



The coming of the Lord and the man of sin

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica for the second time he was aware that some people claiming to be apostles were spreading the rumour that the Day of the Lord had already come. These reports had unsettled the minds of the believers and at that time they were under severe persecution by Imperial Rome so that last thing they needed was to hear reports that the Day of the Lord had already come. Previously Paul had only spent about three weeks with them and in that time had taught them quite a lot about the Coming of the Lord.

In the Bible the Coming of the Lord is also called the Day of the Lord and both these phrases refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Day of the Lord is that Last brief period of time at the end of this present age when the Lord Jesus comes in the clouds, catches up the saints to meet Him in the air and pours out the bowls of God's wrath on the Antichrist's kingdom. These events will occur consecutively one upon another. In this, his second letter, in its context Paul links the Day of the Lord with the rapture of the Faithful Church. Paul had already mentioned the rapture in his first letter. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

So then both the rapture and the Second Coming are called the Day of the Lord. There are not two phases of the

Lord's return but one single event that includes the rapture and it is this aspect that Paul addresses. This is clear from verse one. Now let's look at the text itself.

(Vs 1-2) "Concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him."

As believers our hope and expectancy should be to meet the Lord Jesus in the air at His Coming. Unfortunately multitudes of professing Christians today, especially in the western Churches, are attached to this world and to the things of this world and do not have a real longing for the coming of the Lord. Around twenty five to thirty years ago there was much more interest in the Second Coming of Christ among Christians than there is now.

Today many so called 'teachers' and 'prophets' are telling us that the Church is going to take over the whole world for Christ and present it to Him at His coming. Many of the people promoting this teaching in the Church do not even believe that there will be the Antichrist, the Rapture or a Great Tribulation. Primarily they belong to the 'Kingdom Now' Movement. One of their leaders called Gerald Coates, a proven false prophet, has said that the rapture is a "fantasy and a myth."

These people are also teach that the fulfilment of God's prophetic purposes in the Bible to not depend on His promises

to Israel but on their kingdom now movement taking over the world and presenting it to Jesus when He comes.

For the first century believers the Coming of the Lord was their longing and hope because they were constantly being persecuted in the world because of their faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. They were not at home in this world at all but were “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

These ‘Kingdom Now’ people say that Matthew chapter twenty-four is not about the last days but only applies to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD and that there is no future fulfilment. However, a careful examination of the text clearly reveals that Jesus’ discourse on the Mount of Olives directly relates to His Second Coming and the conditions in the world leading up to it. According to the Bible the last thing happening just before the return of Jesus will be the persecution of faithful Christians by the Antichrist’s empire on a global scale unequalled in history. See (Revelation 13:7-8)

Already this is a reality in today’s world. Right now millions of faithful Christians are laying down their lives for Christ as Islam spreads its religion of the sword through many third world countries. Islam itself is the greatest threat to western democracy and Christianity today. The west is compromising with Islam but Islam is not compromising with the west! In fact it is highly probable that Islam and not Rome is ‘the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lives!’

Many professing Christians in the west are sitting on the fence today with one foot in God’s Kingdom and one foot in the world but God is going to electrify the fence so that they will have to jump

one way or the other. God is going to arrange things in the world in such a way that we will desperately long for His coming.

Paul continues in verse one...

“we ask you brothers not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us saying that the day of the Lord has already come.”

Apparently some people claiming to be apostles had spread the rumour that the Day of the Lord had already come because of the severe persecution the believers were experiencing and these “false apostles” were also implying that the Lord Jesus had already come and had left the Thessalonian believers behind but Paul wanted them to know that this wasn’t true at all. In fact when you consider the doctrine of a Pre-Tribulation rapture of the Church it does not hold up in the light of what Paul teaches here in Second Thessalonians, as we will see in the text itself.

What Paul teaches actually contradicts those who are promoting the Kingdom Now teaching and telling Christians that things are not going to get worse in the world but better. Both doctrines, the Pre-Tribulation rapture and the kingdom now teaching, are a deception that will leave many Christians unprepared for the persecution of the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation.

Now Bible scholars are divided as to when the rapture takes place and the most common view is the Pre-Tribulation rapture namely that the Church will be removed from the world before the Great Tribulation, however, when we examine what Paul says here in this letter it is clear that the rapture and resurrection of the faithful Church cannot happen until at least three things occur. Now lets look at the first thing.

