

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Coming Man of Sin, Part 3**

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5

Code: 53-9

In my first year of college I was living in a dorm in a Christian college, and we had a young guy in the dorm who came in that year who...who had for some reason an inordinate fear that he might miss the Rapture. And...in fact, he made a big issue out of this in a number of conversations that he was afraid as he had been raised in a situation where his preacher preached a lot on prophecy and described all the horrors that were to come in the end time and all of the very difficult things that were going to be in the wrap up of history. And his great fear was that he might miss the Rapture, that he might get left.

Well that planted a thought in the minds of some of us and so we decided to create a Rapture. And we went to some great extent to do this. We got a large piece of sheet metal which is used to simulate thunder and can be very effective when it's hit with some kind of an object. And then we got a graphlex camera with a huge flash and then we got a guy with a radio voice who sounded like an archangel. And we planned a simulated Rapture. We had all the rooms surrounding his room, he happened to be in my room, a roommate. And we had all the rooms surrounding, make sure that everybody in the middle of the night got out and tucked all their bedding in and put a little kind of cave in the pillow so it looked like they just went through the covers. And we made sure that...there was no distress, no sound going on. Everybody on the entire third floor vacated their rooms in that fashion. While he was sound asleep we went into the room and with the sheet metal hit that thing which was a thunderous and echoing sound in that concrete room and the moment that sound went, of course, he jolted up and right up into a camera we set the flash off which exploded about three inches from his face in a blaze of light. And then a guy standing with his hands cupped in the hall said..."Come." And then we all in the chaos of him trying to come out of this thing, we all disappeared.

And he, of course, eventually, fearing the worse got out of bed and began to feel the beds and sure enough...no one was there, covers were all tucked in. And then we watched from a hidden place down the hall as he went from room to room...and the same reality, finally coming out of about the third room at the top of his voice he said, "I'm left...I'm left." And his worst fear had become a reality in his own mind.

Now we were very happy at the appropriate moment to jump out and say, "Surprise!" To which his response was, "Oh, you got left, too." (Laughter)

Well we were actually trying to do a little, you know, role playing to help him with his problem. Now we laugh at the ridiculous silliness of that kind of a situation. We chuckle at a guy with that kind of an

inordinate fear. But may I submit to you that that young man's concern about missing the Rapture was not unlike what the Thessalonians were experiencing as Paul wrote them 2 Thessalonians. So open your Bible to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and 2 where we have been examining God's Word, now finding our way in to chapter 2. And remind yourself that Paul has been talking in these two chapters about the coming of Christ. This was a big issue with the Thessalonians and, in fact, the major issue facing them right now was the fear that they had missed the Rapture. Or, that a Rapture wasn't going to happen because they had come to believe that they were in the day of the Lord. They were in the day of the Lord.

Now the day of the Lord, as I've explained to you, is a technical term for the final period of God's judgment at the end of the age. It is a technical term. We also know from the first letter to the Thessalonians that the church will be raptured, caught out of the world before the day of the Lord. The day will not overtake us, we are not of the darkness, we are children of the day and children of the light and the day will not overtake us. The day of the Lord is not a time for the punishment of believers. It is clear in the Scriptures that the day of the Lord is a time of final ultimate devastating judgment on the ungodly.

And in writing the first letter to them he had told them, "You will be raptured...chapter 4 verses 13 to 17...caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and then in chapter 5 he described what would happen after that, namely the day of the Lord. So they knew that they were to be raptured and then the day of the Lord would come. Christians would be caught out of the world to meet the Lord in the air and they would go to heaven to be in the place where He is now preparing their home. And He will take them to be with Him where He now is in heaven. So they knew that.

But somebody had come along, some false teacher, and told them..."No, that's not right, you're not going to be raptured out of this, you're going to go into the day of the Lord. In fact, you're in it right now."

Now what would make them believe that? Well the answer is they were being persecuted severely, some of them maybe even losing their life for the cause of Christ. It did seem like a very formidable persecution, a very difficult time of suffering and death. And so because of that there was at least the possibility that they might believe they were in the day of the Lord if someone could show them some convincing reasons. They did. Verse 2, "They were quickly shaken from their composure and disturbed by a Spirit, a message and a letter as if from us."

Now remember what I told you about that last time. Somebody had come along and said, "Look, you're in the day of the Lord." No doubt they said, "Wait a minute, we're supposed to be raptured before the final judgment hits."

