesus was coming back in the next 18 to 24 months. He told me about a book he read that had all the details. It explained the Old Testament feasts and calendars and lined them up to show the date of Jesus' return. Duane asked me to read the book. I was a freshman in college and had plenty of other books in my life. That is one I didn't have time to read.

Duane told me he planned to drop out of college after the first semester and devote the rest of his life, until Jesus returned, to sharing the good news of Jesus with whoever would listen. Duane had a sincere love for Jesus. True to his word, he dropped out of school after the first semester. He became involved in street preaching and evangelistic work. In the next 18 to 24 months, Jesus did not return! The book was wrong! In my junior year, a disillusioned Duane, who was unsure of his faith, returned to college to finish his freshman year. He was led astray by false teachings about Jesus' return.

The Bible tells us Jesus is going to return. We know that is true. There is an entire industry of self-proclaimed prophecy gurus who try to use the Bible like a Dick Tracey decoder ring to figure out exactly what will happen before Jesus

returns and the date Jesus will arrive. They love to get people worked up about a date they calculated for Jesus' return.

One of the famous ones was Harold Camping from the Family Radio network. We looked at him in the past. He set multiple dates for Jesus' return, all of which proved wrong, but he swindled people out of hundreds of millions of dollars as he urged them to prepare for the return of Jesus, which was right around the corner. This brings us to our study.

This morning, we are continuing in our study of 2 Thessalonians. We are in 2 Thessalonians 2. These verses are a favorite of the self-proclaimed prophecy gurus/ They love to build their end-times charts off of this chapter.

I am going to warn you before we begin. These verses are considered the most challenging to understand in the Apostle Paul's letters. Augustine, a brilliant early church father who lived in 400 A.D., said this about the verses we are about to look at this morning.

[I frankly confess that the meaning of this completely escapes me." - Augustine, City of God 20.19](#)

If you want to be a pastor and teach the Bible, I would encourage you to pursue the vocation. Just know that the Sunday you have to preach 2 Thessalonians 2 will be the Sunday you reconsider your job!

While much in this chapter is debatable or difficult to understand, Paul's overall goal for this chapter is clear. It is not to predict the future, which is what many think is the primary purpose of this chapter. It is to pastor people. It is to pastor a young church that was led astray by bogus teaching about the end times just like my friend Duane was in college.

While we are only going to study verses 1 to 5, I want to read the entire chapter to help us understand this chapter. You will see why is important in a moment.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:1–17 (ESV)

Background

If you are a new Christian and you read this chapter, you will feel like Alice in Wonderland stumbling down a dark hole. Everything is new, mysterious, and disorientating. Who is this man of lawlessness? Who is the son of destruction? What is the rebellion? What is the day of the Lord? I don't understand.

I will explain those things in a few minutes. Remember, some of the details of this chapter are fuzzy, but the purpose is clear. It is to pastor a church that was led astray by false teaching about the end times. They were told Jesus returned and they missed it.

Let's look at some of our important background information.

Know when to whisper and when to shout from the Bible.

There are many things in the Bible that are clear. We can shout those truths, such as the fact that faith in Jesus is the only way anyone can be made right with God. We don't need to be shy about those things. There are other things in the Bible which are less clear. We should be careful not to be too dogmatic about those things and make those things a hill upon which we are willing to die. On those issues, we should whisper because some things are not as clear in the Bible. This is not being soft on biblical truth. It is being honest about what the Bible clearly says and distinguishing biblical truth from our opinions of what we think the Bible says or what a text might mean. There are things in the Bible we should speak humbly about, not dogmatically.

As I said earlier, there are many people who use this chapter to develop a detailed blueprint of everything about the end times and exactly how things will unfold. I read some of those authors this week. It felt like I was in a theological math class. The problem is that they are shouting things I think should be whispering. They are giving their opinions of how the end time will come together from this chapter and other verses in the Bible, but since much of what they say is speculation, this mental man may prove wrong. Speaking their opinion

dogmatically, as if it is biblical truth, leaves people like my friend Duane disillusioned when their word proves wrong.

Understand the unit of thought.