1. The Great Apostasy.

(Vs 3) “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs...”

The first thing Paul warns them about is deception. The Lord Jesus in His discourse on the Mount of Olives warned about earthquakes, wars, famines and diseases once but warned about spiritual deception at least four times. Even though the Kingdom Now and Pre-Tribulation people are sincere in what they are teaching it is a deception that Satan is promoting in the Church to make Christians unprepared for the Antichrist’s global persecution of the faithful Church. However, Paul tells us that before the Lord Jesus returns there will be a falling away of Christians unparalleled in history.

The Lord Jesus also warned us about this when He said, “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:9-13). The word Jesus uses for love is the word ‘*Agape*’ and in Matthew it is used of believing Christians.

In the Book of Hebrews we see the two forms of apostasy. One is a total and deliberate rejection of the truth. See (Hebrews 10:26-29). The other type of apostasy is falling away from the standard of living set out for Christians in the New Testament. See (Hebrews 6:4-6) Both of these are conspicuous features in the Church today.

However, the word used here in

Second Thessalonians translated from the original Greek is ‘the apostasy’ or ‘the rebellion.’ It not only implies falling away from Biblical standards of living but also includes a complete denial of the basic truths of the Christian faith that also teaches others to do the same thing. This is where we are today in the professing Christian Church.

The apostasy that started under Constantine has blown out of all proportions today through the influence of the media. Most of the false teaching is primarily coming out of America which is a major part of “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS.” It is ‘a harlot’ because by enlarge it has forsaken its Biblical roots. It may still bear the name of being a Christian nation but its true character and eventual demise is spelled out in Revelation chapter seventeen and eighteen.

Right now our Christian leaders are selling us out. The present Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Britain Rowan Williams is a practicing Druid. Druidism was the pagan religion practiced in Britain before the coming of Christianity. According to the Bible any form of worshipping false gods is demon worship. (Deuteronomy 32:16-17) (1 Corinthians 10:20) Not only is the present Archbishop a demon worshipper but he is also committed to same sex marriages and the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

A few years ago an Anglican Bishop in England denied the resurrection of Jesus and two thirds of the Bishops supported him. Today in the Uniting Church of Australia they are now open to ordaining practicing homosexuals to the ministry.

Many of our evangelical leaders are becoming ecumenical and trying to align themselves with the Roman Catholic Church that teaches doctrines totally

opposed to scripture. John also tells us that if we welcome anyone or invite them into the Church who does not bring Biblical teaching we share in that persons wicked work. (2 John 10-11) Robert Schueller of the Crystal Cathedral fame had a leading Muslim Cleric in his Church as a guest speaker and afterwards it was reported that he said publicly that he wouldn't mind if his grandchildren were Muslims.

Bill Hybells from Willow Creek, who was mentored by Robert Schueller, also had a Muslim cleric in his pulpit explaining Islam. Even if his motive was sincere according to the Bible he had an 'antichrist' in his church. Islam teaches in the Quran and in its other literature that "God has no Son" and scripture is clear that whoever denies the Father and Son relationship in the Godhead is the Antichrist. When you look at the Dome of the Rock Mosque you can see, "the abomination that causes desolation" which has stood on the Temple mount for over 1300 years.

Recently some leading evangelical leaders actually signed a document with the Church of Rome not to try to convert Roman Catholics. Many of our leaders today are even going further and advocating interfaith worship. In the late 1980's the late Pope John Paul met with all of the other religious leaders of the world to pray for unity and to begin the process of forming a One World Religion. Some time ago the present Pope met with a leading Muslim Cleric in Rome to discuss globally unity and tolerance and the establishment of a common faith. This pope has even prayed in a Muslim mosque after offending the Muslims in a speech he made. Some time ago the Pope was in Jerusalem for an interfaith conference with a leading Jewish and Muslim cleric.

Recently 300 Leading Clergy signed a

letter trying to reconcile themselves with Islam for the promotion and good of society and the world at large. Islam, which categorically states, "God has no Son" and puts a curse on anyone who believes that God has a Son. As scripture says, "He that denies the Father and the Son is the Antichrist!" These 300 Church leaders are getting into bed with the spirit of antichrist!

