

*2 Thessalonians 2:3a***PREFACE**

In our previous session we surveyed the big picture of the end times, using the handout as a guide. With this session we begin digging into the details. But, once more, a reminder: Our purpose here is not a detailed study of the end times, but to understand what Paul writes about it to the Thessalonians.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

v3

Let no one in any way deceive you...

The word translated “deceive” does not just refer to someone fibbing to them, telling an untruth about the end times. It is deeper than that.

deceive = *exapatao* = from <G1537> (ek) and <G538> (apatao); **to seduce wholly** :- beguile, deceive; **leading astray**.

Robertson: It is amazing how gullible some of the saints are when a new deceiver pulls off some stunts in religion.

(For) it/that day will not come,

Though it is not in the original Greek, every one of our standard translations inserts a form of this. This is because scholars understand that the original ellipsis (i.e., words left out or, as here, implied) is a common way for Paul to write. Paul speaks of two events that must take place before The Day of the Lord will occur—not the Rapture, but Christ’s coming in vengeance and judgment.

unless the apostasy/falling away/rebellion comes first

apostasy = *apostasia* = feminine of the same as <G647> (apostasion); **defection from truth** (properly the state) [“apostasy”] :- **falling away, forsake; revolt.**

Throughout history there have been many periods of apostasy, many “fallings away.” But what Paul refers to here is not just another like those that have come before—that is, not *an* apostasy, but *the* apostasy, *the* rebellion—one which will throw into shadow all that have come before.

And, predictably, whenever the word “apostasy” comes up, we wonder, “Does this mean that a Christian can lose his or her salvation by becoming an apostate?” There are those, of course, who believe that is possible—that a true Christian *can* lose his faith. Especially now, in the midst of Pastor Jeremy’s series on election and predestination, we are reminded that there are plenty of Scripture passages that teach otherwise. Let’s look at just one.

Read John 10:24-30.

But perhaps the best evidence against true Christians being a part of this apostasy is that all of them have just left!

Robert L. Thomas describes this apostasy as “a deliberate abandonment of a former professed position.” There are in every church—yes, even this one—individuals who by all appearances are devout Christians but, sadly, are not. When one thinks about it, this is one of the saddest tragedies in Christendom: that so many would dwell so closely, for such a long time, to truth, yet ultimately reject it. These are the apostates, those who have proclaimed Christ publicly, who have been considered sheep in His fold, but who—in their heart—have never bowed before Him as Lord and Savior. They, some for most of their lives, have lived a lie—even perhaps lying to themselves. Paul, in his second letter to Timothy describes such individuals.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

There is a proclivity to see the events of the end times as linear, orderly, one event preceding the next, that event proceeded by the next—all like ranks of soldiers marching one after the other: one ends, the next begins, etc., almost as if each event is discreet, disengaged from the next. But that is not how the end times will flow.

There remains the phenomenon of *cause and effect*, even during the supernatural events of the end times. One event will bring about the next, and, occasionally, there will be some overlap. This means that during this period things will not be as neat and orderly as we might imagine. At the same time, this means that it is all of a package; looking at it as a drama, these events would all be acts within the same play, not separate plays. In a play, Act One sets up Act Two, etc., leading to the climax.

This is important to remember because many scholars have wasted a lot of ink and paper fitting these events—specifically, the apostasy and the emergence of antichrist—into human history. For example, there is a substantial contingent claiming that the antichrist refers to the pope—especially some of history’s most hideous examples of those who have donned the robes and sat in that chair. Even in this age of a heightened level of depravity, the behavior of some of these popes would cause even Bill Clinton to blush.

Albert Barnes (who favors this interpretation): Pope John II, was publicly charged at Rome with incest. Pope John XIII usurped the Pontificate, spent his time in hunting, in lasciviousness, and monstrous forms of vice; he fled from the trial to which he was summoned, and was stabbed, being taken in the act of adultery. Pope Sixtus IV licensed brothels at Rome. Pope Alexander VI was, as a Roman Catholic historian says, “one of the greatest and most horrible monsters in nature that could scandalize the holy chair. His beastly morals, his immense ambition, his insatiable avarice, his detestable cruelty, his furious lusts, and monstrous incest with his daughter Lucretia, are, at large, described by Guicciardini Ciaconius, and other authentic papal historians.” Of the popes, Platina (a Roman Catholic) says: “The chair of Saint Peter was usurped, rather than possessed, by monsters of wickedness, ambition, and bribery. They left no wickedness unpracticed.”