"No, I got new word for you. A Spirit or a revelation came and now it is being preached and here it is written, and it is from Paul and Silas and Timothy." That's what it means when it says "as if from us." Paul got a revelation and he's now preaching and he's even written this to you that this is the day of the Lord and you're in it and there isn't going to be any Rapture to take you out. Their worst fears were reality. You see, they had been told in the first letter, chapter 1 verse 10, that they were not destined for wrath. Chapter 5 verse 9, they were not destined for wrath. In fact, chapter 1 verse 10, they were waiting for the Son, they were waiting for the Rapture. They were waiting, as it says in verse 1 here, for our gathering together to Him. But now they had been confused. So Paul says in verses 1 and 2, "I have to request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, particularly our gathering together to Him," that is the Rapture, "that you not be so anxious, that you not be so knocked off your pins, that you not be so disconnected from your moorings so wildly tossed around like a ship in the sea and disturbed because somebody has told you you are in the day of the Lord and tried to affirm that with some kind of apostolic authority, as if it's come from us."

I've got to straighten you out, he says. You did not miss the Rapture and you are not in the day of the Lord. This is the heart of this little threechapter epistle. Paul wants to remind them that what he told them stands. Whatever they may have heard from whoever may have said it, it isn't the truth.

Now there is one thing obvious in this text and that is that the people expected to be gathered together to Christ in the Rapture before the day of the Lord. That's why when they thought they were in the day of the Lord they were so shaken and they were so disturbed because they weren't suppose to be there. They weren't suppose to be in the day of the Lord at all. And that's why they were so shook. What had gone wrong? What is happening here?

To solve their confusion and to end their fear, Paul has to clarify the truth and give them an authentic word with regard to the false teaching that has been attributed to him and his companions. And his answer is, "You're not in the day of the Lord, that's impossible. You can't be in the day of the Lord." Why? Because there are certain features that have to happen before the day of the Lord can come and they haven't happened. That's his simple thought here...his simple thought. Some things have to happen before the day of the Lord, they haven't happened. You can't be in the day of the Lord.

And starting in verse 3 he lays that out all the way down through verse 17. And the whole point of verses 3 to 17 is to waylay their fears, is to remove their anxiety, is to take away their shakiness, is to get back their composure, is to eliminate their being disturbed, to get them back calm, collected, cool, comfortable and hopeful.

Now if I were to divide up verses 3 to 7 I would simply say Paul has a few hooks that he hangs his thought on. If you want to eliminate fear about the coming of Christ, if you don't want to be like my roommate and live in the fear that something might go wrong and you might get missed, then there's some things you need to avoid, okay? And he gives five of them. And this is the way that this text

flows. First he says don't be deceived, then he says don't be forgetful. Then he says don't be ignorant. Then he says don't be doubtful. Then he says don't be weak. What leads to confusion and being shaken and disturbed and afraid and anxious as you look at the coming of Christ is deception, forgetfulness, ignorance, doubt, and weakness. So he takes those five things and simply points out...you must avoid them. Don't be deceived, don't be forgetful, don't be ignorant, don't be doubtful, don't be weak. And as we move through the passage over the next couple of weeks we will see those points unfold. For this morning we're just going to look at the first two and to do that is going to be a major accomplishment because of the fact there's so much here.

The first one is somewhat brief. Now if you want to eliminate your shakiness and eliminate you're being disturbed and get your composure back and live in joy and hope and anticipation...one, don't be deceived. Verse 3, "Let no one in any way deceive you." That's pretty simple. Deception will create anxiety. Deception will create certain fear. The cause of their being shaken and losing their composure, the cause of their being disturbed and distressed was that somebody had come along and deceived them. What does that mean? They told them something was true that was not true.

Now this is a common thing when it comes to end times. I doubt that a week goes by in my life when I don't get across my desk another book or another letter or another pamphlet or another paper offering some other viewpoint about the end of the world. There is a massive amount of deception floating around on this issue. That's why Jesus said, it's recorded in Matthew 24:4 and Mark 13:5, "When it comes to My return, Jesus said, see to it that no one misleads you." There's so much misleading, so much deception. And our Lord was speaking there about deception regarding the time of His return.

There is always in the church the imminent danger of deception because Satan is disguised as an angel of light, he goes around attempting to deceive...that is he sells lies as if they were true. That's his major work. And his ministers are disguised as angels of light. They are endeavoring to do what Satan wants to do and that's to devour you with confusion, to devour you with error and deception. That's why you can no longer be children, Ephesians 4:14 says, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness and deception of Satan. You have to be on the alert for ministers, 2 Corinthians 4:2 says, that come along and are corruptors, or mishandlers of the Word of God. You have to realize that evil men will grow worse and worse deceiving and being deceived, 2 Timothy 3:13. Many deceivers are in the world, John said, many deceivers are in the world, 2 John 7. And he says the deceiver is the spirit of Antichrist. So some deceivers had come in to the Thessalonian church. They found an audience and they were ready to accept it because their circumstances looked so bad that it sounded believable. And then when they popped up an supposed apostolic letter, they bought into it. So Paul's retort is a very strong prohibition..."Let no one deceive you." It's a compound verb, *exapatao*, it means to deceive successfully, or to deceive completely, to delude, to lead you right in to error. Don't let anybody do that. And then he adds that little phrase, "in any way," that is through any means, whether it's a revelation, or whether it's a prophecy, or whether it's a sermon, or whether it's a book, a letter, whatever it is, written, spoken, whatever....don't let

anybody by any means or any method lead you in to any deception.

