The Coming Man of Sin, Part 2
Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5
Code: 53-8

It is a sacred trust to have the Word of God in our hands. It is a sacred duty to rightly divide it. And we this morning want to do that, to take the task that the Spirit of God has given us and in which He helps us and unfold the meaning of God's Word.

Our text is 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. We embark upon a study of this great chapter. And in so doing focus on a personality by the name of Antichrist. In this very compelling and fascinating portion of Scripture, we are brought face to face with the final blasphemer, the final Antichrist. In verse 3 of 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul calls him the man of lawlessness and the son of destruction. In verse 4 he says he opposes and exalts himself above every socalled God, or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. In verse 8 he calls him the lawless one. In verse 9 he says his coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish.

This coming man of lawlessness, son of destruction, Antichrist is really the theme of this chapter. He is an amazing person. Satan's final earthly blasphemer who attempts finally and ultimately to oppose Jesus Christ and blaspheme God, who attempts to destroy all who worship God and all worship of God and to obliterate the very name of God and Christ from the earth. He plays a crucial role in the last days around the time of the coming of Jesus Christ.

As we noted last time this man of lawlessness, this Antichrist, will be the culmination of all who hate God, the culmination of all who hate Christ. He will be the culmination of all blasphemers, all false prophets, all false teachers, all pseudoChristos, all false Christs, all hypocrites. He will be the ultimate hypocrite, the ultimate liar and the ultimate deceiver and in a sense the embodiment of all the rest. The Antichrist's spirit has been around through all of redemptive history. But it will culminate in this one final individual, he will be the most horrible and composite figure, pulling together all false teachers, prophets, blasphemers, hypocrites, liars and deceivers into one. He again is the theme of this chapter.

But this is not the first time the Thessalonians have heard about him. In verse 5 Paul says, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things?" He had told them about the coming of the man of lawlessness, he had told them about the ultimate final blasphemer that would come around the time of Christ's return. I noted for you last time that perhaps in the telling originally when he told them and when he taught them, he must have referred to Daniel's prophecy,

for Daniel more than any other Old Testament prophet gives us details about this Antichrist. We looked last time at something about him in chapter 9, but I would like you this morning to turn back to Daniel chapter 7 and I want to show you some of the other things that Daniel has to say about the coming Antichrist, the coming blasphemer, the final great superman of Satan, we could call him.

In Daniel chapter 7 we are introduced to him. He is called there in Daniel 7 verse 8 "a little horn." Among other horns this little horn came up...the idea being that he has some associates, he associates with other world rulers and all of a sudden from a position of being somewhat small, he begins to rise to prominence and becomes larger than all his associates. Toward the end of verse 8 it says he has eyes like the eyes of a man, this speaks of his intelligence. He is no doubt an intellectual genius, clever, shrewd and knowledgeable. It says he has a mouth uttering great things, or great boasts. He is an orator. He is proud. He speaks against God open blasphemy and he is good at what he does in terms of being a skilled speaker.

Over in verse 21 of chapter 7 we read further about this little horn who grows to become the power of the world, the Antichrist. And it says he was waging war with the saints and overpowering them. He obviously is engaged and involved in aggressive hostility against the people of God and seeks to destroy them entirely. He would wipe them from the face of the earth if he could.

In verse 23 to show you the level of his success, his movement devours the whole earth and treads it down and crushes it. He has military power and military genius that is surpassing any before him. Down in verse 25 it says he will speak out against the Most High, and, of course, he is primarily a blasphemer, he is an abominator of God's holiness. And so he speaks against the Most High. He literally wears out the saints of the highest one by injustice, by seizure, by punishment, imprisonment, and by execution. He slaughters the people of God. He will intend, it says, to make alterations in times and in law. What that probably means is he brings in new celebrations. He throws out all the old times, the world celebrates certain times each year, different countries have different celebrations but usually they are associated with religious celebration and he comes in and brings in new ceremonies, new religious observances, new celebrations in the worship of himself. And he also makes alterations in law. He changes the moral and ethical code of the world which for all of the world's life has been founded on God's will and God's purposes and now becomes Satanically inspired. And there will be given into his hand this tremendous power for a time, that's one, times, that would be two, half a time, that's a half, onetwoand a half are three and a half. For three and a half years he will have this power over the world.

