

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 (ESV)

**1** Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, **2** not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. **3** Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, **4** who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. **5** Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? **6** And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. **7** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. **8** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. **9** The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, **10** and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. **11** Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, **12** in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

I had hoped to move on to several different points in our text, but I did not think I could do that without spending more time on the topic **of the man of lawlessness**. The reason that I think this is so important is that Paul clearly instructed the Thessalonians to **be on the look out** for this man. And if mattered then, 2000 years ago, it matters more now.

I do not pretend to understand a lot of the prophecies in scripture. I do not focus on them much because I just end up speculating and the truth is, anyone's guess is **as good** or **better** than mine. But this topic is different. We are given many **specific identifiers** of this **man of lawlessness**, of this **antichrist**. And we know that he will show up on the world scene shortly before Christ comes back. If he shows up in our lifetimes, we need to know how to identify him. **Paul** thought that was important for the Thessalonians and it is **surely** important for us. So we will take a quick look back at Daniel, a look ahead to Revelation, and a look at 1 John. This will not be a thorough

study of the topic, but it should give us enough to know how to spot this satanic figure, especially as he hits his stride and shows his true colors. First let's take a look at 1 John. 1 John does not focus on the super antichrist that will show up in the end. But he gives us the insight into anti-christ-ness. He tells us what the **precursor** antichrists will look like and be like.

### **1 John 2:18–22 (ESV)**

**18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.**

Here John is saying the same thing that Paul is saying. The antichrist, the lawless one, is going to show up right before Christ does. But John gives us a detail that is very helpful and that Christ shared in Matt 24. Matthew 24:24 (ESV)

**24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.**

John tells us that there won't just be one antichrist. There will be lots of them. They will show up throughout history. These antichrists will have many attributes, but it is the ones they have **in common** that we need to look out for.

**19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.**

The antichrists that John focuses on are the ones who came out of the church. I am not sure that this is true of all antichrists, but these specific ones did. And they were particularly deceptive because they knew the inner workings.

Here is a lesson for us. When the **true church** is **acting** like a **true church** and someone in it cannot bear it and leaves, be careful of that person. Especially if they are looking for followers. I am not trying to say that anyone who leaves a church is an antichrist. But if they are attempting to gain authority and gain followers, watch what they do. They could be exhibiting antichrist characteristics.

**20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.**

These people knew the Gospel and were saved. They knew what they needed to know.

**21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.**

Here is one way to know an antichrist. He will deny the Father and the Son as presented in the Bible.

**1 John 4:1–3 (ESV)**

**1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**

One of the tests we can apply for an antichrist is, “Does he proclaim that Jesus was God in the flesh, fully human and fully God”. If not, he may be an antichrist. The end times antichrist will evidently deny Christ’s humanity.

Now we jump to Daniel. There are three places in Daniel that tell us about an Antichrist type figure.

The first is in Daniel 7 and it is the horn came out of the fourth beast

**Daniel 7:8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.**

**Daniel 7:19 (ESV)**

**19 “Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, ...**

**Daniel 7:20–22 (ESV)**

**20 and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.**

This looks a lot like what Paul is talking about in @ Thessalonians. This horn speaks great things. He makes much of himself. He will be greater than any

other man. He will be more eloquent, more powerful. He will **hate the true church** and **deceive the false church**. He **makes war** with the saints. He will have the political power to attack true believers. Why? Probably because true believers will be the only ones who **defy him**. We will not buy into his godless and wicked agenda. This is getting easier and easier to see. For Christians to not buy into all this gender confusion might be enough to separate us out for persecution. We will be the troublemakers. But whatever the case, he will make war and he will appear to be winning.

We must be prepared for this. We cannot read it wrong. We cannot think in our hearts, “God you must not love me if you will not protect me from this evil.” Scripture is promising this will happen. We are told in scripture that in this period of history, wickedness will be allowed to appear to win for a time. We must understand that.