Obviously Satan is a deceiver and a liar. And you can't be so gullible as just to buy anything. The point is, you check it with what you know to be true. Don't just gullibly buy in to something based upon an interpretation of circumstance. And admittedly the letter that was supposedly attributed to Paul would be a very formidable thing in making the case. But certainly they would have known that Paul wasn't going to counter his teaching and wasn't going to contradict the doctrine that he got from the Lord which he had previously taught them. It's obvious they had been taught about the Rapture. It's obvious they had been taught about the day of the Lord. Obviously they thought the Rapture would come and then the day of the Lord. They knew Paul taught it and they knew he taught it because God gave it to him. There really was no reason to be deceived. They were being deceived as an emotional reaction to the stress of their circumstances. Don't allow that to happen. Let your theology rise above your circumstances. You don't buy in to something because it fits the way you assess your personal problems.

Now Paul says you can't be deceived about this, it's a bad thing to be deceived about. Let me just give you a simple reason why. You need to understand the truth about the coming of Jesus Christ for two reasons...one, for the reason of accountability. In other words, when I know Jesus is coming and His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his work shall be...I'm waiting for Jesus to come and reward me. I'm waiting because when He comes the Bible says He's going to bring His reward with Him for me. And He's going to take me to heaven to my eternal home and there I'm going to dwell with Him. And when I go to meet Him in the air, Jesus Himself will meet me and John says I'll become like Him. As I realize He's coming with a reward to give to me, to take me to glory to dwell in a house He's prepared for me or a place in the Father's house, and to make me immediately like Jesus Christ, that, John says, is a purifying hope. Whoever has this hope purifies himself. I need to be clear about the return of Christ and His coming to gather His people because that is a purging hope.

Secondly, I need to be clear about it in order that I might not only have purity but that I might have joy. If I am confused about the return of Christ, if like my roommate I think I'm going to miss the Rapture and end up in a holocaust, if I'm like the Thessalonians thinking that there isn't going to be any deliverance, I'm not going to be delivered from the wrath to come, I'm going to wind up caught in this thing, if I believe that then I lose the joy of my hope. So for the sake of accountability and obedience and purity and the sake of hope and joy, I need to be clear about the return. Paul says I don't want you to be deceived about this, it steals your purity, it steals your joy.

So the first thing he says is if you don't want to have anxiety about the return of Christ then don't be deceived. Second point, don't be forgetful. Don't be forgetful, verses 3 to 5, don't let anybody deceive you, he says, "For it will not come," that means the day of the Lord, refers back to the day of the Lord at the end of verse 2, that time of final judgment when man's day is over and the day of the Lord

comes as He judges the wicked of the world, so he says the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction or perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God...now watch verse 5, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things?"

He's saying to them don't be forgetful, I told you all of this. I told you all of this. And this, of course, is tied very closely to the first point about not being deceived because you hold on to what you've been taught. Here he says remember it, don't forget it. What it reminds us is that all this is not new information. See that little phrase "these things I was telling you these things," what things? Rapture truth, truth about the day of the Lord, truth about the apostasy, truth about the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, I was telling you all of that. By the way, "I was telling," it's an imperfect tense verb which means past continuous action...I was continually telling you...not I told you once, not I dropped a hint, not I gave you one lecture on this...I was continually telling you this about the Rapture, the day of the Lord, the apostasy and the man of lawlessness. It was a...it was a continual theme in my teaching.

And that is why there's not more detail here. There's just enough detail to try to restore their weak memories to the more full treatment that Paul had given to them when he was there. He says you just need to remember what I told you. If you were remembering you would not be anxious. You wouldn't be afraid of the coming of Christ. Some people are, you know? That young man in my room wasn't the only one, there are many people and I meet them from time to time who have very inordinate fear about the coming of Christ. He says if you weren't deceived you wouldn't have that fear and if you weren't forgetful you wouldn't have that fear because I've told you what you need to know to waylay that fear.

