

## INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] This morning we are going to talk about the antichrist. This is a figure that has gotten a lot of attention throughout history. He has led to obsession, bad movies, and pointing fingers at people trying to identify the antichrist. But we need to recognize that the anti-christ is very real and one day he will come. Though the word anti-christ is never used in this passage, the passage is about this man. The antichrist is not Satan himself. But he is an anti version of Jesus. Where Christ is truly God incarnate, the antichrist is a pretend version of Satan incarnate.
2. [Need] We need to think clearly and Biblically about the antichrist and the return of Jesus.
3. [Subject] What do we need to know about the antichrist? Paul actually tells us everything we need to know in this chapter. Now he won't tell you everything that you want to. You will probably still have questions after today. But Paul will give us everything we need.
4. [Text] 2 Thessalonians 2
5. [Preview] We will talk about when he comes, how much power he will have, and how to resist him.

Point number 1 if you are taking notes is **The antichrist will come before Christ returns. The Antichrist will come before Christ returns.**

You cannot understand the antichrist without studying Christ as well. And you shouldn't.

You don't want to study anything in theology without seeing how it connects to Jesus.

And the appearance of the antichrist is directly tied to the 2nd coming of Christ.

Verse 1 **"Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together with him"**

Paul makes it clear that he is addressing the question of when Jesus will return and Paul talks about the antichrist in order to answer that question.

When our King Jesus Christ returns, all believers will be **"gathered together with him."**

The word for gathering is only used one other place in the New Testament. It is used in Hebrews 10:25 as a command to not neglect the weekly gathering.

It describes the assembly of the church each week for worship.

But on the day Jesus returns we will have one big gathering.

A uniting of not just every church in Duncan,

But every single church on the globe.

Gathered together with our King.

That will be the first time the true church all gathers.

What a day it will be.

And Paul is writing so that they do not think they have missed this day.

Verse 2 **"we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."**

He does not want us to **"be quickly shaken or alarmed."**

Paul doesn't want us filled with fear and terrified about the end times.

This same caution to not be alarmed is used two other times in the New Testament.

Both are in the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7.

Jesus tells believers to not be alarmed even when they see **"wars and rumors of wars," "famines and earthquakes."**

When the world falls apart they do not need to worry.

They don't need to think that Jesus isn't coming.

If studying the end times alarms you, then you are doing it wrong.

And you need to study better or get a new teacher.

Because it should bring you comfort.

It seems that some have been teaching that Jesus already came.  
Or some have even been impersonating Paul's letters and trying to distort his teaching.

This is why verse 2 mentions **either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.**

Some are even claiming to prophesy that Jesus has returned.  
But Paul says don't listen to them.  
Paul says don't worry even when the world seems to get worse.

Why? Verse 3 **"Let no one deceive you in any way."**

He does not want them to be deceived by false teaching.  
And there is a lot of deception and false teaching when it comes to eschatology.

I don't mean places where Christians disagree and there are different valid interpretations.

I mean places where people say "Jesus is coming back on y2k be ready!"

We need to be wary and use discernment in this area of theology.

Because there are a lot of false teachers out there.

And anyone setting dates, or identifying antichrists is probably someone to avoid.

In order to help us from being deceived Paul gives us guidance.

He describes two things that must happen before Christ returns.

Verse 3 continues **"For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction."**

Before Christ returns two key things have to happen.

This is why it says **"that day will not come."**

The first thing that happens before Christ's return is **"the rebellion comes first."**

The word for rebellion is actually "ἀποστασία/apostasia."  
Your translation may simply say, "the apostasy comes first."

This appears to be describing the church.

Some might disagree with me here.

But I think it's the church because only those with faith can commit apostasy.

Before Christ returns massive amounts of Christians,

People who proclaim faith in Jesus,

Will commit apostasy and turn their backs on Christ.

They will abandon the faith.

So first that terrible event must happen,

then second **"the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction."**

The antichrist will step onto the stage.

His revealing and the apostasy are probably tied closely together.

I think his appearance and actions will lead to the great apostasy.

Again it appears that both of these will take place before Jesus comes back.

You might have noticed that I have not talked about the rapture.

That's on purpose.

Now personally my study of the Scriptures has led me to conclude that there is not a rapture. Or I don't think that there is a secret coming of Jesus before His 2nd coming.

