



May 8 – 9, 2010

2 Thessalonians

“What Does the Lord’s Return Mean” Part 3

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians was written only a few months after his first letter, so it’s no surprise that he is still focused on the same theme – the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever thought that life was unfair? Have you ever looked at the injustices around the world and wondered why God seemed to be silent? Have you ever wondered why it seems that bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people? Well, one of the things that will happen at the Second Coming of Christ is the scales of injustice will be balanced, however, before the Lord returns, two things must happen first: a rebellion from the faith will occur and the Antichrist will come onto the world scene.¹

The Scales Of Injustice Will Be Balanced

1. This is a sinful, fallen world, and until Christ comes again, we have to endure our share of suffering and heartache, even when it may not always make sense.
2. Asaph, one of the Psalm writers, struggled with this and wrote about it in [Psalm 73:1–17](#).
 - a. If we had no problems, if there were no sin, if we lived in a perfect world, then *this* would be heaven; but it’s not!
 - b. Christians are waiting for a better home, and God will not only deliver us, He’ll “pay back trouble to those who have troubled us.” ([2 Thessalonians 1:6](#))
3. [Galatians 1:4](#) says that Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age...”
4. [2 Peter 2:9](#) – “...The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.”

¹ The Antichrist will later be destroyed.

5. The Lord will punish those who “do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
6. The punishment will be “everlasting.” (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
 - a. Hell is not annihilation; it is perpetual suffering.
 - b. Hell was originally created for the devil and demons. (Matthew 25:41)
 - c. God doesn’t want anyone to go there, but by willful ignorance and willful disobedience, some people will choose Hell instead of being saved.
 - d. 2 Thessalonians 2:10b says, “They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”
7. When Jesus comes, he will settle every score and balance every scale, because God is just.

A Rebellion From Faith Will Occur

8. 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3a – “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, 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. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way...”
9. The Greek word for rebellion is *apostasia*.²
10. There will be an end-times apostasy, and it will be so wide-spread and obvious that Paul talks about this as a clear indicator that Jesus is coming again, which means it will be noticeable.
11. In Matthew 24:10–11, Jesus said, “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.”
12. 1 Timothy 4:1 – “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”
13. 2 Timothy 4:3–4 – “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.”
14. The Scripture gives this caution: “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:12)

The Antichrist Will Come Into The World

² http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word_apostasy - Apostasy 1. An abandonment of what one has professed; a total desertion, or departure from one's faith or religion.

15. The Antichrist is called “*the man doomed to destruction*” and, interestingly, this term is used for only one other person in the bible – Judas. ([John 17:12](#))
16. What will be the signs of his coming?
- a. The world is going to come to a point of global economic, political and religious chaos.
 - b. People will be looking for a religious/political leader who will unite world governments and world religions under the banner of peace.
 - c. The prophet Daniel says that the Antichrist will come and make a seven-year covenant of peace.
 - d. The Jews will be allowed to rebuild their Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.
 - e. The Old Testament sacrifices will be reinstated.
 - f. Half way into this peace covenant, the Antichrist will set himself up in God’s Temple and proclaim to be God.
 - i. This is what Daniel, and later Jesus, referred to as “*the abomination that causes desolation.*” ([Mark 13:14–19](#))
17. [2 Thessalonians 2:5–7](#) tells us that there is a what and a who that is holding back the coming of the Antichrist.
- a. “*Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now 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.*”
 - b. There is great debate about the meaning of these verses, but the view Pastor Gary endorses is that there is a restraining power against evil in the world; the presence of the Church and the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. The account of Sodom and Gomorrah, in [Genesis 18:26](#), is one example of this understanding.
 - i. “*The LORD said, ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.’*”
 - ii. God’s mercy was over an entire town because of the presence of a few righteous people, and that’s the way it is with our world today.
 - iii. The church will be removed (The Rapture) and when that happens, the Antichrist will be revealed.
 - iv. The “*what*” holding him back is the Church. ([2 Thessalonians 2:6](#))
 - v. The “*who*” is the Holy Spirit, but when “*he*” is taken out – that is when the Holy Spirit exits with the Church – there will be nothing to restrain evil, and the Antichrist will rise to prominence and power.
 - vi. The Antichrist and his partner “The False Prophet” will perform various “*counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders*” to deceive people. ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#))
 - vii. People will perish because they “*refused to love the truth.*” ([2 Thessalonians 2:10](#))
 1. What is truth? Jesus, in [John 14:6](#), said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:6–10 and 2:1–12** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss **Psalm 73:1–17**.
 - a. Allow the people in your group to share difficult experiences they've had that don't make sense when it seemed as though the scales of justice were completely out of balance.
 - b. What are some ways you can retrain your mind and worldview to understand that while it may look like everything is completely out of control and out-of-whack, God is still in control?
 - i. What role does Scripture have in this process?
 - ii. What role does prayer have in this process?
 - c. What was Asaph's conclusion to the "life's not fair" question?
4. Read and discuss **Matthew 24:10–11**, **1 Timothy 4:1** and **2 Timothy 4:3–4**.
 - a. Allow time for people to share their thoughts and examples of groups or people who've been deceived.
5. Spend time talking about the evidence for the validity of Ravi Zacharias' comment that we're living in a day when there is extreme "cultural relativism and the emasculation of truth."³
6. Pastor Gary mentioned the "who" and the "what" that is holding back the coming of the Antichrist.
 - a. Provide an overview of the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in **Genesis 18** and review #17 above to get the discussion started on the Church and the Holy Spirit's influence in the world today.
7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to: help each person come to a proper understanding about scales of God's justice, both in this world and in the judgment.

³ <http://www.rzim.org/resources/listen/justthinking.aspx?archive=1&i=100> Use this link to go to Ravi's Web site to listen to a free mp3 version his four-part message on this topic.