But remember, it is the saints that ultimately win. It is the saints who will possess the kingdom.

Then in Daniel 8 we seem to see this person again.

#### **Daniel 8:9–12 (ESV)**

**9 Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. 10 It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. 11 It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. 12 And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.**

I am not sure I understand all of this. When we studied Daniel I said that this was probably Antiochus Epiphanes. But he certainly was an antichrist figure and this may be one of those prophecies that is fulfilled by Christ. I am not sure how much we can glean from this before the fact, but it is good to be aware of this.

And here is the third picture of an antichrist in Daniel.

#### **Daniel 11:31–37 (ESV)**

**31 Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. 32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand**

firm and take action. **33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. 34 When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, 35 and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time. 36 “And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. 37 He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.**

Wow, this looks a lot like the Antichrist that Paul is speaking of. Look at the traits. Remember that there are many antichrists. But there is a sense that they all look alike and they produce similar effects.

This antichrist in Daniel will be guilty of the abomination of desolation. Can this be done without a temple? I don't know. But what is more of an abomination of a sacred place than for a satanic person to demand worship of himself?

Notice what is said from verse 32-35.

There is going to be a boatload of deception and seduction. But look how it works. We have **God's true people**. And those who **claim to be** God's people. The antichrist singles out the false believers and seduces and deceives them. But his efforts are not effective on the true followers of God. They will stand. They will take action and make others understand. We applied this to the Maccabees when we looked at this in Daniel. But again, it may be one of those double prophecies. It fits Paul's picture.

In this passage we see that the believers have a tough time going through the persecution. It looks a little shaky for them. But because they are God's, God will see to it that all of this is used for their good.

But this king will do what he wants. And again, he will magnify himself above all other gods. He will actively and overtly demand worship. I think that is the **most obvious sign** of an antichrist. At least the **end-time** antichrist. He will **demand exclusive worship** and will kill those who will not worship him.

His blasphemy will be exceedingly arrogant and clear. I do not think it is going to be hard to spot him once he hits his stride. Those believers who hear him

will cringe at his blasphemy. It will be astounding that God allows him to breathe another breath.

And the last picture of the antichrist is in Rev 13

### **Revelation 13:1–8 (ESV)**

**1 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.**

This is exactly what Paul said. The man of lawlessness will come in the devil's power. He will have a lot of political and spiritual power. Remember how we learned that beasts are governments. Well this government has the features of most of the prior governments in Daniel. Leopards, bears and lions. This probably represents a consolidation of the worst parts of all the prior beasts.

**3 One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.**

One of its heads is probably a person. This is probably the final antichrist. Now this head injury? Is this literal? Is this one of the miracles that he does? It could be. It seems the injury and the healing of the injury is marveled at. The world is mesmerized by this guy. He will be truly impressive.

**4 And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"**

This world government will draw worship to the dragon, to the devil. After all, that is what this government is designed to do. I seriously doubt it will be advertised as, I am Satan. Worship me. I think he will claim to be the real Christ. That is why Jesus in Matthew 24 says, when they say I have returned and I am here or I am there, don't believe them.

**5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.**

I think the antichrist is this mouth talked about here. The antichrist will be the devil's mouth. Remember that blasphemy is ascribing something that is of God to something that is not of God. He will claim to be worthy of worship. He will slander who Christ is and who God is. And notice the word "allowed". The dragon is never off his leash, no matter how things look. God allows the devil to have what he wants for a while. It will be the ultimate proving of what the devil's kingdom **is like** and who the **devil's** people **are**. And it will prove

what **God is like** and who **His** people are. When we are in eternity, we will be left with no doubt that we made the right choice.

Notice too that the devil is always on God's schedule. His reign will not last a moment more than what Christ determines it will be.

**6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.**

The antichrist will be speaking all kinds of false doctrine, saying bad is good and good is bad, saying the saints and angels are wicked and they are the enemies of this new world order. Everything will be upside down. Darkness is light and light is darkness.

