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

The Coming Man of Sin, Part 4
Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:6-10
Code: 53-10

Let's take our Bibles this morning for our time in God's Word and look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, our continuing study of the coming man of sin...the coming man of lawlessness, or as we've subtitled it, how to avoid fear regarding the Lord's return...how to avoid fear regarding the Lord's return.

You know, of course, that the return of Jesus Christ is set. The only thing we don't know is when. He said it's not for us to know the times and the seasons. He said no man knows the hour when the Son of Man comes. God knows. The plan is set. Jesus will return. And we should live not in fear of that but in anticipation of it.

In 2 Timothy chapter 4 the Apostle Paul says these familiar words, he says, "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing." We should so greatly anticipate the return of Jesus Christ that actually it could be said we love His appearing. It is our greatest hope, it is our greatest and most joyous anticipation. We are to live in hope. We are to long for the return of Christ. We are to say with John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." And yet there are some people in the church who claim to be Christians who are for one reason or another afraid of the return of Christ. Apparently the Thessalonians had such a fear. Notice verses 1 and 2, just by way of review. "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 a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."

Now Paul says I would like to write you about the Rapture. I would like to write you about the Lord coming for you, about our gathering together, as he calls it in verse 1. I want to talk to you about the coming of Christ and about the Rapture and about the day when we're going to be gathered together but you have been distressed and you have been disturbed and you have been shaken from your composure because somebody has created fear in you. How? Well somebody told you you are in the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is a technical term for the time of final judgment on the ungodly. Somebody had come along, according to verse 2, and said that a Spirit and a message and even a letter from Paul stated that the day of the Lord had arrived. And that means that they missed the Rapture or there was no Rapture. There was no catching away of the church in to the presence of Jesus Christ. They were now in the day of the Lord.

You say, "Why would they believe that?" Because they were being severely persecuted. And so they had been told that they had missed the Rapture or that there was no Rapture...we don't know which. And they were deeply concerned because this supposedly came from a Spirit, maybe even the Holy Spirit through a message and a letter from Paul, it was claimed.

Now there's one thing then obvious in this text and I've pointed it out and I'm just briefly reviewing, and that is this, Paul must have taught them that they would be raptured before the day of the Lord. He must have taught them that they would be caught away to meet Christ before the day of the Lord hit. That's what is inherent in what he says because they're saying we're in the day of the Lord, we've been told we're in it, what happened to the Rapture? Now that implies that they had expected to be delivered out before the day of the Lord began. And I think that's correct. That is what Paul taught and in fact they had been lied to and told that Paul had changed his view or some new revelation had come. To solve their confusion and to solve their fears, Paul then has to clarify the truth at hand, that is you're not in the day of the Lord, you didn't miss the Rapture. And his answer is to show them that they are not in the day of the Lord, they couldn't be in the day of the Lord because certain events precede the day of the Lord that haven't yet occurred.

Now that's kind of where we were in the very beginning of understanding this passage. So Paul says you're not in the day of the Lord. I'll prove it to you, there are certain precursors to the day of the Lord and they haven't happened yet. In verse 3 he tells them that, "Let no one in any way deceive you that you're in the day of the Lord and missed the Rapture, it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed who is also called the son of destruction." You can't be in the day of the Lord, he says, the apostasy hasn't come and the man of sin, the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, or as we know him most frequently, the Antichrist has not yet come. That's his answer.

And as he introduces the man of sin, the Antichrist, he then launches in to a more full discussion of him to help them to remember what he had previously taught them. Now as you look at verses 3 down to 17 there is a continuity here. And I just remind you of what we've already learned. Paul want's to allay their fears. And so he suggests several things to them. First of all, he says don't be deceived, verse 3, "Let no one deceive you." Deception can certainly create anxiety, deception, religious spiritual theological doctrinal deception can certainly create fear. He says don't be deceived. That is always an imminent danger in the church because it is always a major effort of Satan. But he is saying stick with what you know is the revelation of God, compare everything with Scripture like the Bereans did and don't allow yourself to be deceived.

Second thing he says, don't be forgetful...don't be forgetful. Down in verse 5, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things..." what things? The things in verses 3 and 4, that the day of the Lord can't come until the apostasy comes, until the man of lawlessness is revealed and the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself above every socalled or object of

worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God. In other words, the day of the Lord can't come until the man of sin comes, when the man of sin comes he will desecrate the temple of God, he will put himself up as if he were God, that is what Daniel called the abomination of desolation in Daniel 9.