To understand this chapter, we need to understand a concept called a unit of thought. When looking at the Bible, we need to deal with a complete, not an incomplete, unit of thought. This is one of the first mistakes people make when it comes to understanding a passage. They deal with an incomplete unit of thought. That leads to people thinking the biblical author means something he is not trying to say. If you look at an incomplete unit of thought, it is like quoting only part of what someone said. That leads to misunderstanding what someone is trying to say.

If you look in your Bible, you will see a section break between verses 12 and 13. There is even a new section heading as if Paul finished his thoughts in verse 12 and started a completely new subject in verse 13. I don't think that is what is happening. The entire chapter is one unit of thought. The section break you have in your Bible was added by an English editor. It is not in the original text. Verses 1 to 17 need to be read together if we will understand why Paul wrote what he wrote. Let me show you a few reasons why this entire chapter is one unit of thought, not two separate topics.

In verse 2, Paul talks about them being led astray by false teaching about Jesus' return.

not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.
2 Thessalonians 2:2 (ESV)

In verse 15, Paul tells them how to keep from being led astray by these bogus claims.

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV)

In verse 2, Paul describes the problem. They were led astray by false teachings about the end times. In verse 2, Paul talks about them being shaken in their mind and alarmed. In verse 15, Paul tells them how to avoid that happening to them. Stick with what Paul taught them and what he wrote to them. They know that is true.

In verse 2, we get a picture of their emotional world. They are shaken up and alarmed. They were scared out of their wits that they missed Jesus' return.

If we go to the end of the letter, he prays for them. He prays for their mental stability. He prays that God would give them comfort.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts... 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 (ESV)

Maybe even more convincing that these verses belong together as one unit of thought is that verses 1 to 12 give a description of unbelievers. Verses 13 to 17 give a description of the Thessalonians believers. The two groups are contrasted. The unbelieving group in verses 1 to 12 is said not to accept the truth, while the Christians in verses 13 to 17 are described as chosen by God through their belief in the truth. The unbelieving group in the first half of the chapter is described as being destroyed. The believing group in the second half of the chapter is described as being saved.

The first and second halves of the chapter fit together like interlocking fingers.

Why is it important to realize this chapter is one unit of thought, not two? It determines what is the true north of the chapter. It helps you understand the arguments Paul is trying to make. If it is two units of thought, it is easy to think Paul's purpose was to discuss the end times. If it is one unit of thought, all the end-times discussions only serve the purpose of showing us how pastored the people he loved who were led astray by faulty teachings about the end times.

Outline the chapter

Once we understand what is the unit of thought, we want to understand the flow of thought. That means we need to outline the passage. This isn't a detailed outline. It is simply following Paul's logic in the chapter to see what he is trying to accomplish.

Why is this important? This keeps us from missing the forest because of the trees. It keeps us from spending so much time on the specific details in this chapter, such as who is the man of lawlessness, so we end up missing Paul's purpose for the chapter. I will give you a flow-of-thought outline for the chapter to show you what I mean. All of the points begin with "C" to make them memorable.

1. Crisis v.1-2—In the opening verses, we meet the crisis. Someone led them astray, either through a false prophecy or a bogus letter that claimed to be written by the Apostle Paul that the day of the Lord had already come. Jesus returned, and you missed it. This claim is obviously false, but they are young Christians. They are easily deceived. Paul's name was associated with this false

teaching, so they believed it. Since they thought they missed Jesus' return, they were scared out of their wits. They were worried they would now face the wrath of God because they missed the rescue of God.

2. Correction v. 3-12 — In these verses, Paul corrects the Thessalonians on the false claims made to them that were made in Paul's name. Paul reassured the church that Jesus' return could not have taken place because certain future events must take place first before Jesus returns. One of which is that the time of rebellion must take place. Another of which is that the man of lawlessness must be revealed. This guy is also known as the Antichrist. I call him Satan's Superman.

3. Comfort v.13-14—Paul reassured the Thessalonians Christians with the message that God's election guarantees they will not face God's judgment when Jesus returns but will receive salvation. While unbelievers will perish all Christians are sure to be saved by Jesus because Jesus died for them to forgive them. The truth is they don't need to have anxiety about Jesus' return. They need to be comforted about Jesus' return. It will not be a terrifying day for them. It will be a good day for them.