Let me give you a footnote here just so that you put this in your file somewhere. This church in Thessalonica is only months old in the Lord. I mean, these are baby Christians. Paul, you know, had gone there and stayed just a few weeks, the church was born. After traveling for a few more weeks he writes a letter. After traveling a few more weeks he writes another letter. This is only a few months old, this church, these are baby Christians. And it ought to be filed somewhere in your mind that prophetic teaching about the Rapture, the day of the Lord, the apostasy and the man of sin Paul felt was essential to the foundation of a new Christian. Obviously it is not something that you wait for, it is something that you put in the foundation. Why? Because it has such a tremendous impact on the matter of purity and the matter of joy that believers need to know it from the beginning. And so Paul must have laid it out, unrolled his apostolic eschatological chart and took them through it.

It is important for all of us to understand the return of Jesus Christ. We're waiting for the Son from heaven like they were. We're waiting for the gathering together. We're waiting for the twinkling of an eye in which we leave this world with those that are dead in Christ and are gathered to meet the Lord

in the air, we're waiting to go to the place He's prepared for us in heaven. We need that holy hope, we need that joy. And so he is saying, "Don't you remember what I told you? I told you all these things. I told you Rapture would come and you'd be caught up and the gathering together would take place, I told you you were not children of the darkness or the night. I told you the day would not overtake you like a thief. Something has to come first," he says. It can't be the day of the Lord, for it will not come...back to verse 3...until the apostasy comes first. He must have already told them that, but here he reminds them.

Now this is his main point. This is a very important point, now don't miss this. Paul's saying, "Look, you can't be in the day of the Lord. The reason you can't be in the day of the Lord is because the apostasy hasn't come. It comes first, then the day of the Lord comes." Pretty clear. In other words, he's saying the day of the Lord can't just show up at any time, there's some things that have to happen before the day of the Lord comes. He could have chosen a number of things...he really could have. He could have chosen any of a handful of precursors to the day of the Lord. For example, listen to Joel chapter 2 verse 31, "The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes." Now can it be more clear? If the day of the Lord is here, look up. Is the moon blood and has the sun gone out? Right? That's what it says. That has to happen before.

He could have gone to Joel 3:14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision, the sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness." Is the moon blood? Has the sun gone out? Are the stars gone? Are multitudes from all over the world collected in a valley near Jerusalem to be judged by God? Has that happened?

Well how about Zechariah...he could have gone to Zechariah chapter 12 verse 10, "I will pour out on the house of David on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication so they will look on Me whom they've pierced, mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. There will be great mourning." And then he says, "A fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and impurity," chapter 13 verse 1. In other words, all Israel is going to be saved. There's going to be salvation for them. Then verse 1 of chapter 14, "A day is coming for the Lord and He'll gather the nations against Jerusalem and battle will take place." Has that all happened? Has Israel been converted? Have the nations gone to battle against Jerusalem? Are multitudes in this valley?

He could have gone to Malachi. He could have gone to Malachi chapter 4, "Behold, I'm going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." Had Elijah come? Had he restored the hearts of the fathers? Had there been a revival led by Elijah? He could have picked any of that. He could have said you can't be in the day of the Lord, the moon isn't blood, the sun isn't out, the stars aren't gone, the nations of the world haven't fought against Jerusalem, they're not collected into a valley for judgment, Elijah hasn't come, Israel hasn't been saved, the hearts of the

fathers haven't been restored, this is not the day of the Lord.

But he didn't choose any of those. What did he choose? Something else, look at verse 3, he said, "It will not come unless the apostasy comes first." He picked this called the apostasy. The day of the Lord will not arrive...by the way, there's an ellipsis there that's filled in by words in italics that are very accurate...it will not come...you see that in italics. Paul is so excited here his grammar fails a bit. And it's kind of an ellipsis, you know, like three dots, something's left out and filling it in is appropriate. The day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first.

Now let me add a footnote here please. Paul is not discussing the time of the Rapture. He says nothing about the time of the Rapture. He simply says the day of the Lord is preceded by the apostasy. He doesn't say whether his readers will see the apostasy, whether any believers will see the apostasy or not see the apostasy. The time of the Rapture is not a discussion here. He doesn't even deal with it. All he says is that there is coming the apostasy and then after that comes the day of the Lord. He doesn't say anymore than that. So we cannot read into this text some specific timing for the Rapture. We only know it will be before the day of the Lord. For sure he is wanting the Thessalonians to comprehend that but in this text he is simply saying the day of the Lord can't come until this event takes place. And that event is called the apostasy. The apostasy comes first.