So Paul says...Look, I've taught you about the day of the Lord, I've taught you about that ultimate blasphemous apostasy, I've taught you about the man of lawlessness, I've taught you about all of these things, the message has not changed...verse 5...don't you remember it?

THE apostasy, that's a specific event, by the way, that is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. That is THE event where the Antichrist goes in to the temple in Jerusalem desecrates the temple and establishes the worship of himself as if he were God. That is the final act of ultimate apostasy and it triggers the events that lead to the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord being the time of God's judgment on the ungodly. So when the Antichrist moves into the temple, when he sets himself up as God, blasphemous in his effort to replace all worship of the true God, that triggers the events that lead to the day of the Lord. By the way, we are told in Scripture that that event occurs half way through a period known as the Tribulation, half way through the sevenyear period. And it triggers the last half of that seven years called The Great Tribulation which leads to the day of the Lord.

So the Thessalonians basically cannot be in the day of the Lord. You can't be in it, no Antichrist has arrived. He has not desecrated the temple. He has not set himself up as God in the temple. You can't be in the day of the Lord. So don't be deceived by false teachers and don't be forgetful of what I have taught you.

Now wanting to go a step further he adds a third point and we'll come to that point for our lesson this morning, he says don't be ignorant...don't be ignorant. As long as I'm talking about the Antichrist I might as well fill you in on some more features of his career. And here in verses 6 to 10 he expands to discuss the Antichrist. By the way, in case you may not understand that term, Satan says he is going to overthrow God, he is going to overthrow Christ...that's his driving passion. And his final effort at doing that is to bring into the world a false Messiah, a false Christ, a counterfeit Christ who will be powerful, who will be energized by all the forces that Satan has at his disposal with the purpose of counterfeiting credentials so that the world might believe that he in fact is Christ the Messiah. Israel does buy it. He then becomes the ultimate apostate. He blasphemes God, desecrates the temple, sets up the worship of himself and that is the final effort to dethrone Christ, dethrone God and for Satan to take back the world, as it were, for himself. So Antichrist is a very important personality to come in the end time. Remind you also that John said there are many Antichrists, there are many people who have been against Christ, who have been false Christs, but this is the epitome of all of them, the consummate Antichrist who is the man of sin, or the man of lawlessness.

Now as you look at verses 6 to 10, Paul is going to give you four aspects of the career of Antichrist, four aspects, really fascinating...fascinating information as we look at the future. Number one, his revelation...his revealing. And he starts with his coming in verse 6. "And you know what restrains him now so that in his time he may be revealed."

Paul says to the Thessalonians, Antichrist has not yet come but there is a time when he will be revealed, for now he is being restrained and you know what restrains him. That's an interesting statement. And you know what restrains him now. Or literally, and now that which is restraining him you know. How did they know? How did they know what restrains him? If you were to pick up a Bible commentary on 2 Thessalonians today and you were to read some offerings about this verse, you would probably find people bouncing around on eight different opinions about what restrains the Antichrist. How did they know?

Well I'll tell you how they knew, Paul had told them. When he was with them he told them. We can only had wished that he had repeated it here. But he didn't, he just says, "You know," and so we're all saying, "Right, they know but are we sure?" How did they know? He taught them when he was with them. It was information well known to them, if not to us. That which is restraining, notice it there, literally the verb means to hold down, or to hold back. And so he says you know what the restraining force is, it is in the neuter here. So here you're talking about a force. We have all kinds of suggestions.

Some say that what restrains the coming of Antichrist is the preaching of the gospel and that the gospel will be preached and as long as the gospel is being preached it holds Antichrist in check...as long as men preach the gospel, he is restrained. And finally when the gospel is fully preached and needs to be preached no longer, then the restraint will be off.

Some say it is the Jewish state. It is the state of Israel that restrains. Some say it is the binding of Satan that is going on today among believers as they go around binding Satan. They are restraining him. Some say it is the church, the church restrains him by its influence in the world as salt and light. Some say it is human government, that God having ordained human government, human government being diverse and controlled by a myriad of people seems to be restraining him because of its own power. He can't take over because government is strong.

Some say it is a principle of law, or a principle of morality that sort of has effused itself into the fabric of the world and so this principle of morality restrains Antichrist from letting all hell break loose. Some use to teach that it was the Roman Empire, that the Roman Empire itself was the single government that held back the coming of Antichrist.