Many years ago now the United Nation set out a constitution calling for a universal religion and have even established an Ark of Hope containing seventeen commandments for world peace and unity to be the focus of that religion. Many of our Bible Seminaries and institutions are becoming increasingly academic and moving away from the plain teaching of God's Word. Many evangelical colleges are now mixing secular psychology with the Bible. The latest trend to hit the Church is the 'Purpose Driven Movement' promoted by Rick Warren that is primarily secular marketing strategies mixed with scripture. In the Bible God clearly says that He hates a mixture. By the way his name is among the 300 Church leaders who signed the letter to the Muslim clergy I have just mentioned.

The major feature today that indicates that we are in the last days is the widespread spiritual deception in the Church through false prophets and teachers who are teaching doctrines of demons. (1 Timothy 4:1-3) In his second letter the apostle Peter speaks about these false teachers, "secretly introducing destructive heresies" This phrase Peter uses indicates that false teachers do not teach outright lies but lay truth and error side by side. It is like having a beautiful gourmet sandwich laced with arsenic a slow acting poison that eventually brings on death. False teaching is the same and its end result is spiritual death!

(2 Peter 2:1-3)

One major false prophet today is Benny Hinn. He is a proven false prophet and heretic yet millions of Christians around the world still follow him and hang on to every word he says.

Then there are the faith prosperity teachers who are teaching another gospel and are doing exactly what the money-changers were doing in Jesus day when He drove them out of the temple. These men are profiteering on the blood of the Lamb.

Ultimately this compromise in the professing Christian Church, primarily in the western nations, will bring the Antichrist to power. When he arrives on the scene there will be a falling away from faithfulness to Jesus and His word unparalleled in the history of the Church. In one foul swoop a third of the stars will be swept from heaven by the tail of the dragon. (Revelation 12:4) Stars in the Bible are symbolic of believers in both Testaments. (Genesis 15:5) (Daniel 12:3)

So the first thing Paul tells us is that we will see the great apostasy before Jesus comes to rapture the faithful Church. Then he tells us the second thing that must occur before the Rapture can take place.

2. The Coming of the Antichrist.

"...And the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction (the son of perdition). He opposes and exults himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

There is only one other man in the Bible called 'the son of perdition' and that is Judas Iscariot. He is a major type of the Antichrist in the New Testament. He was the only man personally indwelt by Satan himself. He was an apostle and

very close to Jesus and the other apostles. He was able to work miracles. He was into money. He was a deceiver and a thief and only Jesus knew this. He was able to deceive the other apostles.

The antichrist will be very closely associated with religion and especially with the professing Christian Church in some way. Like Judas he will be personally indwelt by Satan himself and able to deceive the majority of the professing Christian Church into compromising and going along with his agenda. When you consider ecumenism and interfaith worship being encouraged today by the secular powers it is logical that those who go into this type of amalgamation will be deceived.

Islam is the fastest growing religion today. There are now well over 1.2 billion Muslims in the world today and over a 100 million are fanatical and 'Jihad minded!' That means that 10-15% of Muslims are of the militant Islamic strain. In America it has been estimated that somewhere between 300,000 to 750,000 American Muslims support the terrorists.

A major type of the Antichrist was the Selucid Greek Antiochus Ephaphanes who invaded Israel around 160 years before the birth of Jesus. When he invaded the Holy Land the majority of the Jewish religious leaders supported him and many who knew what was happening said nothing to save their lives and their reputations all except for the Maccabees who were led by a Priestly family to resist Antiochus. God had a faithful remnant that resisted Antiochus with the physical sword and just before the Lord Jesus comes again there will be a faithful remnant that will be resisting the Antichrist and his empire with the Sword of the Spirit. During this time many will be purified and refined!

Judas Iscariot was also into money, being the treasurer, and the Antichrist will also have vast amounts of wealth at his disposal. This aspect of his character is seen in Daniel chapter eleven verse 36ff.

Ultimately his aim is to be worshipped as God by the whole world and within the professing Christian Church. According to the Bible this man will be worshipped as God on the temple mount in Jerusalem and in the professing Christian Church.

In the Bible there are several different words used for 'temple' and the word Paul uses here is 'naos' which implies a spiritual temple as well as a physical one. In other words Paul is telling us that before the faithful church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His Coming the Antichrist will demand to be worshipped in the professing Christian Church.