Now very quickly follow my thought, I want to show you what this means. The apostasy, apostasia, short definition...revolt, rebellion..revolt, rebellion. It is used in Joshua 22:22 that's in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, of rebellion against God. A long definition...a deliberate abandonment of a formerly professed religious position...a deliberate abandonment of a formerly professed religious position. In other words, you're associated with a certain religious view, you profess it and then you revolt against it. That's apostasy. Revolting, rebelling against a position you once professed. This is defection, religious defection.

Now what's he talking about here? If he wants to say...now follow this...if he wants to say you can't be in the day of the Lord, you cannot be in the day of the Lord because the apostasy hasn't come, what does he mean?

Is he talking about apostasy in some general sense? No. Because if he were talking about it in some sort of general sense we always have it around, right? So it wouldn't signify anything. It wouldn't signal anything. There will be, for example, apostasy in the church all the time. There will be defectors in the church from the very start. We're studying Revelation 2 and 3, right? We've read the letters to the seven churches. Five of the seven churches have defecting Christians, don't they? Falling into sin? Several of the seven, at least two, have a large contingent of nonChristians who have totally rejected the faith and one, Laodicea is a whole church full of apostates, people who have defected from the true faith. So that's been around a long time.

So if he's talking about the apostasy in some generic sense like the Laodicean type church that has left the true faith but continues to be religious, he can't be speaking of that. He's not just talking about that general reality that was in Laodicea. There have been Laodicean churches throughout the history of the church for the last two thousand years. We have Laodicean churches today. You can't identify that as some particular event. That's just general.

Furthermore, there's another apostasy. You say he might be thinking about not just the general apostasy that happens all the time as the church defects, all through history it's done that...the Roman Catholic Church, cults and isms and chisms and spasms and all the stuff that comes off the church, all the cults and occults and all that other stuff, there's always that. That's...that can't be what he's talking about...liberals and neoorthodox and whatever other stuff. You say, "Well maybe he's talking about that sort of end time apostasy, that sort of escalated apostasy, that sort of final culminating apostasy. You know, 1 Timothy chapter 4 the Apostle Paul says that in the later times some will fall away from the faith paying attention to deceitful spirits, doctrines of demons. Is he talking about that, that sort of final escalated apostasy of 1 Timothy or even the 2 Timothy 3 when it says dangerous seasons will come and there will be a departure and it will grow worse and worse? Or maybe the 2 Peter 2 passage where it says that in the latter times, in the end times there will come false teachers and they will secretly bring in destructive heresies and they will deny the Master that bought them? That's apostasy. They will defect from having once named Christ." That's end time stuff. Or the scoffers in chapter 3 of 2 Peter, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Or the people that Jude talks about in the end time who come along and they mock, they mock the truth, they are worldly people who follow after their own ungodly lusts. "Is he talking about that, that sort of last days final form of apostasy?" No, he's not speaking of that.

It isn't just the general apostasy that goes on all the time through all the history of the church. It isn't that sort of final accumulated apostasy at the end of the church age. There's another possibility. Even during the hour of testing, Daniel's seventieth week, that seven year period that we often call the Tribulation, there will be some apostasy there, too. There will definitely be some defection among some people there. It says in Matthew 24 that our Lord says, "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many and because lawlessness has increased most people's love will grow cold and only those who endure to the end are going to be saved." So there are going to be defections even in the period that we call the Tribulation. There are defections all through church history. There will be a sort of an accumulated large kind of spiritual apostasy at the end of the church age and there will be apostasy in the time we call the Tribulation or the hour of testing. Is he talking about this? No. He's not talking about those. What is he talking about?

Look back at verse 3. He doesn't say it will not come until apostasy comes first, but until...what?...THE apostasy. In this case that article is very definitive, THE apostasy. This is an event. This is not a general spirit or a general flow or a trend, this is an event...specific, identifiable,

unique, this is the consummate apostasy, the ultimate apostasy. This is as you would have it the final act in the course that was set in motion in Romans chapter 1. The is the event of final evil blasphemous magnitude.