And then some have suggested that it could be an angel, and even specifically it could be Michael...Michael the angel uniquely is mentioned in Daniel in a way that could lead somebody to conclude that. I'll just tell you the verse, I think it's Daniel 10:21. It says there, "I tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth, yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince." So here Michael is seen as standing against some evil force and some conclude that Michael then is the one who holds back the coming of Antichrist.

Now having said all of that I just want you to know that I don't think any of those is correct. First of all, all of those with the exception of Michael are human. They are all human. Humans preach the gospel. Humans are making up the Jewish state. Humans are running around trying to bind Satan. Human beings make up the church. Human government...the principle of law and morality that is part of human social life, the Roman Empire is made up of human beings. And it is hard for me to imagine that any human effort at all could restrain the supernatural power of Satan in releasing the Antichrist.

Further, even though...take, for example, what you would assume would be the best of those choices would be the church and you might assume that the church would be the best restrainer, certainly human government doesn't restrain things in all cases, certainly it doesn't necessarily restrain evil and give place to good. We wouldn't want to say too much about the principle of morality since our culture knows absolutely nothing about it. We wouldn't want to make virtuous the Jewish state or the Roman Empire.

So the best choice, you say, would be the church. The problem with that is that even the church as salt and light doesn't restrain evil. It may restrain evil to some extent in the lives of its people but it has not been successful in restraining evil in the lives of people outside of it. The world continues to get worse and worse. Evil men, says 2 Timothy, grow worse and worse. And there is no reason to assume that the church has some kind of power in and of itself to restrain Satanic plans for the ungodly. And, of course, as I mentioned, some of the folks in these institutions that are offered as the restrainer aren't even Christians, let alone spiritually strong. The Roman Empire at this moment is dead, and though it will be revived in the future, its revival has nothing to do with spiritual power. Human forces deal with human issues, not supernatural issues. Human forces, human power, human ingenuity, human society, human institutions do not cope well with supernatural forces.

So the power that holds back Satan from bringing the Antichrist and the final apostasy must be supernatural. Now let me give you a little insight here. Satan doesn't want to wait for God's timetable. You understand that? He is in a hurry. If he had his way the Antichrist would be here now. If he had his way the Antichrist would have already been here. But that's not God's plan. God has a timetable and God is operating that timetable. And Satan wants it to happen now, he wants the final rebellion now. He wants the false Messiah now. He wants the blasphemy now. He wants to set himself up as the controller of the universe and his Antichrist, as it were, as Christ now. But God says no and he is being restrained by God through a supernatural means. And the man of sin cannot come until God

removes this restraining force.

So there is a power in operation and it has to be a supernatural power. It has to be dealing on another level, not just an earthly one. And it is retarding Satan from pulling off his plan with a final Antichrist. Now remember, this will be a human being. So we can assume then that Satan may have had a number of human beings that he would have liked to have used along the way. Adolph Hitler certainly being a prime example.

So he says to the Thessalonians...you know this, you know that there is a force, a supernatural force that keeps Satan from doing what he would otherwise want to do. Listen, you think the world is bad now, you haven't seen anything yet. Fortunately if you know Christ you won't see it, but in the day of the Lord when the restrainer is gone and all hell breaks loose, the world will see what happens when God does not restrain Satan in his plans.

Now the reason for the restraint, back to verse 6, so that in his time he may be revealed. God has this restraining force imposed on Satan in his plan for Antichrist because God has appointed a season and no sooner. You say, "What is the season?" Listen very carefully, you'll understand it. God is redeeming His church. Before the foundation of the world, God ordained who would be redeemed. Their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. If Satan were not restrained, he would come, he would send the Antichrist, he would bring the holocaust of final blasphemy and disaster and then God would step in and judge the whole thing and the day of the Lord would come and the end would come but the problem would be there would still be people who had been planned by God to live and believe and populate His eternal Kingdom who would not yet have been born. You understand that? So God must wait until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, to borrow Paul's term in Romans 11, until the whole plan is consummated, until all those from before the foundation of the world set for eternal redemption are born and believe, and only then can it come otherwise Satan has successfully thwarted the plan of God. So only in His time will he be revealed...not Satan, not demons, not any human enterprise or human force of fallen men, no devilish plan, no purpose from hell can operate until God allows it. His plan, His power control everything including Satan and Antichrist. As one commentator put it, "Evil will not pass beyond its limits." God would never allow that.