And then in verse 26 it reminds us, "But the court will sit for judgment and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. And the sovereignty and the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the highest one, His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all the dominions will serve and obey Him." God will become eternal King, this man only three and a half years.

In chapter 8 we learn a little more about him, down in verse 23. At the end of verse 23 it says he is a king who will arise insolent and skilled in intrigue. The word "insolent" has to do with his being an intimidator. Literally he has a fierce face. He is a fierce individual who intimidates everyone in to submission. He is skilled in intrigue. He is a master of deception. Verse 24, "His power will be mighty, but not by his own power." Revelation 13:2 says Satan will empower him. He will be inspired by and no doubt even indwelt by Satan. And therein lies his great power. Verse 24 says he will destroy to an extraordinary degree. Verse 25 speaks of his shrewdness, his deceit. He will magnify himself in his heart, his pride. He will destroy many while they are at ease. He will kill innocent victims at peace. And he will oppose the Prince of princes, no doubt the Messiah. And then he will be broken without human agency. In other words, no man can destroy him, a stone cut out without hands, Daniel 7, will crush him to death, that no doubt referring to the virginborn Messiah.

Chapter 11 tells us a few more things about him. Here he is further described as the king who will do as he pleases, or the Authorized calls him the willful king. Verse 36 of Daniel 11, "He will do exactly what he pleases, he is a total dictator of the world." He is a Satanindwelt dictator of the world who does exactly what he wants. And what he wants most of all is to blaspheme God, blaspheme Christ and destroy all who worship them. It says he will exalt and magnify himself above every God, he has absolute power, sovereign power and takes that power and that authority to limits that are unknown up to that point. He speaks monstrous things against the God of gods, the true God. He is, as I said, a blasphemer primarily. And he will prosper. He will be very effective in his profanity until the indignation is finished for that which is decreed will be done. He lasts three and a half years until God's fury is done with him, and then it's over.

Verse 37, a very interesting note, he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers. No doubt he's a Gentile and he is utterly irreligious, he has no concern for traditional religion in his family. Then it adds this, and he has no regard for the desire of women. Two possibilities. One, he could be a homosexual. That's a possibility. He does not have normal desire for women, that does not seem too remote in the world in which we live today. It also could mean he has no regard for the Messiah, Christ, because the Messiah was known by the Jews as the desire of women because every Jewish mother hoped that she would bear the Messiah. Then in verse 37, "He will not show regard for any other God," that is he has no concern for any religion or any other deity, he alone is God. He will magnify himself above them all. He is God, he is Christ, he is all there is. The only God he honors is the God of fortresses, or the God of war, a God whom his fathers didn't know. He will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. Apparently he comes out of a people that are not known as militarily powerful, but he comes and he is powerful and he is wealthy so he can finance his wars which he carries on all over the world. He will take action, verse 39, against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god, or ally, he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him. In other words, he'll elevate and lift up those who agree with him, cause them to rule over the many and parcel out land for a price. He takes control of land and he uses it to make money. He

takes control of all authority and puts his people into power. He controls everything.

Verse 45, he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas, that's the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea, that's right in Jerusalem. And the beautiful holy mountain, he sets himself up right there in the very place where God has set His temple. And he'll come to an end and no one will help him. He will meet his match.

So Daniel had said some very specific things about this blasphemer, this Sataninspired intellectual military genius, this great orator, this man who will take power over the world, this man who will destroy everything he can that names the name of God. Daniel had said enough, surely, to fill a few Pauline sermons. And so when Paul said, "I've told you about these things," no doubt much of what he had said came from Daniel. And now in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 he has some more things to say and things to remind them about regarding the man of sin.

But before we look at that, a question comes to mind. And the question is this, when you read about such an individual, you read about him in the book of Daniel and it is indeed a unbelievable description, a man with power like nothing we've ever conceived of, and were you to compare Revelation chapter 13 and read about him there, you would read there that it says he has a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies and he has authority to act for 42 months, that's the same time period, three and a half years. He opens his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is those who dwell in heaven. He makes war with the saints to overcome them, authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him, and all who dwell on the earth will worship him and everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who has been slain, when you read about the tremendous power of this man and you read here that he will do signs and wonders that are deceptive and false and that he comes in the power of Satan, you ask the question...could there be such an individual? Isn't this almost a fictional human being? I mean, we're talking about a man, we're talking about someone in the vernacular who puts his pants on the same way we do, could such a creature actually exist?