You say, "But how are we to know what it is?" Well he tells you by introducing the main character. "The day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first." And what is that? "It's the man of lawlessness who is revealed." The apostasy, beloved, is associated with the revealing of the man of lawlessness. Whatever this event is it involves someone called the man of lawlessness. If you know the key person, you can find the key event. The key person is the man of lawlessness. Some manuscripts say "the man of sin," that's why I called the series "The coming man of sin," that's the more familiar name of this guy. But the better manuscripts here would use the word "lawlessness," and that also fits with verses 7 and 8 where lawlessness and lawless is used as well. This is...lawlessness is anomia, without law. This is the person who lives without any regard for God's law, okay? A man who has no regard for the law of God, no regard for the will of God, the rule of God at all. First John 3:4 says sin is lawlessness, and of course it is. But this is then the consummate lawless one, the consummate sinner. There have been millions of lawless, there have been millions of blasphemers, there have been millions of Godrejecters, Christ haters, millions of people throughout human history, billions even, who have blasphemed God. There have been millions who have hypocritically outwardly professed to worship God and to worship Christ, so defectors, apostates, rebels, revolters, they've been around a long time. The lawless, the godless who refuse the law of God, the will of God, the Word of God, the rule of God, there have been billions. But this is the ultimate one. This is THE man of lawlessness. This is the ultimate composite wicked blasphemous human being. And at the apostasy, please note verse 3, he is revealed.

Whatever this apostasy is it is an event in which the man of lawlessness is revealed. The verb, by the way, "revealed," stands in the emphatic position in the aorist tense, for those of you who care, which points to a definite time when he's revealed. And it would read like this...the apostasy comes first revealed is the man of lawlessness. It is at the apostasy that the revelation of the man of lawlessness takes place.

Now the fact that he is revealed also indicates that he had previous existence. It doesn't say he's born. It says he's revealed. He is taken out from the secret place where he's been. What has been hidden is now fully disclosed. His true identity will be made manifest. He's already around. In fact, you want to know something? Before he pulls off the apostasy he's already the ruler of the world...the whole world. They just don't know who he is. They don't know he is a 100 Judases rolled in to one. But they're going to find it out in one moment, in one great event, in one blasphemous cataclysm, the epitome of evil pulls the epitome of apostasy.

Now who is this man of lawlessness? Some commentators say, "Oh, it's Antiochus Epiphanes." It can't be him, can't be him because three and a half years after he does this the day of the Lord

comes, then comes the Millennium and then the eternal state. And I've got news, we aren't in the eternal state. Couldn't be Antiochus or the day of the Lord would have been passed thousands of years ago.

Some say Caligula. Couldn't be him either. Some say Nero. Couldn't be him. Some say Pompey, couldn't be him. Some say Satan, couldn't be Satan because it says in verse 9 that he works in accord with Satan. Some say it's just a principle of evil. It doesn't say a principle, it says it's a man. Must be the Antichrist.

So the Antichrist is going to come and he's going to do something that is the ultimate act of apostasy. He is further called "the son of destruction, or perdition." That's a quite graphic name. The Hebrews used this expression "the son of" to point up something very simple. If a person belonged to something so inextricably they would want to say that he had the nature of that thing. This man is so totally associated with destruction that he can be called a son of destruction. We would say the son of a father bears the father's nature. And that's what they're saying. A son of destruction bears the very nature of destruction. He is in his inmost being destruction. He is in his inmost being perdition just as the Son of God is in His in most being, Godlike. It is to say he belongs to hell. He belongs to perdition. He belongs to torment. He belongs to punishment. He belongs to judgment. He belongs to apoleia, is the word ruin. He is human trash for the dump of hell, ruination. One other person in the New Testament is called a son of perdition, who is it? Judas, John 17:12, same title. Only two people in the Bible are given that title but there are many more who are capable of bearing that title. In fact, all unbelievers would but there's a sense in which this title is reserved for the worst of the worst. Who can think of a worst person in human history until the Antichrist than Judas? Who can think of a more fierce apostasy than the apostasy of Judas? Who can imagine a man who could live for three years in the presence of God Himself in human form, who could be with Him, walk with Him, talk with Him, eat with Him, who could do every little duty of life alongside of Him, who could hear His words and see His life and feel His love and know His wisdom and who could turn his back and sell Him? That is an apostasy of monstrous proportions. And certainly the hottest hell is reserved for that kind of apostate, that is a son of destruction.

But the Antichrist is a hundred Judases, the ultimate blasphemer. Judas simply went to the temple and threw the money down. The Antichrist goes in the Holy of Holies and pronounces himself God. Both men were controlled by Satan. John 13:2 says of Judas, "Satan entered into him." Revelation 13 says of the Antichrist that Satan controlled him in the vision that John saw. He's destined to be destroyed.