The main reason I keep circling back to is that I don't see a distinction in the Bible between the rapture and the 2nd coming.

I think that they are the same event.

This gathering up in the air of the church will happen!

I just think it will happen here after the time of apostasy and the antichrist.

Now I know that I disagree with Pastor Brad here.  
I disagree with some of my professors at DTS.  
And I probably disagree with at least some of here on this point.  
But I want you to know that my theological position is not weird.  
I didn't just invent it myself.  
It's actually called a post-tribulation view if you want the fancy term.  
There are a lot of good godly Christians who agree with me,  
and there are plenty of good godly Christians who think I'm wrong.

Now if you think there is a rapture, then you need to figure out how to interpret this passage as well.  
You might take it to mean that the apostasy happens, the antichrist appears, then Rapture, but not the full coming of Jesus.

However, you run into a problem with the time of verse 8, which we will tackle later on.  
More likely Paul is just focused on the 2nd coming and doesn't bother talking about the rapture here.

Now I want to focus on the antichrist, but I needed to mention the rapture in case you were wondering.  
And if you have questions for me I am more than happy to explain it after the service.  
Or come see me sometime during the week and we can study together.

So **"the man of lawlessness is revealed."**

He is lawless because he does not care for the laws of God.  
It is not simply that he ignores the Mosaic law,  
It is that the antichrist does not listen to anything God says.

He is a **"son of destruction."**

Or the son destined for destruction.  
In John 17:12 Jesus uses this same title to describe Judas.  
The name should bring us comfort. Because he is doomed.

And the antichrist opposes God.

Verse 4 **"who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship,"**

He does not just oppose the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

He opposes everyone and everything that would be god.

Every single false god and every idol

He doesn't want people to even worship their phones, or addictions.

He wants the worship all for himself.

The rest of verse 4 **"so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."**

This could mean that he literally does this.

Causes the temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem and sits in it.

Or it could be a reference to the universal church that is often described as a temple.

Or it could just be metaphorical to describe his actions.

The antichrist is attempting to overthrow YWH and be worshiped.

He dares to call himself god.

The point is not the location of this blasphemy, but the fact that it takes place.

Verse 5 **"Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?"**

Paul tries to remind them that he has already given them instructions on the antichrist.

But I don't think this is just a reminder.

I think that Paul is telling them that they know everything they need to know.

Like us the Thessalonians probably had lots of questions about the antichrist and the apostasy.

When will it be?

Where will he come from?

How can we recognize him?

And Paul is saying that they don't need to know more.

This is the key verse for us to grapple with.

God has told us everything that we need to know.

We don't need to know more even though we want to.

Instead of asking for more information, we should be content.

We know what we need to know.

[**Transition**] To summarize our first point. We need to remember that the **antichrist will come before Jesus returns.**

Next, we will look at the power the antichrist has. Point number 2 in your bulletins is **The antichrist has no power over Christ. The antichrist has no power over Christ.**

Right away in verse 6 we see that Christ controls the antichrist.

**"And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time."**

The antichrist wants to come now.

Satan wishes that he could be revealed now, but something holds him back.

Some argue about the identity of what holds him back.

Could be an angel, the church, gospel preaching, Roman Empire.

But ultimately it's God.

Whatever it is, God is behind it.

So God holds him back like a dog on a leash.

Verse 7 **"for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who no restrains it will do so until he is out of the way."**

The enemy is working his own plan.

That's what the master of lawlessness is.

It is the enemy's attempt to destroy the church.

And it's active right now.

It's been active since Paul first wrote this letter.  
But God restrains it and frustrates it.  
The enemy's plan will only move forward when Christ allows it.  
The antichrist has no power over Jesus.

Verse 8 is my favorite. **"and then the lawless one will be revealed."**  
Finally, the antichrist gets to come on stage and deliver his monologue.  
All the enemy's plans get to begin.  
Finally the plan hatched since the garden of Eden begins.  
But look at the rest of the verse.

**"Whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming."**

Jesus will walk and kill the antichrist with words.  
All that build-up and frustration is brought to nothing.  
The real power is in the mouth of Jesus.  
Paul wants to make it clear the power of the enemy is always subject to God's sovereign control.

