

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

There is no ground for justification in anything man is or does, has done or will do. Even after his being born again, called, converted, sanctified, the ground of God's verdict whereby he is justified is never in the sinner. It is not because of his faith, or because of the good works he performs by faith, that God declares him to be righteous. Nor can these add anything at all to his righteousness before God. The ground of his righteousness is never in man. It is outside of man, outside of the sinner himself. The ground of the verdict of God justifying the ungodly is Christ alone. [Herman Hoeksema, The Triple Knowledge, Vol 2]

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

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Don't be Deceived – The Spirit of Antichrist

(Part 4 – The Great Apostasy)

October 5, 2025

Sermon Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

**Scripture Reading:
2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

We continue this morning with part 4 in our series on the Antichrist –

the presently operative *spirit* of antichrist, and as in this morning's text, the specific Antichrist, the man of sin Paul warned us will be revealed in the last of the last days before Christ comes again.

You will remember that Paul gave this instruction because certain false teachers had been working to deceive the Thessalonian believers with lies claiming that the day of the Lord had already come. A very similar false teaching is present with us today – it is called *preterism*. This is the claim that

biblical prophecy was already fulfilled in 70AD when the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem temple.

Consider for a moment this lie that, as Paul puts it, *the day of the Lord has come*. What is this day of the Lord? -

the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. (Act 2:20)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new

earth in which righteousness dwells. (2Pe 3:10-13)

Clearly then, the day of the Lord is the final judgment when Christ returns. Notice that in order for someone to maintain that the day of the Lord has already come, all of these Scriptures which speak of that Day will have to be forced to fit events which happened in 70AD. Which of course is impossible to do.

Question: Why would someone make this claim? There could be several reasons, but certainly this has to be a central one – the wicked fear the final judgment. They want to deny that Christ is coming again. They are not born again. They claim this:

2Pe 3:3-4 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Now do not forget the obvious – these scoffers, these deceivers who claim that there is no literal, future return of Christ in judgment, *are in the visible church. Creeps who creep in among us, who even resort to claiming apostolic authority.*

That such people are of the spirit of antichrist, unregenerate, counterfeit Christians is evident from the many scriptures we have which identify the love for Christ's return to be a characteristic attribute of every one of Christ's true people:

Rom 8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

2Co 5:2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,

1Th 1:9-10 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols

to serve the living and true God, (10) and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Tit 2:13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Heb 9:28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Rev 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

So these deceivers are wicked people who claim to be Christians, who claim to have biblical

authority for their heresies, and they are motivated by *a hatred of Christ, a hatred of the idea that He is coming again, who fear the final judgment, and who actively work to lead Christ's people astray with their lies.*

NOTE: Preterists also deny that the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist, is coming. They maintain that he already came in years leading up to 70AD. Therefore their heresies are meant to promote carelessness rather than watchfulness, to increase the blindness to the truth that Antichrist is indeed coming.

Scripture is quite the opposite – we are warned repeatedly to be on the alert, to always be watchful, the spirit of antichrist is already at work and this man of lawlessness is going to be revealed. Let's learn more about what he will do.

First Comes the Apostasy

You recall from last time that Paul said –

2Th 2:3 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

We looked at this subject of *the* apostasy. A rebellion against Christ's truth and Word. A falling away from the gospel. An apostasy that takes over the visible church – most probably worldwide. That spirit is, as the Apostle John tells us, at work very energetically right now.

The Revealing of the Man of Lawlessness

Right now, the Lord is preventing (restraining) Antichrist from coming to full power. Satan is bound and it is Satan (the dragon of Revelation) who empowers Antichrist. But one day, according to the Lord's sovereign plan, Satan will be loosed for a short time. He will once again be able to deceive the nations and that is when Antichrist – Satan's man – will step into the spotlight and head up his *anti-Christ* kingdom.

Consider the names Paul gives to the Antichrist –

- Man of lawlessness – you see this name emphasized. Verse 7 again “mystery of lawlessness.”

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

2Co 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

1Jn 3:4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

Lawlessness is a fundamental quality of the devil’s being. And it isn’t just lawlessness in the sense of some kind of misdemeanor – it is hatred of *God’s Law* and thus of God Himself.

NOTE: The KJV has “the man of sin”. There is a textual variant here. The Greek manuscript which the

KJV uses has “sin” while later translations have “lawlessness” because they conclude that “lawlessness” is the most accurate reading in the original. But the essence of meaning is the same – What is sin? *Sin is lawlessness.*

1Jn 3:4 Everyone who does sin also does lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Therefore, we can expect *increasing lawlessness and hatred of God’s Law* as we approach closer and closer to Christ’s return. Every one of the 10 Commandments will be mocked and rejected more and more.

Are we not seeing increasing lawlessness in our time – even in these past few years? Criminals have no fear of the law. Prosecutors take the criminal’s side.

We can expect that Antichrist will promote every perversion, crime, every thing that is right and good will be rejected and hated. Examples today about. Consider for instance the kind of

performances that are being selected for the Super Bowl half-time.

- Paul also calls the Antichrist *the son of destruction*.

Now, at first glance you might think that this title means that the Antichrist is the one who destroys. And he certainly does – he will do all he can to destroy any remnant of the true Church. But that is not what Paul means here.