We look back in history, we have a little preview of that kind of individual, all the way back around 168 B.C. in the king of Syria by the name of Antiochus. His name was Antiochus. He called himself Antiochus Epiphanes which means the great one. The people called him Antiochus Epimanes, which means the maniac. He was king of Syria. And his goal was to blaspheme God and to eliminate Judaism from the world. He invaded Jerusalem, killed thousands of Jews, sold them into slavery. He made it a crime punishable by death to circumcise a child or own a copy of the law. He erected an altar to Zeus in the temple. And he offered a pig on it, to blaspheme God. He took the temple chambers which were occupied by worshipers and priests and Levites and made them brothels for prostitutes. He was a deliberate desecrator, a coldblooded enemy of God attempting to wipe out the Jewish religion, wipe out the worship of God and wipe out the Jews together. He was antiGod. He

was a picture of the one to come. He didn't succeed. God used the Maccabee family to lead a revolt that divested him of his power and spared the people of Israel.

But there's another even more graphic illustration of the kind of man Antichrist will be. And that man's name is Adolph Hitler. Any close look at the life of Hitler will reveal the possibility and the potentiality of such a man as Antichrist. He is perhaps in human history the single greatest model of this man. The effort of Hitler was to rule the world. Hitler hated God and Hitler hated Jesus Christ. Hitler hated the Jews and attempted to wipe them off the face of the earth in a Satanic plot to therefore eliminate the people of God and therefore disallow the promise of God to redeem Israel and give them a kingdom. Hitler was demonic. If ever a man was possessed not by just any demon or demons but Satan himself, it would have had to have been Adolph Hitler. He is the classic historical example of Antichrist.

In a fascinating book called The Morning of the Magicians by Lewis Powells(?) and Jacque Brigerre(??), published by Avon Books in 1969, we learn some background about this unbelievable man. The authors, who by the way are nonChristians, had nothing to do with Christianity, present their case from the records of the Nuremberg trials, thousands of books and reviews and testimony personally from eyewitnesses. Here's what they say, "It is impossible to understand Hitler's political plans unless one is familiar with his basic beliefs and his conviction that there is a magical relationship between man and the universe."

In fact, in their book they tell how Hitler was fascinated with mysticism and that he was deeply immersed into the ideas of mysticism. He saw rather mystically the miracle of his own destiny as the action of unseen powerful spirit forces. The Aeneids of Plutonius were read in little mystical societies of proGerman intellectuals, along with ancient Hindu texts, Niche(?) and the writings of Tibetan magicians. The probable explanation they write for Hitler's deeds is the existence of a magical puzzle, a powerful and Satanic mystical covenant. "We shall never be safe from Nazism or rather from certain manifestations of the Satanic which through the Nazis cast its dark shadow over the world until we have roused ourselves to a full understanding of the most fantastic aspects of the Hitlerian adventure."

Another book entitled The Hollow Earth written by Eric Norman in 1972 gives more information. He says that Hitler and his Nazi oriented society was a secret occult society. And the whole story is a macabre tale from the Hollow Earth Cult. The Hollow Earth Cult for centuries has believed that the earth is hollow. And in some place in the hollow earth dwells some advanced beings and they have powers beyond human power. If men on the earth are to be able to exercise that power they have to enter in to league with those beings in the hollow earth. When they enter in to that kind of alliance they become the slaves of the hollow earth powers. Eric Norman writes, "Nazi records seized after the fall of the Third Reich indicate that Hitler and his henchmen launched several expeditions to try to find the hollow earth." Hitler's concept, for example, of using children came from occult writings on the

Hollow Earth. From those writings he formed his corps of adolescent werewolves, as he called them, with black uniforms and sinister death's heads on their sleeves.

Hitler's whole Third Reich was wedded to the black occult. One of his greatest generals, one of his most wellknown was a man named Karl Househoffer(??). Househoffer for many years had been a member of The Society Of The Golden Dawn. Now that is a very ancient society of occult involvement. I am somewhat familiar with it because of writings in other fields than just Adolph Hitler. I met a young man in Hollywood on one occasion who had written two rock musicals, both of those rock musicals he said he wrote under total influence by a demon so that he didn't even know what he was writing until he came out of the trance. In the process of writing those rock operas he got involved with mediums and demons and was getting and giving messages coming from demonic sources. In that process he came across some fascinating literature. Through sheer fear and terror he came to Christ out of all of that and brought me some of the books and much of what I read in the books that he had for me was about The Society Of The Golden Dawn. It is an ageold black magic occult society.

