

## **10 FACTS ABOUT THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

### **2 Thessalonians 1-2:12**

**By Andy Manning**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. After Jesus rose from the grave, He spent 40 days with His disciples, equipping them win the world for Christ. Then He was taken up into heaven (His ascension). As they were watched Him disappear in the clouds, two angels appeared and said, “Jesus is coming back.”
2. **Acts 1:11** They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”
3. Jesus is coming back! When? How can we make sure that we don’t miss it? How can we make sure we are ready for it? Will it happen in our lifetime? Are there any signs that will indicate that it is near? What will happen when Christ returns?
4. The return of Christ falls under the category of eschatology, the study of the end times. The Greek word “eschatos” means last things, and “logos” means word, or study. It means the study of last things, or the study of end times.
5. If you want to study the return of Christ and the end times, there is perhaps no better place to look than in Paul’s letters of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul mentions the return of Christ in every chapter. 1 Thessalonians 4 contains the most clear and in-depth discussion about the Rapture. In 2 Thessalonians 1-2, we are going to find an in-depth discussion about the return of Christ, along with the most in-depth information about the man of lawlessness, aka the antichrist.
6. So let’s dive into 2 Thessalonians today and learn all about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

#### **II. TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

1. Paul, Silvanus,, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, since your faith is flourishing and the love each one of you has for one another is increasing. 4 Therefore, we ourselves boast about you among God’s churches—

about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions that you are enduring. 5 It is clear evidence of God's righteous judgment that you will be counted worthy of God's kingdom, for which you also are suffering, 6 since it is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels, 8 when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength 10 on that day when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at by all those who have believed, because our testimony among you was believed.

### **III. 10 FACTS ABOUT THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

#### **1. It will be a day when God repays the enemies of the church.**

- i. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-7** "6 since it is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels"
- ii. If you are an enemy of Christ or the church, the return of Christ will not be a good day for you.

#### **2. It will be a day when God gives relief to Christians from their enemies.**

- i. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-7** "6 since it is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels"
- ii. Christ's return will be a wonderful day for Christians. Relief from enemies. Relief from persecution. Relief from all opposition.

#### **3. It is called the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven.**

- i. **2 Thessalonians 1:7** "and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels"
- ii. Three main words are used in the NT for the return of Christ.
  1. Parousia: coming. Cornelius Venema says, "Used in pre-Christian literature to describe the formal visitation of an emperor, king, or person of prominence, it is often used in the NT to designate the great event anticipated by believers, when Christ the King returns to judge the living

and the dead and complete his work of bringing all things into subjection to the Father.”

- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:1** “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him”
- b. It is important to remember that not every “coming” of Christ refers to His second coming.
  - i. The spiritual comings of Christ when He comes to each individual believer in the Holy Spirit’s ministry (Jn 14:18); when He comes close to believers as they worship together (Mt 18:20); His coming to believers spiritually when they die to take them to heaven (Jn 14:3).
  - ii. The metaphorical coming of Christ when He destroyed Jerusalem in the first century (Mt 24).
  - iii. The literal coming of Christ (Acts 1:9-11).
2. Epiphaneia: appearing; from which we get our English word “epiphany.”
  - a. **1 Timothy 6:4** “to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
3. Apokalypsis: revelation, uncovering; from which we get our English word apocalypse. The Complete Word Study Dictionary says, “includes not merely the thing shown and seen but the interpretation, the unveiling.” Not merely the physical revelation of Christ from heaven, the revelation that Christ is indeed Savior and Lord.
  - a. **1 Corinthians 1:7** “so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### **4. He is coming with His angels.**

- i. **2 Thessalonians 1:7** “and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels”
- ii. Elsewhere in Scripture we are told what the angels will do:

1. Matthew 25:3-32 says that Christ will sit on His throne, and all the nations will be gathered for the final judgment. Perhaps it will be the angels who gather everyone together.
  2. Then, according Matthew 13:49-50, the angels will separate the evil people from the righteous, and throw them into hell.
  - iii. So, when Jesus comes, He will come with an army of angels to help Him carry out His final tasks.
  - iv. But that's not all He is bringing with Him. According to 1 Thess 3:13 He is also bringing with Him all the Christians who have died and are in heaven.
- 5. It will be a day when Christ will take vengeance on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel.**
- i. **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9** "7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels, 8 when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength."
  - ii. When Christ comes back, He will send unbelievers to hell.
- 6. Christians will both glorify and marvel at Christ.**
- i. **2 Thessalonians 1:1-10** "9 They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength 10 on that day when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at by all those who have believed, because our testimony among you was believed."
  - ii. Christ's return will be wonderful for Christians. We will both glorify or praise Jesus, and marvel or wonder at Him and His works.

**IV. TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

- a. Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy, or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord, has come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness

is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's temple, proclaiming that he himself is God.

- b. 5 Don't you remember that when I was still with you I used to tell you about this? 6 And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one now restraining will do so until he is out of the way, 8 and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will bring him to nothing at the appearance of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working, with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders serving the lie, 10 and with every wicked deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe the lie, 12 so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but delighted in unrighteousness.