But in the right time, he says, he may be revealed. There is the word that is familiar to us. It really is a revealing not unlike Christ's...it is an apocalypse, it is an unveiling, it is a revelation. You remember in Galatians 4:4 it says, "In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son made of a woman." In God's perfect time the Messiah came, and in God's perfect time the false Messiah comes. In God's perfect plan, Christ came. In God's perfect plan, Antichrist comes on time on the schedule God has eternally ordained. He controls all of it. And He has ordained a specific time for the appearing, the manifestation, the apocalypse, the revelation, the unveiling of Antichrist just as He did for the appearing of Jesus Christ the first time and the appearing of Jesus Christ the second time. God the Father knows exactly when Christ will appear. You remember, Jesus said, "No man knows the day

nor the hour except the Father," He does know the day, He does know the hour, He knows the split second and He operates the plan that way.

And so he says he will be unveiled, he will be revealed but only in God's time. So the idea...now mark this in your mind...the idea that somehow we can by some human enterprise bring the Kingdom prior to its planned time is not true. You hear a lot of, I guess, what you could call contemporary post millennialists wanting us to do things in our society and our culture that will expedite the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. Listen, we can't do anything to bring it before God planned it to come. We can't end this whole deal until all those ordained unto eternal life have believed. This thing is set by God Himself and just as God has ordained the coming of Christ to bring it to an end, He has ordained the coming of Antichrist to start the final judgment.

Now Paul is in to this now. He's already made his point that it can't be the day of the Lord cause the man of sin hasn't come. But while I'm talking about the man of sin, he says, I just can't help but go a little further and give you a fuller understanding so you won't be ignorant. So in verse 7 he takes it a step further. "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way." Now he says the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...mystery, interesting term. It means that which is unknown, that's all. It doesn't mean like an Agatha Christie novel. It means that which is unknown. I'll take it a step further, that which is incapable of being known unless revealed by God. A mystery is some reality, some great truth that you would never known, you could never know if God didn't tell you. There are a number such...of such mysteries given in the New Testament, perhaps the best definition, scriptural definition, comes in Romans 16:25, talks about the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past but now is manifest. That's a mystery.

Now look what he says. The mystery of lawlessness. What does he mean? The true character of lawlessness, follow this, the true character of lawlessness is already at work, it's already at work. But you haven't yet seen the final picture of it. That's the idea. It's already working. Evil men are growing worse and worse, 2 Timothy 3:13. It already is visible. We're watching a dying culture. We see iniquity prevailing and escalating. And so the mystery is gradually unfolding. It is already at work, but we have not yet seen in this world what lawlessness is really like, it is still somewhat of a secret. And the world will not know how wretched sin is, how wicked Satan is, how evil the kingdom of darkness is until the mystery is fully revealed. That happens when the apostasy takes place and the Antichrist sets himself as God, triggers the Great Tribulation and the horrors of the Great Tribulation which we'll learn in Revelation and then the day of the Lord where God destroys and damns to eternal hell all of the ungodly on the face of the earth.

When evil really is let loose, when the restraining force is gone, and as I said, all hell breaks loose and you have hell on earth, then you will see the fullness of the mystery of iniquity unveiled. But even now, he says, the mystery is already at work. It's already working powerfully and effectively. In our

world we have evil and wretchedness and vileness and wickedness and lies and hypocrisies and false teachers and false religions and they get worse and worse and worse and it's almost as if the mystery is capped but it's in a jar maybe but it leaks and finally some day the whole thing is going to blow. The final Satanic plan to overthrow God and bring the false Christ is the ultimate form of the mystery of lawlessness and it's not yet revealed. But the spirit of this is in action. First John 2:18 says, "There's coming an Antichrist in the future but even now there are many Antichrists." That's the same concept. We can see the spirit of Antichrist. We can see already the embodiment and the attitude of a Christhating mentality but we'll not know anything like what will be experienced when Antichrist finally comes.

Then he says in verse 7, "Only He who now restrains will do so until He's taken out of the way." The mystery will not be fully revealed until He who restrains is taken out of the way. Now here's a very important change. In verse 6, what restrains was neuter. Now we have "He" who restrains. We've moved from a neuter, a force, to a masculine, a person. And I believe this is a good indication that there is a person here, that there is a supernatural person who is exerting the force in verse 6, there is a force that restrains but there is a "He" who exercises that force.