This Antichrist, as you remember I showed you, was described, remember in Daniel 7, Daniel 8, Daniel 9, Daniel 11? Daniel laid out a very clear description of him. Zechariah adds to that, "For behold I'm going to raise up a shepherd," this is God talking, "I'm going to raise a shepherd up in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken or sustain the one

standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hooves." God says I'm going to raise up a shepherd...so you want to know something? Antichrist is under the control of whom? God. He doesn't do what shepherds are supposed to do, he doesn't care for the perishing, those that have been cut off, literally those who are dying. He doesn't seek the scattered. He doesn't heal the broken, sustain the one standing. That could refer to one about to give birth. He just devours the fat sheep, tears off their hooves. And then in verse 17, "Woe to that worthless shepherd." That word "worthless," ruined, useless, pointless, trash for the dump of hell, this is the Antichrist. The little horn, Daniel called him, that rises out of the other nations. He starts out not being very powerful and soon controls the world. He is the king, Daniel says, who does what he pleases, the willful king. He is the insolent king. He is the man of lawlessness and he is a son of destruction.

Now what is the apostasy that he does? Verse 4 describes it. "Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship." Stop at that point. Apparently he's been the friend of religion. He has risen to world power. And when I say he has risen to world power, friends, I mean he has risen to world power. Look at Revelation 13...Revelation 13 verse 1, John sees this beast and this is a visionary symbolic picture of the Antichrist. He has ten horns, seven heads, on his horns were ten crowns. Now we don't want to go in to the detail on that, those pictures of this beast suffice it to say lead us to understand the tremendous breadth of his power. Horns mean power, heads can mean intelligence, crowns mean dominion and authority. He is a massively powerful ruling entity. But notice on every one of the heads were blasphemous names. He is a blasphemer of God. He rises to prominence with all this power. Imagine ten horns, seven heads, ten crowns, this is a world ruler. He's wearing all the crowns.

And then it says in verse 2, "He was like a leopard and also feel like a bear and a mouth like the mouth of a lion." What's the importance of that? If you go back to Daniel chapter 7 verses 3 to 8 you will remind yourself that Babylon was described as a lion. And you will remind yourself that Medo Persia was described as a bear. And the great kingdom of Greece as a leopard for its swiftness...fierce, strength, swift. And so what you have here is the Antichrist being the composite of all the great world empires, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece. He will come out of Europe, he will come out of the revived Roman Empire which died and is now being reformed. Isn't it amazing to watch it happen? A united Europe...that's no mistake, that's no political mishap, that's no serendipity. We wondered, I think, years ago how Europe could be so prominent in prophecy and why the Antichrist would rise out of Europe when America was more prominent. Now America is on the down and the great power of the world is becoming confederated Europe. And out of that Antichrist rises and then what you've got is all that Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece and the old Roman Empire were all rolled in to one individual. The whole earth is amazed. Verse 4, "They're worshiping the dragon who is Satan because he gave his authority to the beast...they don't know that...they worship the beast, they say, Who is like the beast? Who is able to wage war with him?" So he comes, he conquers the world.

Verse 5, he has a mouth and out of his mouth words of blasphemies. But once those blasphemies start he can only go for 42 months, that's three and a half years. That's exactly what Daniel 7:25 said, a time, times and a half a time. That's the limit. He speaks, verse 6, blasphemies against God...blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, blasphemes those who dwell in heaven. He makes war with the saints, overcomes them. Please note, he has authority over every tribe, people, tongue, nation on the face of the earth, that is all who dwell on the earth worship him whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of the Life of the Lamb who has been slain. Every nonbeliever in the world worships this guy. He literally rules the whole world. He rules the world...this son of perdition. He rises to that rule and when he hits his apex he starts to blaspheme God and he blasphemes, it says, His temple or His tabernacle, His dwelling place and those who dwell in heaven. He just goes after God and everything that is associated with God.

Before he does that though he has reached world prominence. He gets to the point where the whole world embraces him and he must be tolerant of religion. He must be able to put his arms around the Jews and the Gentiles and everybody. I'm amazed to see this happening. I suppose you've been amazed to see the Pope meeting with Muslim leaders. There will be a tolerance of world religion by this individual...but, please notice verse 4, at one great movement he will oppose and exalt himself above every so called God or object of worship. Boom! He is the ultimate egotist. He will be worshiped. By the way, this is simply a human being fulfilling some massive way the desire of the heart of Satan. When Satan fell, what prompted him? Isaiah 14 says he said this, "I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the mount of assembly, in the recesses of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High." Satan has always wanted to be in God's place. And this Antichrist will move in, blaspheme God, set himself up as God. First he opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or sebasma, that's a word that means something to be revered, every...every holy article, holy holiday, festival, or whatever. In other words, all religion goes.

You might note, up until this time, you read Revelation 17, he's been coexisting with the mother of harlots, the false world religions. He's been doing fine but eventually devours them. Read that in Revelation 17. And then he sets himself up. Verse 4, he takes his seat in the temple of God, in the naos, the inner most part, the sanctuary. It indicates to us that when he does this there will be a temple in Jerusalem. There will be a temple. He goes into the temple of God and he puts himself up as God, displaying himself as being God.