We could go on, for example history gives us figures such as Caligula, Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, etc. But all these, including the papacy, can be dispensed with easily. The prophecy of the end times is remarkably precise and substantiated by multiple writers of Scripture (Daniel, Paul, John). It is sequential and all of a piece: one event follows another. Over one seven-year period there will be the Rapture, the apostasy, the revelation and rule of the antichrist, and Christ's return in judgment. Since the totality of that sequence has not yet occurred, *none* of it has.

So, here is not just the time line, but the sequential cause and effect:

The Rapture

In "the twinkling of an eye" the Rapture will occur, removing the church—all true Christians—from the earth. Just think about that for a moment: every last follower of Christ, world-wide, gone. Not one left. Churches—*most* churches—left without pastors and shepherds; many families entirely gone, or decimated; Christian institutions left rudderless—or empty; no witness for Christ left on earth. What will be the effect of this?

The Tribulation, Part One

Two camps will be created in a relatively short period of time: those who, as a result of the Rapture, turn *to* God, and those who, for the same reason, turn *against* God. Scripture indicates that the latter will predominate. This will be period of profound evil and supernatural turbulence.

Imagine that the Rapture occurs on a Sunday morning, during the worship service of your average, mid-sized evangelical church—and you are a fly on the wall observing everything that transpires. In a flash most of the congregation disappears, but some are left. Seated there are individuals who most thought were believers but, in fact, were not. With some variation, they will have one of two reactions:

- Some left behind, who sincerely *thought they were* Christians, or who had been procrastinating, figuring they had plenty of time to decide *but were moving in that direction*, will be cut to the quick. They will immediately understand what has just occurred, and will fall down before the Lord in authentic submission and belief.
- Others left behind, who sincerely *thought they were* Christians, or who had been procrastinating, figuring they had plenty of time to decide, or *who knew in their heart they were living a lie in the church*—these will be hurt and angered, feeling that Christ has rejected them (whereas, in fact, *they* are the ones who have rejected Christ). These are the apostates; these are the ones who inaugurate a period of hatred against God and His Son like no other in history. These are the ones who will make life miserable on earth for just about everyone for the next seven years.

But we cannot forget about those who will turn *to* Christ, rather than against Him, after the Rapture. They will have lost their shepherds, but everything those shepherds and leaders produced will remain:

- the writings of Spurgeon, A. W. Tozer, C. S. Lewis, J.I. Packer, John Piper, Dwight L. Moody, Jonathan Edwards, Warren Wiersbe, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Chuck Colson, Philip Yancey, John and Charles Wesley;
- videotapes of Billy Graham crusades, CDs and DVDs of Chuck Swindoll, R. C. Sproul;
- commentaries by Matthew Henry, MacLaren, Scofield, F. F. Bruce, Gordon Fee, Donald Barnhouse, D. A. Carson, James Montgomery Boice;
- all the hymnals left in suddenly vacant pews; and
- every Bible translation from the Septuagint to the ESV.

All this and more will be left behind—including the Internet, or some future means of world-wide distribution—which means that even though they have lost their shepherds and leaders, they will not have lost vital information for the maturing of their faith. And they will need all the help they can get.

Read Matthew 24:9-13.

These apostates—knowingly or in ignorance—will lay the groundwork, the foundation for what will happen in three and a half years. They will comprise *hoi polloi*—"the masses"—who set the stage for the revealing of the "man of lawlessness. A man of brilliant evil, he will take the pulse of this groundswell and know that this is his moment, his time to strike. The apostasy will both inspire and then support his campaign of evil, and because of them the world will truly never be the same.

Lange: In all history there exists a reciprocity of action between the actual movement of the time and the achievements of an energetic personality. For every historical individual there is a thousand-fold work of preparation, and he makes his appearance not otherwise than as a child of his age. And again the drift of the time only reaches an irresistible supremacy, when one man conceives the spirit of the time at its height, with bold grasp brings to bear what is fermenting half obscurely in a thousand minds, and so stamps the age with his seal. He can do it, if he has the courage—after all, it will be the effrontery—to express and carry out what is in a thousand hearts. Those who were his forerunners then become his servants and helpers.

(7 YEARS) DANIEL'S SEVENTIETH WEEK