Karl Househoffer was a part of that society and it was he who inspired Hitler to write Mein Kemp(??). He had visited Tibet and China, India, he had adopted Buddhist beliefs and was initiated into secret Buddha societies from which only suicide was an escape. It was said that Househoffer had amazing psychic powers. And most of the people who write about Hitler who know this say that Househoffer was the black magician that controlled Hitler. Even Rudolph Hess said, quote: "Househoffer was the power, the magician behind Hitler and his demonic legions." It was as if Hitler was a medium and Househoffer was the magician. The swastika was no German sign, swastika was a magical symbol in China and Europe, a symbol in the black occult.

By 1925 a group of Tibetan monks had moved to Berlin. All of these Tibetan monks were members of a black order, swearing allegiance to the power of darkness. Supposedly they had contact with the hollow earth spirits. From that time on funds were made available by the Nazis to finance expeditions to Mongolia and expeditions to Tibet to dig deeper into the black occult. When Germany fell several hundred in secret service, S.F.(??) Death head uniforms were found to be Himalayan orientals who had no ID. The whole Third Reich was infested with these monks from the black occult. Rosenberg(?) wrote, "They were the last of the black monks who helped Hitler's dark menacing movement."

In March of 1946 Househoffer killed his wife and then before a Buddhist altar killed himself and his son said he knew his father was the magician behind Adolph Hitler. The seven founders of Nazism were all deep in the occult. Powells and Brigerre wrote, "One cannot help but think of him as a medium...that is Hitler...most of the time mediums were ordinary insignificant people. Suddenly they're endowed with what seems to be supernatural powers. It was in this way beyond any doubt Hitler was possessed by forces beyond himself, demoniacal forces which the individual named Hitler was only the temporary vehicle for." They said when he got up front of the crowds to speak, the voice

that they heard was not his voice. It was an unearthly voice, not at all like the voice they heard him use in conversation.

So here was a man possessed by Satan. One eyewitness said this, "A person close to Hitler told me that he wakes up in the night screaming and in convulsions. He calls for help and appears to be half paralyzed. He is seized with a panic that makes him tremble until the bed shakes. He utters confused and unintelligible sounds, gasping as if on the point of suffocation. Hitler was standing in his room swaying and looking all around as if he were lost. `It's he...it's he...it's he, he's come for me,' he groaned. His lips were white, he was sweating profusely. Suddenly he uttered a string a meaningless figures. Then words and scraps of sentences. It was terrifying. Then suddenly he screamed...`There...there, over in the corner, he's there.' All the time stamping his feet and screaming."

This is Hitler. This is a man totally possessed by Satan, attempting to take over the whole world, blaspheme Christ, blaspheme God and wipe out the Jews. This is a preview of Antichrist. Hitler said, quote: "There is another species of humanity which doesn't deserve the name, left as a relic of some baser form of life, created along with hideous crawling creatures, namely gypsies, Negroes and Jews. They are," he said, "as far removed from us as animals are from humans. I do not mean I look on Jews as animals, they are much further removed from animals than we are. They are creatures outside nature," end quote.

He butchered six million and wanted to kill every Jew on the face of the earth. The man Hitler...a vehicle for a Satanic plot to wipe out the people of God and destroy God's plan and God's kingdom. Could such a man exist? Yes. We've seen some previews. Antichrist will be a hundred Hitlers rolled into one, a man to be Satan's tool to destroy Israel, to kill the saints, to blaspheme God, to blaspheme Christ, to destroy all religion except the worship of himself and lead the world to hell. It is this man of whom Paul speaks.

Now the question immediately comes...why does Paul bring the subject up? This is a little letter, isn't it? Three chapters, to a relatively young church. Why does he bring it up? Why does he spend a whole chapter dealing with this? Well the answer is very simple, they had three problems in that little church, one was persecution and so he wrote chapter 1 to comfort them in the midst of it. Two was insubordination, or disobedience, so he wrote chapter 3 to call them to obedience. And the third problem was confusion and so he wrote chapter 2 to straighten them out. They were confused over what? Over matters regarding the return of the Lord. They were confused over matters regarding the return of the Lord and Paul in order to help make his point brings the Antichrist into the discussion. And we'll see how that unfolds.