You say, "Why does he pick the temple?" Because for all of history since God brought His people into the land and built a temple, that has been the symbol of the presence of the true God. Yes, Israel is apostate. Yes, Judaism has failed. Yes, God has removed Himself, as it were, from that unique place of covenant blessing which Israel once enjoyed and awaits their future salvation. But still Jerusalem belongs to God and God's presence is symbolized in the temple in that place. What other place on the face of the earth would be a more perfect place for Satan to orchestrate the ultimate blasphemy

against Jehovah the true God and therefore His Son Jesus Christ? So he goes in to the temple and desecrates it. This happens at the middle of the seven week, seven years, the seventieth week of Daniel, the time of testing, the time of Jacob's trouble, as it's called. For the first three and a half years he just captures the world. They don't know who he is. Then he's revealed for who he really is when he goes in and calls himself God and the world says, "Oh oh, we've got a maniac." Jesus said in Matthew 24:15, "When you see that happen which was spoken of by the prophet Daniel, even the abomination of desolation...next verse, the first verb...run, run and hope it isn't winter and hope you're not nursing a baby because what's going to happen is indescribable." He will massacre everybody he can, including those who have come to believe in Christ in that time, including Jews to wipe out the people of God if he can, literally all hell breaks loose.

The first half, he's this world leader. Daniel says he signs a treaty with Israel. He brings peace to the Middle East. He becomes the protector of Israel. They probably let him in and out of their temple. He looks like he's religious. He probably talks about loving God, about knowing God. And he controls the world. And then the reality is known when he moves into the place, opposes every religion, consumes the mother of harlots which is the false religious system of the world during that time, sets himself up as God and then begins to destroy anyone who associates with the true God in any way, shape or form. That act of going into the holy place, putting himself up...Jesus said it would happen in the holy place, Matthew 24:15, that act is the apostasy. That we might to borrow contemporary language say, is the mother of all apostasies...or better, the child of all apostasies, the ultimate apostasy. He sets himself up as God, the ultimate affront to the true God. And then for three and a half years he has a reign of terror that is ended by the day of the Lord.

But that act in the temple is called the abomination of desolation. What that means is an abomination denotes an object of disgust or revulsion, or abhorrence. The abomination of desolation, literally the abomination that desolates, that lays waste. It literally lays waste the house of God. It causes it to be desolate. And then he starts to kill anybody who names the name of Christ, he attempts to massacre the whole remaining population of Jews. This is the one to come.

What's Paul's point? He says...Look, you're not in the day of the Lord. I could have told you look up, is the moon blood? Is the sun gone out? Are the stars disappeared? I could have said, is Elijah here? Is there a big valley, have the nations been gathered? Has there been a war in Jerusalem? But here's something better, you can't be in the day of the Lord because the apostasy hasn't happened. The Antichrist hasn't gone into the temple, into the holy place, blasphemed the true God with an act of desecration.

I don't know what the specific act is but it's enough that he sets up the worship of himself. And if you read Revelation you'll see then the false prophet forces the whole world to worship him as God. For three and a half years he is worshiped as God and anybody who doesn't worship him is killed. Believers refuse to worship him therefore don't get the mark of the beast are massacred. He sets out

to massacre all of Israel. God has to hide them and protect them so that they'll be around to be redeemed and to have the Kingdom promised to them.

You're not in the day of the Lord. Before the day of the Lord comes all this has to happen...the apostasy, the man of lawlessness.

This is comforting. So he says in verse 5, "Don't you remember, while I was still with you I was telling you these things." Beloved, there's no need to have fear. You're not of the darkness nor of the night. The day of the Lord will not overtake you as a thief. You're looking for our gathering together to Jesus Christ. You're looking for the Rapture when the Lord comes from heaven to take us to the place He's prepared for us. You're waiting for the Son, not the Antichrist. The day of the Lord isn't for us. Be comforted. Don't let anybody deceive you and don't be forgetful of what you know.

Father, we thank You this morning for Your Word. How powerful it is. We rejoice in hope of the coming of Christ, thank You that we'll not be in the day of the Lord. We'll not be there because You'll keep us from it. We thank You for the promise of Revelation 3:10 that we will be kept from the hour of testing that shall come upon the whole earth to try those who dwell on the earth. And we know that's a technical phrase, those who dwell on the earth for unbelievers and is so used throughout Revelation. There is coming a time to test unbelievers. There is coming a horrible day of the Lord. For us though there's coming a Savior to take us to be with Him. In that hope we find the call to holiness and source of our joy and we thank You for such a great hope in our Savior's name. Amen.

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