Today we can clearly see 'the secret power of lawlessness' (rebellion) at work in the Church. Today in the Roman Catholic Church the Pope is called the Vicar of Christ, i.e., as "the one who speaks in place of Jesus Christ." In the Latin language his title is "Vicarious Christos" but in the Greek language his title is "Anti Christos" or "Antichrist". These words are printed on the Pope's tiara and every time he puts it on he sits in the seat of the antichrist.

The word 'Antichrist' itself has two meanings in the Greek language of the New Testament. Firstly it means, 'against Christ.' Secondly, 'in place of Christ.' The real Vicar of Christ is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth and not error. The Holy Spirit will never endorse teaching that contradicts God's Word. (John 14:17 15:26 16:13) This is why Ecumenism is unbiblical and aligned with the spirit of antichrist.

When the Pope speaks he is speaking as Jesus Christ and even if what he says goes against the plain teaching of God's Word it is accepted as doctrine. (This has been proven historically) All of these things are the spirit of antichrist operating in the Church. The late Pope had his photo taken kissing the Koran, which explicitly says that "God has no Son" and John tells us that whoever denies the Father and Son relationship in the Godhead is the antichrist. (1 John 2:22-23) While the Papacy itself reflects the character of the Antichrist it points to the ultimate Antichrist who is to come.

Islam itself is the worship of Satan and another 'abomination of desolation' stands on the Temple Mount today awaiting the appearance of the Antichrist. Already Muslims around the globe are waiting for the Mahdi and in the light of world conditions if someone in the character of Mohammad arises in the earth then the whole Muslim world will follow him. This would bring about a global persecution of faithful Christians unparalleled in history. What Islam does to Christians in the countries associated with it will spread into the western nations.

Ultimately the Antichrist himself will destroy all religion except his own and demand the world to worship him as God. Ultimately his empire will 'burn' The Church of Rome and the apostate Christian churches in the western nations associated with ecumenism and interfaith. 'Babylon the Great' will be overthrown! (Revelation 17:15-18) Now lets continue with the text.

(V5-7) "Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of

the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed..."

There are three things that restrain evil in our world today. *Firstly*, there is human government ordained by God to restrain evil. *Secondly*, there is the preaching of the Gospel. (Salt and Light) *Thirdly*, there is the Holy Spirit Himself. Here in the text Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit as *'the Restrainer.'* In some way a time will come when the restraining force of the Holy Spirit will be removed and the Antichrist will immerge. The Holy Spirit will never be taken out of believers but in some way He will no longer restrain evil in the way He does now. For a limited time and within certain perimeters the Lord will allow Satan to dominate the world. During this time Satan will persecute the Church through the Antichrist and then turn on Israel. The Holy Spirit is restraining him now but the time is coming very soon when there will not be enough faithful believers to stop his coming. The increasing apostasy in the Church will open the way for the Antichrist. Now lets continue.

(Vs 8) "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of His coming." Things will become so bad at that time that the Lord Jesus will have to intervene to save the world from total destruction and for the sake of His faithful followers. (Matthew 24:21-22) On the Last Day when the seventh trumpet sounds the Lord Jesus will take His bride out of the world, unleash the bowls of His wrath on the earth and then come with His Bride to destroy the Antichrist. (Matthew 24:31) (Revelation 7:14) (Revelation 19:11-21)

At that time the armies of the whole world will be gathered against Jerusalem and attacking it. Suddenly Jesus will come and by the power of the words of

His mouth, destroy those armies. Then the Antichrist and the false prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire. Satan himself will be thrown into a pit and locked up. Following this Jesus will judge the nations and inaugurate His Millennial reign.

This present world is a 'Titanic' heading for the iceberg. We are either in the 'casinos' of this world's pleasures and pursuits and living for ourselves or in the 'lifeboat of Salvation' waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue us from the coming disaster.

So then the second thing Paul tells us that before the Lord Jesus comes for His Church the Antichrist will be revealed. Now he tells us the third characteristic that will precede the coming of the Antichrist.

Just before the Antichrist comes there will be an abundance of false signs, miracles and wonders in the Church. These manifestations will open the way for him. Finally there is the third thing that we will see before the rapture occurs.