It's a very simple thing to understand. Look at verses 1 and 2. "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him that you may not be

quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or by a message or by a letter as if from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."

Now here's a very simple issue. They have become convinced that the day of the Lord...what?...has come. That's pretty clear. They have become convinced that the day of the Lord has come. They're in it. Well, why would they ever believe such a thing? Well they're undergoing tremendous persecution, severe persecution, including perhaps martyrdom. And somebody has told them this is the indication you are in the day of the Lord.

What is the day of the Lord? And why would they be so shocked to be in it? The day of the Lord is a very technical term. It refers to the time of God's ultimate judgment. The term "day of the Lord" appears four times in the New Testament. Many other times it is described or even given different names. The term "day of the Lord" appears 19 times in the Old Testament. It always refers to a specific final period of divine wrath. It's easily described by just a few Old Testament passages.

Isaiah 13:9, "Behold the day of the Lord comes cruel with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate." Jeremiah 46:10, "For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries." Joel 1:15, "For the day of the Lord is at hand, it shall come as destruction from the almighty." Joel 2:11, "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible." Joel 2:31, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." Amos 5:20, "Is not the day of the Lord darkness?" Malachi 4:5, "The coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Zephaniah 1:14, "The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter." And then Zephaniah 1:15, "The day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

When you see the day of the Lord you see wrath and fierce anger and desolation and vengeance and destruction and terror and darkness and dread and gloom and distress and trouble. It's judgment. Six times it is referred to as the day of doom. Four times it is called the day of vengeance. Revelation 6:17 calls it THE great day of His wrath. It always refers to the ultimate severest cataclysmic judgments of God on the wicked. It is the culmination of God's fury, God's wrath. It is climactic. The New Testament calls it His day, the day of wrath, the day of wrath and revelation, the great day of God Almighty. So this is a terrorizing period of judgment, the final judgment.

We are warned in the Bible the day of the Lord is near, the day of the Lord is at hand. It's always sort of coming out there in the final time when God pours out His fury. Jesus in the parables of Matthew 13 described it as a time of fire, burning. In Matthew 24 and 25 as He preached on His Second Coming He described it as a time when the angels come with flaming fire. Peter describes it as a time when the elements melt with fervent heat and men are consumed in eschatological fire.

Now think of it. Here's a little church. Here's a little group of Christians who have been convinced that they're in this and they're saying to themselves, "How did this happen? How did we get in this deal? We're not supposed to be here."

You say, "Well, what made them think that?" Go back to 1 Thessalonians. First Thessalonians chapter 5, in the first letter he wrote to them he told them this, verse 2, "You yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come." You know about it. You read the Old Testament. You know what Jesus taught. You know what I've told you. "The day of the Lord will come and it will come like a thief in the night." What does that mean? Unexpectedly, quickly, unannounced and harmfully. Just like a thief, they come unexpectedly, unannounced when you don't expect...when you're not ready and they do harm. While they...not we...but while they in the world are saying peace and safety, everything is fine, then destruction comes on them suddenly like birth pangs on a woman with child. They'll not escape. Notice they...they...they...not us...not us...not you. Verse 4, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness that the day should overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day, we're not of night nor of darkness."

In other words, his point is this, this isn't for you, but you, brethren, the day is not going to catch you. You say, "Well what's going to happen to us?" Well he already told you. Go back to chapter 4 verse 16, "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, with a trumpet of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first, 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words." This is the we and the us part. The Lord's going to come and take us to heaven. We're not going to be here for the day of the Lord. We're not in the darkness. The day won't overtake us. We're sons of light and sons of day, not sons of night and sons of darkness. That's for the ungodly. That's clear in the Old Testament. That's clear in the New Testament. That's not for the godly. That's the ultimate culminating judgment of God as He fires His wrath on those who don't know Him. That was further described, wasn't it, in the first chapter of 2 Thessalonians as God's righteous judgment, retribution on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

So, you see, what they had been told was the day of the Lord is an event you're not going to be at because the Lord is going to take you to be with Him. The dead in Christ are going to rise first. The living are going to get caught up, we're going to meet the Lord in the air, we're going to go and be with the Lord. We're going to be rescued out before the fury falls.