Who is it? I believe the best understanding would lead us to believe it is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the person who exerts the force that holds back Satan.

In Genesis chapter 6 there is an important verse, verse 3, "Then the Lord said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever." What you have here is a concept. The Holy Spirit battling against wicked men. And God says My Spirit isn't going to do that forever. My Spirit isn't going to fight your wickedness forever. It wasn't long until He drown them all, right? And I think you have there the work of the Holy Spirit that is a restraining work. The Holy Spirit was battling against the flood of wickedness in the ancient world. In Acts chapter 7, one other verse that shows us the Spirit's ministry in this kind of area. In Acts 7:51, "You men who are stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit." Now here again you have the Holy Spirit battling against sin, battling against iniquity, battling against evil, trying to restrain, as John tells us, to convict in John 16.

So we have a number of passages in which the Holy Spirit is seen dealing with sin, wrestling with sin, confronting sin, convicting of sin, restraining sin. No doubt He could be assisted by Michael, but Michael is not omnipresent. And Michael is limited because he is a created angel. I wouldn't argue that He may use someone like Michael, an angel like Michael or other holy angels, but I believe it is the Holy Spirit who is the restrainer.

Now please note. The Holy Spirit's restraint will go on until half way through the time called the Tribulation. The period called the Great Tribulation is the second half of the seven years. The Holy Spirit restrains until the mid point and then He allows the Antichrist to go into the temple, do the abomination, bring the apostasy, and then the horrors described in the book of Revelation take place,

which lead to the day of the Lord. So that restraint will go on until the man of sin is revealed in God's perfect time. The Holy Spirit then, I believe, is most likely the restrainer because it must be a supernatural being. The Holy Spirit is the one most frequently associated with dealing with sin, restraining, convicting. And we could see it as a neuter because there is a force that He exerts and as a masculine because He is a person.

By the way as a footnote for you that are interested, in the Upper Room discourse, Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit. And in that discourse as He spoke about the Holy Spirit interestingly enough, He fluctuated between the neuter and the masculine genders. If you study the Greek text of the Upper Room discourse, John 13 to 17, you will see Him fluctuate between the neuter and the masculine referring to the Holy Spirit, depending on whether He was using a gender to agree with a grammatical term or whether He was using a gender to emphasize personality. So the Holy Spirit can be spoken of in the neuter, after all, pneuma the Greek word for Spirit is neuter, He can be spoken of in the masculine when He's identified as a person. So that's not an unfamiliar thing in Scripture. So I would take it that the Holy Spirit is preventing Satan from the full final lawlessness under Antichrist until God's perfect time. And it has to be in God's time because He has to redeem the church that is ordained from before the foundation of the world, He has to accomplish all that that involves.

Now then note, please. This has nothing to do with the Rapture of the church. Some people have said the Holy Spirit restrains but when the church is raptured the Holy Spirit living in the church is taken away and then the man of sin is revealed. That is not the case. The man of sin is not revealed until the mid point of the seven years. So the Holy Spirit is restraining all the way in to the mid point until the abomination of desolation. So if we are to affirm that the church is raptured before the seven years begins, the Holy Spirit continues to restrain until the mid point. You cannot therefore use the removal of the restrainer as evidence of the pretribulation Rapture because if you believe in a pretribulation Rapture, you have the church taken away on the basis of Revelation 3, kept from the hour that comes to try the earth, that's probably the key passage teaching a pretrib Rapture, but you've still got the Holy Spirit restraining until half way through the period of Tribulation.

Please notice in verse 7, the one who restrains is taken out of the way...just a footnote, that does not mean He is removed from the world. It doesn't mean that. That doesn't mean that He's taken into heaven. Listen, in the first place, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, right? So He has to be everywhere. In the second place, people are going to be saved during this time and nobody is saved who isn't begotten again by the Spirit. So the idea that the Holy Spirit leaves is not true. What happens is the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way in terms of blocking Satan, in terms of His restraining ministry. So the Holy Spirit is simply taken out of the way as a restrainer, removed as a roadblock, not removed from the world or no one could be saved and God wouldn't be effecting His purposes and His plans. So we don't want to make too much out of that. It is the Holy Spirit, He is not removed from the world, or there could be no evangelization by the 144 thousand, there could be no comprehension of the gospel because the Spirit has to quicken the mind, there could be no conversion because He alone is

the one who gives eternal life, so He has to be here doing His work, He just stops the restraining part of it.