4. Command v. 15 — Paul gives them a command to help them avoid being led astray in the future. The command is to hold fast to the traditions the apostle had previously taught them either in word or in his letter. We would say, keep your finger in text. Skip the exotic prophecy books and read the Bible.

5. Closing v.16-17 — Paul ends this chapter with a word of comfort. Twice in the prayer, he asks God to comfort the unsettled and upset church members

led astray by false teaching. Since Paul twice talks about comfort, it shows us Paul's purpose in this chapter is to comfort a church who were led astray by false teachings about the timing of Jesus' return. This is similar to what happened to my friend Duane in college. He was led astray by false teachings about the timing of Jesus' return.

Let's start working through this chapter. We will only get to verse 5 today.

Crisis

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2 (ESV)

What is the day of the Lord?

The false teaching they received was about the coming of Jesus and our being gathered to him. It was also about the day of the Lord. They were told they missed the time when God's people were gathered to him, so all that was left was the day of the Lord. The phrase "the day of the Lord" is used in the Old Testament to describe God visiting people in judgment for their sins.

That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes. The sword shall devour and be sated and drink its fill of their blood... Jeremiah 46:10 (ESV)

Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. Joel 1:15 (ESV)

Paul told them that when Jesus returned, it would be a time of relieve for God's people, but it will be a time of destruction. It will be a day of the Lord type event for everyone else.

While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 (ESV)

While missing Jesus' return seems obviously false to us, to this young church, it was believable and stressful.

Why were they worried the day of the Lord had come?

In Paul's last letter, he said that when the day of the Lord comes, fellow believers who had fallen asleep would be resurrected. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul told them that sudden destruction would fall on their unbelieving neighbors when Jesus came. Paul told them they would hear the trumpet call of God. None of that had happened!

Why did they believe that bogus claim that the day of the Lord had already transpired? Ultimately, we don't know. My guess is that since the bogus teaching was associated with Paul's name, they believed it. Yet, it contradicted what Paul already taught them. They were being tricked. Later, Paul will gently tell them they shouldn't have been deceived even though this false teaching about the end times was associated with his name simply because it so clearly contradicted everything he taught them in the past.

What was the source of this false teaching?

...either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (ESV)

Paul gives three options. He does not know what was its source. It may have been all three.

"A spirit" would be a prophecy that took place in the church. This might be what we would call the charismatics in the group. Someone claimed they suddenly had a word from the Lord for the church. They told the church that the Lord told them the apostle Paul endorsed their word. Of course, there would be

no way to verify this. The church would be easily deceived if they did not have a way to check this. I have seen this happen in modern charismatic churches where people claim to suddenly have a word from the Lord for the church that they give in the middle of the service. There is no way to verify its truth.

The second option Paul gave is a “spoken word.” This would be a Bible teacher or speaker. It is a speaker giving false teaching about the return of Christ and claiming Paul endorsed their teaching to add credibility to their teaching. As a result, the Thessalonians were led astray.

In my opinion, the third option is the most likely option. It was a false letter written to the Thessalonians intended to deceive them about Jesus’ return. The author attached Paul’s name to it when Paul had nothing to do with it.

This bogus letter option is likely. We know many false gospels were written and circulated in the ancient world. They claimed to be written by an apostle or person of significance in the Christian community, but they were bogus. Satan used them to teach a false gospel and lead people astray.

Many of those letters still exist in the archives of history, such as the Gospel of Mary or the Gospel of Thomas. They clearly don’t line up with the authentic gospels so they were never accepted in the church or endorsed by the church.

As mentioned to you a few weeks ago, when the lists of recognized books in our New Testament were published around 325 A.D. after the council of Nicea, the purpose of those lists was not to recognize the books of our New Testament as authoritative. That took place hundreds of years before. It was to make sure

the growing church knew which books about Jesus they could trust. It was to keep people from being led astray by false letters. This is what happened to the Thessalonians. The existence of deceptive, inauthentic letters and gospels was a common problem in the early church. If you have read *The DaVinci Code*, the premise of the book is based on a misunderstanding of the way history transpired. The book is fictional. It is based on the idea of discovering missing books of the Bible that should have been included. The truth is those missing books of the Bible were around from the beginning. There is nothing new about them. They were not included in our Bible because the early church fathers recognized them as fraudulent and leading people astray.

This is why Paul begins verse 3 by saying.

Let no one deceive you in any way... 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)

They were deceived about the return of Christ. They were led astray into thinking it took place, and they missed it. To borrow the title of a once popular book series, they thought They Were “Left Behind.”

Correction v.3-12

This is hard to understand because we are walking into the middle of a conversation.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 2 Thessalonians 2:5 (ESV)

The verb tense for the word “told” is in the imperfect tense, which means Paul didn’t just teach about end times stuff once. He taught them about end times events multiple times.

One of the reasons some things in these verses are foggy to us is that we are walking into the middle of a conversation between Paul and the

Thessalonians. This is a dialogue with an extensive history. Paul doesn't take time to explain some of these things because he has already talked to them about these things multiple times. That is not true for us. We are walking into the middle of the conversation. Keep that in mind as we get into these verses.

This is hard to understand because Paul did not put things in chronological order.

Another reason these verses are difficult to grasp is he does not put things in chronological order.

1. v.3-4 are about the future. They describe what must happen before Jesus returns, namely the great time of rebellion and the coming of the man of lawlessness.

2. v. 5-7 are about the present. Lawlessness is already at work but there is a restraining thing and a restraining person holding it back at this time.

3. v.8-10 are about the future. Paul moves back to more details about the coming of the man of lawlessness and what he will be like.

4. v. 11-12 Paul moves back to the present to describe the judgment of unbelievers.

This shift back and forth between the future and present reminds us that Paul is not trying to give us a detailed timetable of end-times events. The purpose of this paragraph is to pastor a church he loves and help them after they were led astray by false teaching.

I made you wait long enough as we dealt with background issues. Let's dive into the tough parts of the text!

...For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,... 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)

Paul gives us two things that must take place before Jesus returns. Are these events sequential or simultaneous? My guess is relatively simultaneous.

The Rebellion

The ESV calls this the rebellion. Other translations call it the apostasy. The Thessalonians already knew about this. Paul taught them about it. All he needed to do was mention it and not explain it. Paul calls it THE rebellion. This is not the concept of rebellion. It is a specific event. It is a rebellion that is large enough that it is titled “The Rebellion.” The Thessalonians were already taught about this. We weren’t. Let’s see what we can learn about it.

The Greek word for rebellion or apostasy is not common in the New Testament, so we can’t use other occurrences of this word in the New Testament to help us understand it. In secular Greek, it refers to significant political or military rebellion. In the Greek Old Testament, the word is used to refer to rebellion against God. This word refers to complete a rebellion against the government, the laws, and God.

Some passages in the New Testament remind us that rebellion against God will be common before the return of Jesus.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” Jude 17–18 (ESV)

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV)

In light of this background, the rebellion mentioned by Paul is likely a period of mass rebellion by people against the government, the laws, and against God himself. It is mass political and religious disobedience.

Today, when we see businesses moving out of cities because they are no longer places of law and order but of chaos, that is a sample of what worldwide rebellion will look like. Remember that this rebellion is not just against the laws of society that make it peaceful and orderly, but against God and the innate laws he gave us. It is the rejection of marriage. The rejection of family. The rejection of gender. It is a rebellion against the building blocks of society.

This time of mass apostasy will not just be the collapse of the civil order, but it will include those in the church who are only outwardly associated with Jesus but have no inward commitment to the Christian faith. They will create rebellion in the church and chaos among God's people.

The first thing to happen before Jesus returns is mass apostasy, rebellion against God and government, against law and order.

The Man of Lawlessness

The second thing that will happen before Jesus returns is the manifestation of one who will emerge from this great societal breakdown to be a leader. He is known as the man of lawlessness.

This person is not Satan. This man is a servant of Satan.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, 2 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)

This man is the most satanically possessed and demonically empowered person to walk the face of the planet. I call him Satan's Superman. The apostle

John called him the Antichrist. Just as Jesus was God in the flesh, this man will be as close to Satan in the flesh as the earth will ever see. His character is the exact opposite of Jesus in every way. That is why John calls him the Antichrist.

