

LESSON 2: 2 THESSALONIANS 2

The Lawless One

1. When Paul speaks of “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and of “our being gathered to him,” what is the nature of the event of which he is speaking? Review 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. People who speak of “the rapture” do so with reference to this passage as indicating a separate, earlier, and secret event involving only Christians, as distinguished from the final, public Second Coming. What is your understanding of this passage? How would you explain it to someone who comes up to you and asks, “What’s all this I keep hearing about the rapture...?” (See 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11.)
2. What issue is Paul addressing when he writes that he doesn’t want the Thessalonians to be “easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophesy, report, or letter supposed to have come from us” (v. 1)? Why do you think someone might imagine that “the day of the Lord has already come” (v. 2)? Why might he be worried that his readers might be misled in the midst of their sufferings?
3. In verses 3-12, Paul sets forth a picture of the events immediately leading up to the climactic Second Coming of Christ. What things will precede the coming of “that day” (see especially vv. 3-4)?
4. Who is “the man of lawlessness,” “the man doomed to destruction” (v. 3)? Who is he *not* (v. 9)? In 1:7 Paul wrote of the day “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven,” and in 2:3 he speaks of this “man of lawlessness” also being revealed. What do you think is significant about this word being used for both Jesus and the one opposed to Jesus?
5. What will be the character of the rebellion that will accompany the revealing of the man of lawlessness (vv. 3-4, 9-10)? Antichrist looms large in the popular (and Hollywood imagination). How does the Bible describe antichrist? See 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3, and 1 John 1:7. Also read Revelation 13:1-8, 19:19-20, and 20:10-15. What picture is revealed for us in all of this?

6. In one sense, these are already the “last days” (see Hebrews 1:1-2; Acts 2:17), the spirit of antichrist is here (1 John 2:18; 4:3) (as the kingdom also is already in our midst, e.g., Matthew 12:28, Luke 17:20-21), and there is widespread apostasy (e.g., Matthew 24:10-12; 1 Timothy 4:1). But how does Paul, and how ought we, distinguish “these last days” from the very end? (Also compare “son of destruction” in John 17:12 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3.)

7. With regard to the man of lawlessness, who/what is “holding him back”? See Revelation 20:1-3. One of the objections to the Reformed (amillennial) understanding of this passage is that it is difficult to understand in what sense Satan has been “bound” since the enthronement of Christ in Heaven. How might you explain this concept to someone? In what way, and by what means, can Satan be understood to be bound? (See John 16:7-11.) How then might Satan be set free near the very end?

8. Explain therefore how “the secret power of lawlessness is already at work,” but that he is being restrained until the “proper time,” when “the lawless one will be revealed”(vv. 7-8) in accordance with the work of Satan (v. 9). But what will happen next (v. 8; see also 1:7)?

9. If the “lawless one” has not been revealed yet and our world is currently plagued with the influence of evil, what will the world be like when he is revealed?

10. Describe the step-by-step descent of unbelievers into condemnation and destruction (vv. 10-12; compare Romans 1:24-28). What is “the lie” that nonbelievers believe?

11. What awaits the believer in Jesus Christ (vv. 13-15)?

12. Why are the “traditions” of verse 15 to be accepted? When are traditions harmful?