3. Counterfeit signs, miracles and wonders.

(Vs 9-12) "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

Today in the Church there is so much emphasis on signs, miracles and wonders. Multitudes of Christians today are flocking to hear men like Benny Hinn and others who are obviously preaching

another gospel yet they still go to their meetings. The Lord Jesus said that it was a wicked and sinful generation that seeks for a sign. (Matthew 12:39) He also said that these signs would follow the preaching of the Word and not be the main focus. (Mark 16:17) Today just the opposite is happening. Multitudes of Christians are emphasizing signs, miracles and wonders above the preaching of God's Word.

Today many so called prophets are saying, 'I have a word for you' and many Christians want to hear 'a word' rather than hear the Word of God. Signs, miracles and wonders do not validate a man's ministry. Even among Mormons and African witch doctors and in other religions people prophecy, speak in tongues and perform healings. These things are not unique to Christianity. The magicians of Pharaoh's court were able to counterfeit the miracles of Moses and Aaron by occult power.

False apostles, prophets and teachers are using the occult in the Church today to counterfeit the miracles of Jesus. When you look at the laughing revival perpetuated by Rodney Howard Browne and others you see a type of Kundalini Yoga wrapped in Christian packaging. The apostate 'Super Church' of the last days will be a supernatural Church filled with all kinds of pseudo signs, miracles and wonders.

Just before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC God's people were chasing after false prophets and false prophecies, actually at that time they were enjoying a time of abundant prosperity. Listen to what the Lord said through Jeremiah,

(Jeremiah 5:30-31) " A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and

My people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?"

(Jeremiah 8:10b-12) "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their; loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when they are punished, says the Lord."

The Babylonians are coming again in the empire of Islam! Once more the western nations are threatened. The Antichrist will come in the character of king Nebuchadnezzar from the regions of ancient Babylon and Assyria to devastate the western nations. Just before the Lord Jesus returns the Islamic empire will dominate the world politically, socially, economically and militarily, having swept through Europe, the Middle East and having burned much of America and Britain with fire!

The UN and the EU will be powerless to stop this invasion. Already there is a 'Trojan Horse' of Islam within the nations of Europe. Both the kings of the North and the South and China and India as well will oppose the Antichrist but he will prevail over them until the thrones are placed and the judgement decreed by the Lord is poured out on him.

For years now Russia, the US and other European countries have been selling weapons of mass destruction to Islamic nations in the Middle East and soon the consequences of their actions will come back upon their own heads.

What happened in Jerusalem before judgment fell is happening in the

Western Church today. Paul wrote to Timothy saying, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Today people perish because they refuse to love the truth and be saved. Jesus said men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil and that they will not come to the light because their evil deeds will be exposed. But this is equally true of multitudes of professing Christians in the Church today. They would rather chase after signs, miracles, wonders, false words and false prophets rather than hear God's Word. In fact if they persist in this way the Lord Himself will send them a delusion so that they will ultimately believe the lies of the Antichrist himself. They will no longer be able to believe the truth even when they hear it because they have refused to believe the truth and have delighted in wickedness.

The apostasy will be so great that the false Church will have peace at any price even if it means accepting Islam. Already the seeds of this apostasy are in the Church today as the Christian Church tries to amalgamate with Islam. This is part of the spiritual deception facing the western nations today that historically have been associated with Biblical Christianity!

Conclusion

If the Church was to be taken out of the

world seven years before the end of the age then why did Paul tell the believers at Thessalonica about these things? If the Church was removed before the Antichrist was revealed then to whom is Paul speaking to? Undoubtedly Paul expected the man of sin to be revealed to the faithful!

The plain meaning of the text is clear. We will not be caught up to meet the Lord in the air until we know who the Antichrist is. Already we see the beginning of the ultimate apostasy and the false signs, miracles and wonders and only after the Antichrist has been revealed will we be taken out of this world to meet Jesus in the air at His Second Coming.

The rapture and resurrection is our hope as Christians and if we love and obey God's Word in our lives then the Lord Jesus will rescue us from the coming wrath. We are not destined for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. If we remain faithful to Jesus and to His Word we will never experience the wrath of God. (1 Thessalonians 1:10 5:9)

If we are attached to this world and to the things of this world then we will not be ready when Jesus Comes. Remember Lot's wife! She looked back because her heart was in this world and she perished in the fire. If we do not love and obey the truth then we will ultimately believe the lies of the Antichrist. If we say we love Jesus but do not love His Word then we do not love Jesus. God Himself will send us a delusion and we will no longer be able to love and obey the truth even when we hear it.

BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION

" For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ "