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18 (ESV)

John describes the antichrist two ways. There is one great final Antichrist who will come at the end of history. Paul calls him the man of lawlessness. Until that time, there are many Antichrists who will come earlier in history. These are lesser manifestations of the ultimate antichrist but they have the spirit of the Antichrist.

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22 (ESV)

Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is ultimately a liar and is embodying the spirit of the antichrist.

According to John, when you look at the timeline of history. You will see various people pop up who are lesser antichrists. They have the spirit of the antichrist, but by God's grace, they are not the full-blown end-times manifestation of the ultimate antichrist. An example of that would be Hitler.

I did some background reading this week on Hitler. We know he rose to power after World War I when Germany was crippled by reparations after the war. He burned the Reichstag to remove governance by the people. He put himself forward as the savior of the nation. The people voted him into power. Once in power and building Germany's military, he entered into peace treaty after

peace treaty with surrounding countries. He kept none of them. Why did he break them? He was a lesser AntiChrist. He was a man of lawlessness and deception.

When in power, he pursued the final solution. He planned to kill the Jews and eliminate the people of God. That is a satanically empowered move. He corrupted the church of Germany to destroy the truth. He intended to take over the world and be the ruler of the world, like the man of ultimately man of lawlessness with do. Thankfully, by God's grace, He used the Allies to defeat him before he rose to complete world power.

As I was reading about him this week, I learned that in the Nuremberg trials, we learned about his involvement in the occult and his attempts to tap into demonic power to achieve his goals. That shouldn't surprise us. That is the profile of the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness.

There is coming a man who will be far worse than Hitler. He will take over the world. Paul calls him the man of lawlessness. In Hebrew, that is a description of his character. He is completely lawless. He respects no laws of man, and he doesn't respect the laws of God. He sees himself as above all law. He does not believe all men are created equal. He is Satan's Superman.

The Son of Destruction

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,... 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)

His first name is the man of lawlessness, which describes his character. His second name describes what he does. He is the son of destruction. He causes a lot of destruction. Imagine what will happen when the most satanically controlled man on the planet is in charge of the nuclear codes and the vast

traditional military machine. That will lead to a lot of destruction! If you think the war in Ukraine or the war in Gaza is bad, you have seen nothing compared to when Satan's Superman takes over. Like Satan, he loves to kill and destroy.

The Man Who Claims To Be God

who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (ESV)

Not content to be the leader of the world, he will want to be the one everyone worships in the world. He will exalt himself against every so-called god or object of worship. He will attempt to replace all the religions of the world with worship of him. Holding the power of life and death in his hands, he will be persuasive.

This should also not surprise us. Isn't this what Satan tried to do? He was not content to worship God. He wanted to be the one everyone worshipped instead of God. If that was the source of Satan's fall, it shouldn't surprise us when we see the same character quality coming out of the most demonically possessed man to walk the planet.

I imagine that when this happens, he will burn the religious books of every religion. He will kill those who speak about the worship of anything but him.

It also says he takes his seat in the temple of God and even proclaims himself to be God. Before this, we saw the man of lawlessness take over all false worship. Here, he attempts to take over all true worship. This is not a position he was given or that he earned. He aggressively takes the position where only the true God of the universe belongs. The word used for the temple is not the generic

word for the entire temple structure, but it is a specific word used to describe the holy of holies in the temple, where only God was allowed to dwell.

This is the fulfillment of some prophecies in the book of Daniel. Daniel 12:10 and 11:36.

And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. Daniel 11:36 (ESV)

Earlier, we talked about knowing what to whisper and what to shout out of these verses. This is an area where I recommend we whisper, not shout. Some people believe that since the man of lawlessness has to take his seat in the temple of God, this means the Jews need to retake the temple mount from the Arabs who put the Dome of the Rock over it in 691 A.D. Will the Jews need to remove the Dome of the Rock, rebuild the temple, and reestablish Old Testament sacrifices for the man of lawlessness to come and attempt to take his seat in the temple? That might be true. It might not be true.