William Hendrickson writes an interesting paragraph summing this up, "Accordingly, the sense of the entire passage in verses 6 and 7 seems to be this, Satan while perfectly aware of the fact that he cannot himself become incarnate nevertheless would like to imitate the second person of the trinity also in this respect as far as possible. He yearns for a man over whom he will have complete control and who will perform his will as thoroughly as Jesus performed the will of the Father. It will have to be a man of outstanding talents but as yet the devil is being frustrated in his attempt to put this plan into operation. Someone and something is always holding back the deceivers man of lawlessness. This, of course, happens under God's direction. Hence, for the time being the worse Satan can do is to promote the spirit of lawlessness but this does not satisfy him. It is as if he and his man of sin bide their time. At the divinely decreed moment when as a punishment for man's willingness to cooperate with this spirit, the someone and the something that now holds back is removed, then Satan will begin to carry out his plans," end quote.

The something is of supernatural force, the someone who exerts it is the Holy Spirit. Verse 8, "And then that lawless one will be revealed." That's when it's going to happen. And then that lawless one will be revealed. This, by the way, is the third mention of the revelation of Antichrist, the appearing, the manifestation, the coming of Antichrist.

Now we have already kind of talked about what's going to happen when he comes. You remember in our previous messages we went to Daniel chapter 9 and chapter 7 and chapter 11 and we went to Revelation chapter 13, chapter 17, and we saw his career. So I don't want to go into that now. This simply tells us when the restrainer steps out of the way, then that lawless one will be revealed. And then his career goes in to full operation. He does the abomination of desolation, sets himself up, begins to rule the world, destroys all religion that is existent, literally in Revelation chapter 18 it says that he consumes the false religious system, eats them, so that he is left alone as the one to be worshiped by the whole world. And then the terrible terrible fearful judgments described in the bowls, the trumpets come to pass. So we see something about his coming, or his revelation.

Let's look at a second element in these verses, verses 6 to 10, Paul again saying I don't want you to be ignorant, so the second thing is I want to talk to you about his destruction...his destruction, verse 8. "Whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming." Whom the Lord will slay...the Lord's going to kill him. We...and He's going to kill him right at the height of his operation...we remember from Daniel 7, isn't it verse 26? It says his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Revelation chapter 17 has a similar indication of destruction falling upon this man of sin in verse 11, "The beast which was and is not," that's him, "is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven and he goes to destruction." So Daniel says he'll be destroyed along with his power and Revelation says he'll be destroyed and here, says Paul in this

letter, he will be slain, whom the Lord will slay.

How? This is very interesting. "By the breath of His mouth." He will be slain by the breath of His mouth. In other words, the Lord doesn't even have to do anything to destroy him, as formidable as he is, as powerful as he is, as monumental as he is in human history, the greatest world ruler the world has ever known, he has surpassing control over the whole of the earth, this massive Satanic empowered man is so powerful and yet Christ doesn't have to do anything, He doesn't have to call an army, He doesn't have to speak a word, all He has to do is breathe and he will be destroyed. That phrase, by the way, is an Old Testament one used in 11 of Isaiah, chapter 11 verse 4, "With righteousness He will judge the poor and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth, He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked." That's obviously where Paul got it, with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked, in this case the wicked one even the Antichrist.

Again in Isaiah 30 verse 33, that phrase is used again. "The breath of the Lord like a torrent of brimstone sets afire." God, as it were, lets the breath out of His mouth and it comes like fire and brimstone to consume and to destroy. Psalm 33:6 has a similar expression.

Notice again back there in verse 8, a second statement, "He will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end...and bring to an end." Literally abolish, render inoperative, immobilize. Both verbs side by side give you the full annihilation of this man and his enterprise. Satan's false Christ, he's a counterfeitlike Jesus Christ. I believe Israel makes a covenant with him because they believe he's their Messiah. He has a message which is a lie. He has a day just like Jesus Christ has a day. He has power to do signs and wonders. He has a supernatural person behind him. In all of those ways he's like Christ. Christ has a coming, a revelation. Christ has a message. Christ has a day. Christ has the power to do signs and wonders. Christ had a resurrection. Christ has behind him the supernatural God. But this one comes to a quick end and he's destroyed with the breath of God's mouth. His whole enterprise is brought to an end. Please note when it happens...by the appearance of His coming, that's the Second Coming of Christ.