They had the same kind of anxiety that the dear people in the time of Malachi had. Malachi is the last prophet of the Old Testament in the order of the books are given. And in that little prophecy Malachi says, "God's going to judge...God's going to judge...God's going to judge." And a little group of believers get together at the end of chapter 3 and they start talking to each other and saying, "I wonder if God remembers us. We could get caught in this deal. When the fury falls we might get it."

And Malachi says, "The Lord heard them talking to each other and the Lord said, Don't you worry, don't you worry, you'll be Mine in the day that I make up My jewels and I know how to distinguish between the wicked and the righteous. Don't you worry, you're not going to get caught in that."

It has always been the hope of the people of God that the Lord would deliver them out of judgment, that those who are in Christ Jesus will not know that condemnation fury. But here are these believers and somebody has convinced them they're in the day of the Lord and the obvious reaction is...what happened to the Rapture? We're supposed to be out of here before this deal starts. And now they're really confused. Panic sets in because they think they're in the day of the Lord.

Let's look then closely at these first two verses and see how Paul faces this issue. "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him." Stop right there.

Paul says, "I want to...I want to request of you that you begin to properly understand this matter of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him. I've got to straighten you out." The word "now," de in the Greek marks the move to a new subject. It's a transition from the beautiful prayer in verses 11 and 12, now to the real heart of the letter, the real doctrinal heart, this matter of the Second Coming. He calls them brethren, it's a gentle humble approach to the situation that emphasizes their equality as brothers in Christ. And he comes with a tenderness. He doesn't come and say to them, "You blockheads, I've already written you one letter and explained all this stuff." He's a very gentle Apostle at this point and because they are so perturbed and upset, he wants to deal with them kindly. And you should remember that throughout this notoriously difficult passage, Paul is motivated by a pastoral purpose. He's not out to gratify some unlawful curiosity about the end times, he limits his instruction to what is necessary to correct their error and get back the comfort they should be enjoying in the hope of the Rapture. So he speaks gently to them in pastoral terms. "And we request you," is a verb that basically means what it says...we plead with you. There's a gentleness. There's a kind dignity to this. He avoids being pontifical or authoritarian or intolerant or overbearing, but wants to be very gentle and very tender with them. It's the very same phrase he used back in the first letter, chapter 5 and verse 12.

Now what is it that he wants to persuade them about? With regard, or in behalf of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him. The Greek construction here in the Greek language forces us to conclude that he has one event in mind...one event. It is not the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, that's one...and our gathering together to Him, that's two. It is one event. There is a single definite article and it ties them together. It could read, "With regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, specifically our gathering together to Him." When you say parousia, the word for coming, you're talking about a lot of things. There are epochs and times within the coming of Christ. He comes for His Church. He comes with His church. He comes to judge. He comes to set up His Kingdom. He comes to rule in His Kingdom. And then to establish the new heaven and the new earth.

There are many events in the coming of Christ. So he narrows it down. I want to talk to you with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him. That's a perfect description of the Rapture, isn't it? Doesn't the Lord come and then aren't we gathered to meet Him...where?...in the air. He says I want to talk to you about the Rapture.

Now why would he be discussing the Rapture? Because that was the problem. They can't figure out how they got in the day of the Lord. They're not supposed to be there by what they've understood. Furthermore the little personal pronoun "our" lends at least to me, anyway, a friendly tone to this aspect of the Lord's coming. I think if he was talking about the Lord's coming in the judgment sense, I think he would have used the Lord rather than our Lord which seems to be a friendly way of making it a hopeful aspect of that event. So with regard to the coming of our Lord and our gathering to meet Him, which is a perfect description of both sides of the Rapture, he says, "I've got to straighten you out." Coming is parousia, the general term but obviously he's relating it to our gathering together to Him which is a description of the Rapture, episunagoge. Sunagoge is the word from which you get synagogue, a gathering place. Epi is intensifying it, the place of our collecting together. So here we have a concern on their part about the event in which we are gathered together with the Lord.