During the Reformation, many Reformers thought the man of lawlessness was the pope. At the time, the Catholic Church was corrupt. It taught salvation by works. When the Reformers began getting the word of God to the people of God and showing salvation by grace, the response of the Catholic Church was to kill them. The reformers began thinking the pope was the man of lawlessness because he was leading people astray and he was in the seat of God's presence on earth, which was no longer the temple but the church.

Why was Paul convinced the man of lawlessness wanted to be worshipped in the Holy of Holies in the temple? A little history will help.

I just read to you Daniel 11:36, which talks about a king who lifted himself above every god, and proclaimed himself to be god. Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled for the first time in 168 B.C. by a king known as Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He claimed to be God. He demanded that people call him Epiphanes, which means the manifestation of God. He conquered Jerusalem, abolished sacrifices in the temple, offered a pig on the altar in the Holy of Holies, set up an image of Zeus in the Holy of Holies, and made the temple a place for people to worship him. Thankfully, he was driven out by the Maccabees. He was a man of lawlessness. He was a forerunner of the Antichrist but not the final Antichrist.

Next in 63 B.C., the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem and entered into the holy of holies of the temple. Once again, wanting to put himself in God's place.

In 40 A.D., the Roman emperor Caligula planned to turn Jerusalem into a place of worship dedicated to him as a god. He instructed a statue of himself to be set up inside the temple. He sent a Roman general to destroy Jerusalem and make the temple a place of worship dedicated to him as a god. Thankfully, the Roman general delayed in carrying out his orders. While he delayed, Caligula was assassinated, so his statue was never set up in the temple.

All three of these are miniature Antichrists who tried to put themselves in the place of God. They wanted to be worshipped instead of God. It only makes sense that the final Antichrist will do the same.

Does the temple in Jerusalem need to be rebuilt for the ultimate Antichrist to come? Maybe, but maybe not. This description may be more about the

character and goals of the man of lawlessness than an exact geographical location and building. Taking the throne of God is his attempt to usurp the authority of God in this world. That will be his goal.

Conclusion

I began by telling you about my friend Duane in college. He was deceived by the book about the end times that calculated a date for Jesus' return based on Old Testament events and festivals. This led him to the date of Jesus' return in 1987, which was wrong.

This week, I was forwarded an email from a pastor trying to calculate the date of Jesus' return. He calculated it would be this weekend. Let me read your part of his email.

At sunset on Wednesday, October 2, 2024 begins the Feast of Trumpets... This feast of trumpets is special. It ushers in the 3500th year since the giving of the Law. This means it is the Year of Jubilee when all debts are forgiven.... It coincides with another feast. The Day of Atonement, when God judges sin. I look forward to the next 72 hours, anticipating the Trumpet that will call me and all others who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior... as a watchman, I am sounding the alarm, warning everyone to be prepared... now you too be a watchman, go and warn everyone you can in however much time we have left... if we are still here this weekend.

Today is Sunday. Jesus did not return based on the math of the Old Testament feasts. Some people lost sleep over this one. As I was reading this email, I was writing a sermon on 2 Thessalonians 2, which tells us Jesus will not return until the great rebellion takes place and until the man of lawlessness is revealed, until Satan's Superman tries to set himself up as the only one who can be worshiped on earth.

It doesn't surprise me that this guy's end-times email was wrong about Jesus returning this weekend. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul tells us things that must take place before Jesus returns, and those have not happened.

This chapter has some bad news to it, and good news in it.

The bad news is things we definitely get worse before Jesus returns. The great rebellion will take place, and the man of lawlessness will be revealed.

The good news is that when it looks like all hope is lost, when the most demonically possessed person to exist on the planet sets himself up as in charge of the earth, has the military might of the world at his disposal, and forces the entire world to worship him as the only god in the universe, guess who shows up?

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV)

Jesus comes back! He does battle against Satan's Superman. It isn't a battle. It is easy for Jesus. He just hits him with a little puff of breath from his mouth, and Satan's Superman is destroyed. The day of judgment for sin has come, and the day of rescue for Christians is in motion. That is all it will take for Jesus to defeat the AntiChrist.

My friends, life will get hard. There will be times when we wonder where Jesus is. We will wonder how God can allow so much evil on the earth. When it looks like all hope is lost, that is when Jesus will return.



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