Now you will clearly understand then that he has a short operation. How long is it? Three and a half years. At the abomination of desolation in the middle of the sevenyear period called the seventieth week of Daniel, the time of Tribulation, he operates. Revelation says he operates for42 months, three and a half years, then Christ comes and by the appearance of the coming of Christ he is slain and his operation is brought to an end. That phrase "the appearance of His coming" is interesting, it's the only time it's used. It brings together two words...epiphaneia, we use an English word epiphany which means an appearing. It means a manifestation, it means a shining forth. It was used by the Greeks for the manifestation of their deities. And he says his career will end at the epiphaneia, the shining forth, the manifestation of His parousia, that's His coming or His presence. The visible glorious Lord Jesus Christ comes out of heaven, paralyzes the daring presumption and arrogant activity of the man

of sin, destroys him and destroys his whole enterprise. And He does it in a moment by the very breath out of His mouth.

And what happens to him? Revelation 20 verse 10 says he's thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone and tormented there forever and ever...along with the devil and his angels and the false prophet. So we see the revelation of this man, he will be revealed in God's time, we see the destruction of the man. Thirdly, his power. This is most interesting...his power. Verses 9 and 10 and we can cover this quickly, it's just very very clear. "That is the one who is coming is in accord with the activity of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders." Wow!

So powerful is he, verse 10, that with all the deception of wickedness he works. Now here he tells us about his power. Paul says he comes in accord with the activity, the energeia, the energy of Satan. By the way, that word energeia is used in Scripture for power in action. You see it in Ephesians 1:19 and 20, you see it in Ephesians 3:7, Ephesians 4:16, Paul uses it a lot in that letter and it means power in action. He comes with real power, okay? This is not just deception. This is not just tricks, magic. He comes in real Satanic power. Satan's power is limited, but it is real. It is limited but it is real. And so he comes in the actual energy of Satan. It is limited in terms of comparison to God's unlimited power, but whatever it is able to do he will be the manifestation point.

Then note again, "With all power and signs and false wonders." Power, signs, wonders...or you could translate it, miracles, signs and wonders...dunamis is the word for power, also translated miracles. What about that strikes you? It's the same that strikes me, those are the same three things that are used to describe the works of...whom? Christ...miracles, signs, wonders, Acts 2:22. Those are the same things that are used to describe the Apostles, Hebrews 2:4, miracles, signs, wonders. He's a counterfeit...he's a counterfeit, he mimics the true Christ. And while it is not just magic, it is real supernatural power, it does have its limitations but it is convincing. Verse 10 says it is convincing enough to deceive people with all the deception that wickedness can muster. Would you please note it says with all power, or all miracles, signs and false wonders, literally miracles, signs and wonders that are false and deceptive. False not in the sense that they're fakery, but that they lead to false conclusions about who he is. Power...what is that? Mighty displays of supernatural acts. Signs...pointing to him as the one who does them, pointing to his supernatural power. Wonders...getting the astonishing results. He will do powerful miracles which will point to him as a supernatural being and create wonder and shock and astonishment, so much so that people will conclude that he is divine, the Jews will conclude that he is the Messiah, people will conclude that he is God, he will set himself up as God, the world will fall at his feet and worship him. He will consume all other religion, the whole world will bow down to him and anybody who doesn't will be destroyed by him. He will do mighty acts, pointing to himself as a supernatural energized person, exciting and eliciting astonishment and wonder from the world.

The word "false" should be taken with all three, it's pseudos from which we get pseudo. It shows the effect of the miracles, not the nature of them. They're not false miracles in the sense that it's fakery. They are supernatural Satanic things not like the miracles of God but enough to be convincing. The effect of them is to make people believe a lie.

And then verse 10, "With all the deception of wickedness." That is all that wickedness can do to deceive, all the deceit that wickedness has at its disposal, all the deception that wickedness at its worst can produce. The whole operation is a lie, it is false, it lures people to believe that Antichrist is the world's savior, the world's Messiah. Even nonreligious people are going to see him as the one who will solve the world's problems, who will fix the world. You can see how our world today would bow at the feet of a man like that, can't you? Especially if he could do supernatural things. They're going to believe that this is the man to deliver the world from all its troubles. Religious people are going to believe this is God's man, this is the world's deliverer. And every hellish supernatural ploy Satan has will be used to achieve this deception. And he'll do it and he'll be successful because the Holy Spirit will step out of the way and not restrain it. All of evil's undiluted, unrestrained power to deceive will act.