But the antichrist does have some power.  
But before you hear about it, you need to know that God's is better.  
Verse 9 **"the coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,"**

Satan is behind the antichrist.  
And he will come with all the power he has.  
Most of his power is in false signs and wonders.  
Almost like a magician he will work pretend miracles.  
He will be the Pharaoh's magicians who tried to imitate Moses.  
It looks like power, but it is deceitful and false.  
It's a fancy race car with no engine inside.

Verse 10 **"and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."**

His power will fool the perishing.  
It will lead them away from the gospel.



Those who have refused to accept the love and salvation of Christ will serve another savior.

Everyone bows down to a christ.

It will either be Jesus, or the antichrist.

The true Christ, or the false christ.

But look at verse 11.

Even the deceptions is not ultimately the power of the antichrist.

**"Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false."**

God is actually the one who allows them be deceived.

The antichrist doesn't send a delusion across the world, God does.

It is amazing to see that at the end of the day God has all the power.

The end times,

The Apocalypse

The eschaton,

The great war between heaven and hell is not a true struggle.

God is in control the entire time.

The antichrist only has power because God allows it.

The antichrist only has followers because God allows it.

Satan only succeeds because God allows it.

You may wonder why God would allow people to be deceived.

That might sound unfair, or like it happens against their will.

Look at verse 12

**"In order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."**

These people all had the chance to believe the truth.

They should have known to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

But they embraced lies, so God allows them to get all the lies they wanted.

They also are deceived because they **"had pleasure in unrighteousness."**

These are people who did not love or enjoy God.

They did not want to worship Him.  
They did not want to obey Him.  
They loved sin and unrighteousness instead.  
So again God turns them over.

God's action here is nothing but justice.  
He gives people exactly what they deserve.  
He does not make anyone do something against their will.  
He fulfills their will and desires.

In all of this, we see that the antichrist has no power over Jesus.  
And this should encourage us!  
This should fill us with joy.  
We have no cause to fear the antichrist because Jesus is better.

Too often Christians approach the subject of the antichrist with fear.  
We are afraid that some world leader might be them.  
We are worried and scared of what kind of power they wield.  
But studying this chapter should show that there is no cause for shaking, or alarm.  
You can relax.  
It is not just that Jesus wins at the end.  
It is that Jesus is in control at every moment.  
Not one sparrow will go unnoticed.

The antichrist and Satan will have to fill out an application every time they have a plan.  
And it will have to be placed on the Godhead's desk.  
Where the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God the Father discuss amongst the Trinity if they want to allow it.  
Everything the antichrist does has to be allowed by God.  
You have nothing to fear beloved.  
The antichrist will die with a single word.

God said "let there be light" and the world was made.  
Jesus said "it is finished" and our sins were paid for.  
And Jesus can just say "enough"  
And the antichrist and all his demonic plans will fade to dust.

[**Transition**] The antichrist has no power over christ. But if this is true what should we do? How do we respond? Not just in the future on that day, but here and now.

Your final point is that we **oppose the antichrist by standing firm in Christ. Oppose the antichrist by standing firm in Christ.**

This is the application that Paul gives the Thessalonians.  
What should they do in light of the antichrist?  
How should they fight?  
By believing and standing in the gospel.

Paul continues in verse 13 **"But we out always to give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord."**

He repeats himself talking about why they should be thankful!  
But all this talk about the antichrist just fills Paul with joy as he reflects on the gospel.

Paul reminds them that they are **"beloved by the Lord."**  
He looks at them smiling saying "God loves you."  
One of the core components of the gospel is that God loves you.

When we think about the gospel we should think about God's love.  
I don't think we need to start with how bad we are.  
I think we can start where Paul does.  
We can wonder at the unmerited love that God has for His children.

He continues **"because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."**

He reminds them of the gospel they should cling to.

Focus on the first part of that phrase.

**"Because God chose you."**

The gospel is not that we discovered God.

The gospel is not that invented a religion.

The gospel is that **"he chose us before the foundation of the world."**

Eph 1:4

Before the antichrist came.

Before Satan rebelled.

Before God even said, **"let there be light."**

God chose to adopt you into His family.

The phrase **"as the first fruits to be saved"**

Your translation may say from the beginning.

It means that Jesus chose us first.

And God does not just choose and save us,

He also sanctifies us.

**"through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."**

Do you notice the difference between this and those in verse 12?

Unbelievers do not believe in the truth,

but the Holy Spirit empowers believers to believe in the truth.