**7. It will include the Rapture of the church.**

- i. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-2** "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy, or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord, has come."
- ii. The second coming and the Rapture will happen together.
- iii. What is the Rapture? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 is the most in-depth and clear passage about the Rapture in the Bible. It teaches that as Jesus is descending to earth – a public event for all to see, Christians will rise to meet Him in the air to receive their glorified bodies. They will not be taken away to heaven, but will continue with Christ as He makes His descent.
- iv. The Bible does not teach Pretribulational Rapturism, which is the idea that Christians will be secretly taken away to heaven, followed by seven years of tribulation, followed by the actual Second Coming of Christ. There is no verse in the Bible that teaches that. In fact, in 1 Thessalonians 4 and here in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 it says clearly that the Second Coming and

the Rapture are one and the same event – they happen together.

**8. It is called the day of the Lord.**

- v. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-2** “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy, or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord, has come.”
- vi. But be careful, because the “day of the Lord” is a phrase used to refer to different things throughout the Bible.
  - 1. **Gary DeMar** “The ‘day of the Lord’ most often refers to a time of judgment that was on the horizon for those who first read the prophecy.”
  - 2. For example, Isaiah 13:6 describes a day of the Lord, a judgment against Babylon when they would be overthrown. This was fulfilled in 539 B.C. when they were overthrown by the Persian king Cyrus the Great.
  - 3. **Ronald Showers** (*The Prophecy Study Bible*) “The Day of the Lord refers to God’s special interventions into the course of world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate who He is – the sovereign God of the universe... The Bible indicates that there have been several past Days of the Lord in which God exercised and demonstrated His sovereign judgment on other nations. He raised up Assyria to judge the northern kingdom of Israel during the 700s B.C., Babylon to judge the southern kingdom of Judah during the 600s and 500s B.C., Babylon to judge Egypt and its allies during the 500s B.C., and Medo-Persia to judge Babylon during the 500s B.C..”

**9. It will be preceded by two events.**

- vii. **2 Thessalonians 2:3** “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”
- viii. We don’t know when Christ will return (1 Thess 5:1-2 says that Christ’s return will be like a thief in the night), but we do know what has to happen first.

- ix. Paul gives us two and only two things that must occur before Christ returns: The apostasy and the man of lawlessness.
- x. The apostasy:
  - 1. This word “apostasy” can mean “falling away” or “rebellion.” It can be a spiritual falling away, or a political rebellion. Most commentators agree that the context points to a spiritual “falling away.”
  - 2. “Apostasy” is preceded by the definite article “the.” This points to “the apostasy” being a final, worldwide, climactic apostasy just before Christ’s return.
  - 3. Before Christ returns, and at the same time as the appearing of the man of lawlessness, a large number of professing Christians will abandon Christ.
- xi. The man of lawlessness:
  - 1. What does the text say about the man of lawlessness?
    - a. **2 Thessalonians 2:4** “He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God’s temple, proclaiming that he himself is God.”
      - i. An end-times figure who will appear before Christ.
      - ii. He will oppose every god. He will lead people away from Christ.
      - iii. He will exalt himself above every god, proclaiming that he is God.
      - iv. He will probably be a Christian leader.
        - 1. “He sits in God’s temple (v. 4).”
        - 2. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, and the NT doesn’t say anything about it being rebuilt.
        - 3. Ever since the death of Christ, the temple of God refers not to the Jerusalem temple, but to the church (Eph 2:21-22; 1 Cor 6:19).
        - 4. The man of lawlessness is probably a Christian leader who will turn away from the true faith, claim to be God, and lead

many astray figure who will claim to be God.

b. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-3** “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy, or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord, has come. 3 Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”

v. He will appear before the Rapture and second coming of Christ.

vi. Notice that verse one says that the coming of Christ and our being gathered to him will not happen until the man of lawlessness is revealed.

vii. Pretribulational Rapturism, popularized by Tim LaHaye and the Left Behind novels, teaches that the man of lawlessness/antichrist will come on the scene after the Rapture.

c. **2 Thessalonians 2:6-8a** “6 And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one now restraining will do so until he is out of the way, 8 and then the lawless one will be revealed.”

viii. Someone is restraining him. I believe this to be the Holy Spirit, who is preventing the man of lawlessness from coming onto the scene until the proper time.

d. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12** “9 The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan’s working, with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders serving the lie, 10 and with every wicked deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not



accept the love of the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe the lie, 12 so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but delighted in unrighteousness.”

- ix. He will be empowered by Satan to do miracles. This is why you must be pulled away by “miracle workers.” Just because they do miracles does not mean they are empowered by God; they could be empowered by Satan.
- x. With these miracles he will be able to deceive unbelievers. He is probably the cause of the apostasy.
- xi. The man of lawlessness is allowed by God to deceive unbelievers as an act of judgment for rejected the truth and delighting in righteousness (see vs. 11-12). God only gives us a limited number of opportunities to respond to the gospel before He judges us by closing our eyes and hardening our hearts.
- e. It is unclear if the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2 is the antichrist. The word “antichrist” is never used by Paul. It is only used five times by John in 1 and 2 John. There John says that there are many antichrists, and they were already present in the first century, and that an antichrist is anyone who denies the truth about Jesus Christ. Some believe that there will be a final “Antichrist” before the return of Jesus, and this is the same figure as the man of lawlessness.

**10. It will result in the destruction of the man of lawlessness.**

- xii. **2 Thessalonians 2:8** “and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will bring him to nothing at the appearance of his coming.”
- xiii. We know one more thing about the man of lawlessness, don’t we? Christ’s return will not be a good day for him. He will be destroyed. Christians will be rescued from him.

**V. CONCLUSION**

1. We know that Jesus is coming back. We know that when He comes back, no one will be given any second chances. Those who have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior will be given eternal life, and those who have rejected Christ will be sent to eternal hell.
2. Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?