So Paul says I don't want you to be ignorant so I'm going to fill you in on the details. This man has to come. And here are all the details about his coming before the day of the Lord comes.

The fourth and final thing that I would note for you is his influence. And this is ever so brief. In verse 10, he comes with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. The extent of his influence, on all who perish. Literally those who are perishing, those who reject the truth, those who do not love the truth, the truth written, the truth incarnate. If you don't love the Word of God and love the Lord Jesus Christ so as to be saved, you will be caught up in the deception. The unregenerate will believe the lie. Listen, they always believe a lie. And you remember back in John 8 Jesus said to the Jews, "You're not of God, you're of your father the devil, and he's a liar from the start." If you don't believe the truth of God, you'll believe the lie of the devil. This is the class of people who will succumb to Satan's deception.

In Matthew 24:24 we have a very important statement being made there. There will be people being converted at this time and believing the truth and it says that this guy will be so formidable and so deceptive and so many signs and so many wonders will come so as to mislead if possible even the...what?...the elect, but it isn't...what?...possible. The unregenerate, yes. Their blindness is selfimposed because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. It's the only time in the New Testament that phrase is used. It doesn't say they didn't receive the truth, he adds that compelling thought they didn't receive the love of the truth to show you that true salvation is a love relationship with truth written and truth incarnate. The love of the truth, the gospel, they gave it no welcome, they didn't want it, they didn't love it.

Back in chapter 1 verse 8 it says that the unsaved do not know God and do not obey the gospel. They don't know God, they don't obey the gospel and they don't love the truth. John 3 says men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They reject Christ's words, they reject Christ's person. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life," He is the truth incarnate embodied. Ephesians 4:21, "If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him just as truth is in Jesus."

They don't love Jesus, they don't love truth. Their unbelief is not a matter of mind, it is not a matter of intellect, it is a matter of heart, it is a matter of affection. They may have heard, they may have understood, they may have even thought it was true, but they had no love for the truth. I think we have a lot of people today who if you asked them do you believe Jesus is God, died and rose again for salvation would say yes but they don't love Him or His truth. This is the test of destiny. If they had loved the truth, if they had loved Christ, they would have been saved and delivered from Satan's lies and deception and destruction. So the guilt is theirs. All unredeemed people are under some damning level of Satanic deception. Did you get that? All unredeemed people on the face of the earth are under some damning level of Satanic deception, they are all believing a lie. And we're not surprised to find these folks sucked up in the lie of Antichrist because it is the most powerful embodiment of Satanic deception in the history of the world.

I'll tell you something. You ought to fear the end times if you don't know Christ, if you're not saved, if you don't love Christ, if you don't love His truth because when the end comes you will buy the Satanic lie. So Paul says...Look, don't be deceived, don't be forgetful and don't be ignorant. You are not in the day of the Lord, it hasn't come. It won't come until the apostasy pulled off by this man of lawlessness. You won't be in the day of the Lord, you're going to be raptured before it begins. The ones who are left who refuse the love of the truth will buy the lie and occupy the lake of fire and brimstone along with the devil, his angels, the Antichrist and the false prophet.

Father, we thank You for such a clear instruction. There could be no price to pay, no treasure could we give for the privilege of knowing the truth about the future and yet freely You've given it to us in Your Word. We bless You for that. We thank You for that. And, our God, we ask that You would speak to every heart. I pray, Lord, that those of us who know Christ might live in the joyous anticipation of His return, that we might eagerly await His coming, knowing that He will deliver us from the wrath to come, knowing that it is impossible to deceive the elect. We have nothing to fear. So, Father, we pray that we might live in hope. And we pray for those who do not know Christ, who do not love His Word and do not love Him, who know not the love of the truth so as to be saved. O God, may this be the day when they commit themselves to Jesus Christ, when they accept His death and resurrection on their behalf. May this be the day when they believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead and that He alone is the true Savior so that they will not ever know the horrifying deception of the coming Antichrist. We thank You that You'll deliver us from that as You catch away Your church in the gathering together. But we ask, O God, too that You would include in that

gathering many more so they'll not live to be so eternally deceived. In Christ's name we ask. Amen.

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