This form of phrase is used often in the Bible. For instance:

- Children of wrath (Eph 2)
- Vessels of wrath (Rom 9)
- Vessels of mercy (Rom 9)

In other words, the first word of the phrase *is the object of the second*. Therefore, *son of destruction* means that the man of lawlessness is the *recipient of God's destruction*. Antichrist and all who follow him are reserved for destruction.

2Th 2:8 And then that lawless one will be revealed—whom the Lord Jesus WILL SLAY WITH THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming—

Antichrist is destined for eternal destruction in the lake of fire. As Luther put it, *one little Word shall fell him*. This is meant for US – so that we do not fear and so we are encouraged no matter how dark the days become:

Rev 17:8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Rev 17:11 “And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

NOTE: It may very well be that the apostasy and the revealing of the Antichrist come simultaneously. Certainly a worldwide apostasy in the churches would be a very logical precursor of Antichrist and his evil kingdom. When Antichrist comes to power, the visible church will be entirely apostate. It will still have an outward form, but in reality be antichrist.

I Will be like the Most High

Paul reminds us now what Antichrist will do immediately:

2Th 2:4-5 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. (5) Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

The Antichrist will be the hero of the ecumenical, one-world church movement people. They will praise and worship him for doing what they have wanted all along – combining all religions into one.

NOTE: Any movement or individual or organization that strives for ecumenism, for a one-world merging of religions, *is of Antichrist*. We can know this with certainty. There will be only ONE church, ONE religion. No other will be permitted or tolerated. What is this religion? – It is the “church” of the false messiah, the Antichrist. Who will be its God? Antichrist.

And do not miss this – the vast majority of people who claim to be Christians will embrace Antichrist and worship him.

“...who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship...”.

Antichrist *opposes*. Everything he does, every word he speaks, is opposed to Christ. He is, like the devil, the adversary. The “law” of his kingdom will always oppose God’s law. This is the spirit of antichrist which we see operating today. Laws opposed to God’s law.

“The man of sin is the adversary of God, of God’s law, of God’s people. As such he immediately reminds one of his master, Satan, who is the great adversary.”
[William Hendriksen]

Notice also that Antichrist will exalt himself *above very so-called god or object of worship*. This means that no other religion will be permitted in the world except the worship of Antichrist. There will most probably then be a worldwide destruction of not only Christian church buildings, but mosques and synagogues and Buddhist temples – anything that is not of Antichrist religion. No doubt Bibles will be banned, but not only Bibles – any item that is not of Antichrist religion.

Listen to William Hendriksen again:

“In his reckless audacity and ferocious insolence he uplifts himself not only against the only true God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and against all so-called gods, but also against all sacred objects, against whatever

stands in connection with religious cults. The reference is probably to such objects as temples, places set aside for divine worship, altars, religious statues, etc. He rages against them all. He recognizes only one god, namely himself!

Taking His Seat in the Temple of God

Antichrist crowns himself as messiah and moves into the temple. Daniel saw him in visions the Lord gave him –

Dan 11:36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

Paul’s language here in verse 4 indicates that he had Daniel in mind.

What does Paul mean by this – *so that he takes his seat in the temple*

of God, displaying himself as being God”?

Paul has used “temple of God” elsewhere and this helps us understand our present passage:

1Co 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1Co 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

2Co 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

Eph 2:21-22 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

In other words, he declares himself messiah and god in the visible church.

You can see from this why the Reformers concluded that the Antichrist would be the Pope of Rome. You have in the papacy a very clear picture of a man exalting himself in the church, claiming to be Christ’s vicar on earth – and historically the persecutor of millions of genuine Christians.

NOTE: How would an “outsider” enter into the visible church? For example, a Muslim or Buddhist or other person in a religion opposed to Christianity? My opinion, and I do not know with certainty – nor does anyone – my opinion is that Antichrist will be a professing Christian who is already in the church and who rises to great fame. Then at a certain point, he declares himself to be the Messiah, displaying himself as being God.

To help “sell” his claim, there will be this: [and this is no longer just my opinion] -

2Th 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

His right hand man, the beast from the earth (the false prophet) will be right there to help this all along:

Rev 13:11-15 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. (12) He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. (13) He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. (14) And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who *had the wound of the sword and has come to life. (15) And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the

image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

NOTE: Can you see why no true Christian should ever be caught up in the so-called mega-church movements of our day, led by some celebrity, charismatic preacher/leader? That is exactly the kind of environment we can expect the enemy to promote, and it is fertile soil for the spirit of antichrist to be at work.

As I have mentioned in our study already, this is why I am not at all enthused about this huge Turning Point movement which was almost instantly born when Charlie Kirk was murdered. Rome is right in the middle of it all. The world has never excitedly embraced Christianity. There have never been huge, huge crowds of people flocking to hear Christ – except perhaps for a short while in a very few workings of the Holy Spirit such as in George Whitefield's day.

Let no one in any way deceive you. Put on the armor of God so that you will be able to stand in the evil day – in THIS evil day. And the very first piece of this armor is *the belt of truth*. God's Word. Immerse yourself in it. Read it and hear it, because even more so than in the Thessalonian's day, WE are bombarded with "letters" claiming to be the Word of God. Now they come to us online rather than in paper and pen.

Mat 7:13-15 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. (14) "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (15) "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.