It is a transformation that takes place because of Christ's work.

Verse 14 **"To this He called you through our gospel,"**

God always calls people through them hearing the gospel.

The gospel message of Christ dying on the cross for our sins

Because God loves you and He adopted you.

The call of the gospel is to repent of your sins,

Turn from the antichrist to the true Christ Jesus,

And put your faith in Him alone for salvation.

You oppose the antichrist by believing in the true Christ.

Anything else is just submission to Satan.

**"so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

It is not that we obtain His glory for ourselves.

It means that we get to share in His glory.

God does all of this not just to pump us up.

God did not save us just so that we could be awesome.

But He does this to get the glory He deserves.

And we as followers of Jesus get a front-row seat to that glory.

Not just a front-row seat, but we get to participate in His glory.

Verse 15 is our application and the key verse in this section.

**"So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter."**

The main command is to stand firm in the gospel.

It is to be firmly committed and hold on to it.

We stay committed to the gospel of Jesus no matter what others do.

When Paul says traditions what does that mean?

Paul is talking about something serious here.

He does not just mean that every minor thing they did must always be repeated in exactly that way.

This seems like a reference to the apostolic tradition.

**"hold to the traditions that you were taught by us."**

It is the traditions that they were taught.

The apostolic tradition is a catch-all way to talk about the core of what the apostles taught.

Those first followers of Jesus.

The men who were appointed by Christ to carry His message to the world.

That is the tradition.

It is not just general church tradition, but apostolic tradition.

It is the content of their teaching.

Their teaching about the gospel, Jesus, and theology is what Paul means.

And the apostolic tradition was delivered in two ways.

**"either by our spoken word or by our letter."**

First, he refers to their preaching and teaching.

The things that they heard Paul say while he was in their midst.

But he is also referring to their letters.

And the written tradition is the Scriptures and the Bible.

The apostles knew when they were writing Scripture.

They knew that they were not inventing a religion.

They did not believe that they were sharing their own ideas.

They were passing on to the church what Jesus taught and commanded.

Hearing tradition might make some of you nervous.

You might think this means the church decides what the Bible means.

That's not it.

This means that you don't get to decide what the Bible means.

The apostles set the standard.

We do not get to deviate from the apostles.

We do not have the authority to decide that you know better than Paul, or John.

We don't get to decide that we want to update the core of the faith.

We must hold firm on the Scriptures.

We must believe what Jesus taught.

The antichrist will try to pull believers away from the apostles.

He will pull people away from God's Word.

So we resist by rooting ourselves in the Scriptures.

Verse 16 closes the chapter with a prayer and a blessing

**"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,"**

He reminds them again of the love of God.  
He reminds them of the eternal comfort that comes from God.  
Comfort that will last forever.  
He reminds them of the good hope that we have about the end.  
He reminds them of grace.

And he finishes in verse 17 by praying for more.

**"comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."**

He prays that God would comfort their hearts.  
That as they worry about the antichrist and the end times they will be comforted.  
And they would remain obedient.

I don't know if I can stress how strange Paul's advice and encouragement is.

It is totally unexpected.

When you think of the end times, revelation, and fighting the antichrist you might expect something different.

You might think that Paul would give good strategies.

That he would tell us exactly how we can best resist and fight against the antichrist's plans and legions.

Or maybe you would think that Paul would give us better clues on how to identify the antichrist.

He could have told us places to be on the look out for.

He could have prophesied on where the antichrist would be born.

But Paul does none of that.

Instead Paul encourages us.

He tells us all we need to know.

And then he reminds us to believe the gospel.

What's the best way to oppose the antichrist?

It's by believing the gospel.

It is standing firm in the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, Paul, and the Thessalonians.

You don't need a strategy.

You don't even need to know who the antichrist is.

You just need to know Jesus Christ.

How do we fight the antichrist?

We don't.

Jesus does.

We just stand firm in Jesus and in our ancient faith.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] This morning we have talked about when the antichrist will come. He will come before Christ returns. We talked about the power he has. The antichrist has no power over Christ. And we have talked about how to resist him. Oppose the antichrist by standing firm in Christ.
2. [Challenge] We talked a lot about the antichrist this morning. You probably didn't get all of your questions answered. Maybe you were hoping to hear a different kind of sermon. But we all know what we need to know. We need to stand in Christ. And remember that Jesus will win with a word.