Some of the old commentators called it the muster of the saints. This word, episunagoge, is only used one other place in the New Testament, Hebrews 10:25 where it says, "Forsake not the assembling together." And that's the idea of the word. So they were worried about our coming to be with the Lord, our gathering to Him. Paul had described it for them in the first letter. Jesus had said it this way, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," right? You don't need to worry about whether you're going to lose Me permanently. In John 14 He said, "I'm going to go away and if I go I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again to receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also." That's the gathering together. In fact, there are some who believe that the term, episunagoge, the gathering together, was a technical term used in the early church to speak of that event. And we might be just as well to call that event the gathering together as to call it the Rapture.

So they weren't worried about the coming of the Lord with regard to the fate of the wicked. They were concerned about the gathering of the saved because if they were in the day of the Lord they must have concluded that something went wrong. Go back to 1 Thessalonians 1...1 Thessalonians 1:10, he says to them, "I know you have turned to God," verse 9, "from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." They weren't expecting any of God's fury. And that's a very general statement there but I don't believe they were expecting eternal wrath or any other kind of wrath. They were waiting for the Son who would deliver them out of that. The Son would come and they would be gathered together in a great congregation to Him and they would go to the place He prepared for them and then would come the day of the Lord. They expected to be taken to glory before the day of the Lord ever began. And they had been promised, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, rest or relief. They had been promised, 2 Thessalonians 1:10, glory. So they weren't expecting wrath and fury, but rest and glory.

In fact, chapter 5 verse 9 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul even reminded them God has not destined us for wrath.

So the only way you can understand this passage from my viewpoint is to understand that they thought they were in the day of the Lord and therefore they missed the Rapture. If this was the day of the Lord, maybe God forgot them. They were supposed to be resting in the Lord's presence, but they were in the day of the Lord?

The effect is in verse 2. "That you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or by a message or by a letter as if from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." Listen, they were a wreck. They were shaken. They had lost their composure. They were severely disturbed because through a spirit, a message and a letter purported to have come from Paul and Silas and Timothy, they had been told the day of the Lord had come. "How did we get here?" they're saying. "What are we doing here? What happened to the Rapture? Was Paul wrong? Did God forget us? This is serious stuff."

Let's go backward through verse 2. The last part says, "To the effect the day of the Lord has come." There is no way that you can translate that verb "has come" any other way than the way it's translated. Enistecon(?), it means has come. Some commentators do cartwheels around trying to make it mean something else. It cannot. It simply means they believe that it had come, had arrived, therefore was there present actually. They were in the day of the Lord. It had arrived and they were in it.

You say, "Well why would they even think that?" Because of the persecution which perhaps included martyrdom. And more than that, because they had been told they were in it. You say, "How were they told?" By a spirit, a message and a letter. Three avenues, it's a triple use of dia, the word by or through, indicates three distinct means. What does it mean by a spirit? Well prophetic utterance, divine revelation from the Holy Spirit. They had been told that the Holy Spirit revealed it, that it came by the Spirit, direct revelation from God. And then they got it not only by a spirit but by a message, that's logos, a speech, a sermon. And thirdly, a letter, a written letter. And listen to this, then this little phrase, "As if from us." And that little phrase relates to all three.

Here's the scenario. Somebody comes to town. They say, "We have a word from Paul for you." Oh? Paul? "Yes." Now only months have passed since he had written the first letter, just a few. And they were, no doubt, eager to hear because their hearts were fresh and their love for Paul was great. "A word from Paul. Here's the word, you're in the day of the Lord." What? "He got it by revelation, it came through the Spirit, and he is preaching it by word, by message. And not only that, he has written it, here is a letter." And they had a forgery.

You see, in order to convince them that they were going to have to live through the day of the Lord, they had to get apostolic authority. They had to get some apostolic credentials. And so they said this came as a revelation to Paul, that Paul preached it and they said that he had even written it and here's a letter. It hints, doesn't it, at the existence of counterfeit apostolic documents very very very early in the life of the church, from the very outset Satan was counterfeiting stuff. All kinds of counterfeit documents were running all over the place within a matter of a few years. And the church had to distinguish between the authentic and the spurious.

