**2 Thessalonians, Chapter 2**

Based on [2 Thessalonians 2:1-17](https://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.1-17)

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Advent Midweek Service 2

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After Paul and his co-workers left Thessalonica, misunderstandings about Christ’s return that had arisen there. He wrote his Second Letter to the Thessalonians in order to correct these misunderstandings as is apparent in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 is prophetic scripture. It predicts or describes ahead of time the events that will precede the coming of the Lord.

False prophets tend to use their predictions in order to excite their hearers and work them up into a frenzy. Paul does the exact opposite for the Thessalonians. **They were already worked up by false prophecy to believe that the day of the Lord had arrived!** And *in order to calm them down and to ease their anxiety*, Paul reminds them of the events that will precede the coming. He assures them that--despite what they’ve heard--the Day of the Lord has not arrived. And he says they should have known this, because rebellion hasn’t yet happened, and the man of lawlessness must be revealed. These things must happen before the Day of the Lord.

It is extraordinary to know ahead of time how things will unfold as Christ prepares for his return. *However, Christians are to keep their heads against error and fanatic notions; they are to use their “mind.” The truth of God is sane and never unbalances the mind.* This is why, when speaking about his Coming, Christ and His apostles always encourage the hearer to “be prepared”, “stay awake”. You do not know the hour, so don’t lose your heads. Don’t get entangled in the cares of the world; don’t numb your mind with drunkenness and despondency. Information about the last days is not to work you into a frenzy, but to give you insight and peace so that, when these things do happen, you aren’t thrown out of balance; but you have already braced yourself for impact.

So, Paul writes that, contrary to what they’ve heard, the day of the lord has not arrived. And it could not have arrived because first the apostasy must happen. Our translation says, the “rebellion”, which is right. It indicates a mass defiance of established authority, and breach of faith. Paul is saying that there will be a mass abandonment of the Christian faith. Since that hadn’t happened in any sense yet in Paul’s time, they should not have believed the false rumors that came to them.

Also, the man of lawlessness had not yet been revealed, also known as the Anti-Christ. He is described as “**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.**” The man of lawlessness, who leads the rebellion or apostasy, “takes his seat in the temple of God.” The Jerusalem Temple is destroyed; and since Christ has come, that is no longer the temple of the Lord anyway. The temple of the lord is Christendom. This means that, in some sense or another, the he will work his false signs and wonders and teachings from within Christendom. This is why Luther often opined that the Pope was the Antichrist, because he set himself in God’s seat within and above all Christendom.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, remember this. The great rebellion is not that all sorts of Christians are going to openly deny Christ, leave the church and become atheists. No. The best thing for the church would be for those who truly don’t love Christ and His Word to leave. The problem is they stay. They stay for the appearance of holiness. They stay because it gives them a platform to teach and spread their own false beliefs. And churches bend over backwards to keep them, because membership size and budget size have replaced faithful teaching as the most important asset of the church. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and to think that sheep and goats can dwell in unity within the church is bonkers. Lack of church discipline, a refusal to enforce God’s law and to expect others in the church to hold to the same doctrine, that is what will lead to the great apostasy. Hence the mystery of “lawlessness.”

If the church would preach sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it, the devil would find no foothold, and the man of lawlessness would find no place there. But he will. And the rebellion will happen in some sense within nominal Christendom. Because scripture says he will take his seat in the temple of God. The man of lawlessness will “say” he is Christian, that he comes on behalf of God, speaks for God that he is God, and people will believe, because he will tell them what their itching ears want to hear. So know your doctrine, and remain in the true Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

**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.**

**“Stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.”** The New Testament contain 27 apostolic letters. Paul began Chapter 2 saying that the Thessalonians wouldn’t have been fooled by this false teaching if they would have remembered what he told them, and would have not gotten anxious. As it is, let us always remember the coming of our Lord, that we will not be shocked into despair when masses of people break with the true faith, and when false teachers confuse and scatter the sheep. Be prepared, in his Teaching Christ is with us always, even to the end of the age.

Today, there are many under the strong delusion that unless the church is growing it is dying, and that a dying church is a lazy and unfaithful church. Do not be deceived. The false church will grow, only it will grow in lawlessness. The true church will shrink, that’s what the rebellion and apostasy means, that people will abandon the true faith.