They said this was all from Paul. By the way, Paul didn't like letters being attributed to him that he didn't write. He has a little word that may relate to that, look at the end of chapter 3 verse 17, it's an interesting note. As he closes the letter he says, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter, this is the way I write." What do you think he's saying there? If you've got something else and it doesn't look like this, I didn't write it. He had a way to do his signature that nobody could duplicate, I think. But see, this young group of believers got this and it supposedly came from Paul, that they were in the day of the Lord, that believers are going to go through the day of the Lord and maybe get delivered afterwards.

And what did it do to them? In verse 2 at the very beginning, they had been quickly shaken from their composure and disturbed. Very strong terminology here, it is very graphic terminology. The first verb...first you see the word quickly, hastily, rashly shaken. "From your composure," the word composure in the Greek is mind. Shaken means to be broken loose. It can be used of a rocking motion that shakes a ship, tossing it on the stormy waves. It can be used of a building that disintegrates under an earthquake. It can be used of a ship that is tied to a mooring and it breaks loose and begins to be tossed by the surf. To put it in the vernacular, you've lost your mind, you've gotten cut loose from your moorings. You're flipping and flopping all over everywhere. You're falling apart, tossed wildly. You've lost your mental balance over this. You're running amuck, you're operating on emotion, anxiety and fear. Pretty severe condition.

And then he adds the verb "be disturbed," means to be alarmed out of fear, frightened. Hey, if they were in the day of the Lord, fear. Now think this one through. If they had thought that the Rapture came at the end of the day of the Lord, they wouldn't be in fear, would they? They'd be happy. They'd be saying, "Hey, we're near the end, we're near the end, we're near the end." The very fact that they think they shouldn't be there tells us that they had been taught they weren't going to be there. So, the word "disturb" means...has the idea of clamor, tumult, fear, crying aloud. I don't know what was going on when they met for church but it might have been interesting, moaning, groaning, anxietyfilled people thinking they were in the day of the Lord and trying to figure out how they missed the Rapture or how the Rapture didn't happen, or God forgot them or Paul was wrong, and then where are we? If he's wrong about that, what else is he wrong about? State of nervous excitement that ends up in panic. They were having a continuous panic attack as a whole church. They were then defying a basic principle of Christian living and that is not to be controlled by emotion but by truth. They lost

their sense, they lost their composure.

So obviously they...they had been told that they would be escaping the day of the Lord. If they had been taught a view that they were going to go through the day of the Lord and then be taken to glory, they would have been saying, "Well it's difficult but we're excited cause this means Jesus will be here soon." No. They had expected Rapture and gathering together and then day of the Lord for the ungodly. So what were they doing in it?

So they needed an authentic word and that's why Paul writes this chapter. And he uses Antichrist as the focal point. You know why? Because it is Antichrist who really triggers the events that bring the day of the Lord. So what his point here is this, you can't be in the day of the Lord because the one who comes to start the events of the day of the Lord hasn't even come yet. And he uses Antichrist because Antichrist is an already revealed individual, so he can build his case on Daniel and he can build his case on the teaching of Jesus. And that's why he deals with the Antichrist. And in verse 3 he says, "Don't let anybody deceive you, it won't come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed." You can't be in the day of the Lord. There are some things that have to happen first that trigger that event and they haven't happened.

Some things are going to happen before the day of the Lord kicks in. We've been promised we'll have no part in those things.

Well, no sense in living in fear then, is there? If you want to title verses 3 to 17 just title it this, "How to avoid fear regarding the Lord's return...How to avoid fear regarding the Lord's return." There are five reasons you shouldn't be afraid. And if you come back next week, I'll give them to you. And if you don't...you can just be afraid. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, thank You for the power of Your Word and its great clarity. Thank You for the instruction that Your Spirit gave us this morning. Lord, this is such a horrible thing to see as we look to the future and recognize what's going to happen in the world as Satan sends his man and as You and his reign of terror with the holocaust of the day of the Lord, our hearts grieve over the ungodly who will perish in that incredible time. Lord, we would only ask humbly that You would bring many to righteousness in the days before that hour. We thank You that there is promise in Your Word that Israel will be saved before the day of the Lord, that there is promise that people from every tongue and tribe and nation on the earth will form a great multitude of people who will sing glory to the Lamb before that day breaks. We can only ask, Lord, that You would save many before the terrible time and then we thank You for saving us so that we can look to Your coming without fear, not dreading, not frightened by the day of the Lord, but comforted in our gathering together to Jesus. Thank You for that hope in the Savior's name. Amen.

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