**7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, 8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.**

If we end up living in the very last days, we must know this information so we are not thrown off balance. We must be prepared. God is promising us something here that we would prefer he would not promise. Normally His promises are great. And so the very end will be. But the path to getting there is far from wonderful.

God will allow the devil to unleash the devil's hatred toward God onto God's people. He will more than make war on them. He will conquer them. Faith will be needed. Knowledge of God's will that is revealed here will be necessary for the faithful to stand.

And look what is accomplished.

**all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.**

All who dwell on earth. Every non believer in every country. I don't think this could happen without our current technology. But now our technology makes this doable in ways unimaginable even 100 years ago.

This is the big difference between all the prior antichrists and the ultimate final antichrist. This is a global government. It is a global ruler. And every unbeliever will worship the mouth of the beast and the beast itself.

Then if we were to continue in Revelation we would see the propaganda minister talked about. He is called the false prophet by scholars.

**Revelation 13:11–18 (ESV)**

**11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.**

It looks like this might be another government that is ruled by a voice for the first beast. Whatever the case, it aligns with the dragon and says what he wants said. It will make worship of the first beast mandatory and hold people to doing so.

**13 It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.**

This is really frightening. There will be a lot of spiritual dramatics taking place. It will be important that the Christians of that day are **more informed by scripture** than they are **impressed by miracles**. This will be a severe test for those who equate **spiritual power** with **proof of God's work**.

This beast is dedicated to deceiving everyone to follow the beast. And somehow this image of the beast will appear to come alive. This will be weirder than science fiction. This **image of the beast** will rise up to be the greatest enforcer of worship to the beast.

**16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. 18 This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.**

There are many ways to take this passage. We are not going to delve into this. But it is enough to know that the monetary system will be fully controlled so that a believer will have no way to secure what they need to live through that system.

And remember, as time nears the end the antichrist will not be subtle. He will demand worship. It will be like the three Hebrew children being demanded to worship the statue of the king in Daniel. It was a very clear choice. I believe the choice will not be as unclear as getting a chip to do our banking.



Whatever is being described will be associated with an active and overt worship of the antichrist. I don't think anyone will do it by mistake. Whatever the mark is, it will reveal the true worship of a person.

Now, while all this is scary,  
Remember this.

**all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.**

This means that God will protect **His own** from falling away. They will have a tough time. But they are not the ones who will mistakenly be lost because they did not read the signs properly. God will **preserve them**, whether in life or death. God's **reward** will **await them**, whatever they may need to go through.

Now, to close I want to point out a major theme here. This whole end time effort is an effort of the devil to make himself like God. Remember the devil does not have the power to create. He only has the power to **corrupt**, to **copy**, to **pretend** to be something he is not.

These are the Satanic counterfeits that we see in the end times.

The **beast** in Rev 13 is the counterfeit of **Christ**.

The **beast** is an image of Satan who Satan brought forth.

**Christ** is the image of the Father who is begotten of the Father

The **beast** has 10 crowns and blasphemous names

**Christ** has many crowns and worthy names

The **dragon** gave the beast his power, throne and great authority

The **Father** gave Christ great power, a throne, and authority

The **beast** has a potentially lethal wound that he recovered from, maybe from the dead?

**Christ** had a fatal wound that God raised Him from the dead from.

The **beast's recovery** is one of the biggest draws

**Christ's resurrection** is one of His biggest draws

Worship is directed to both the **Dragon** and the **Beast**

Worship is directed to both **Christ** and the **Father**

The beast attracts the worship of the **whole world**

Christ will be worshipped by people from the whole world- every tribe and nation

The **beast** utters blasphemies

**Christ** utters praises to God

The **beast** makes war against the saints

**Christ** makes war against the beast

The song of praise to the **beast** in Rev 13:4

Counterfeits the song of praise to **God** in Ex 15:11

The **beast** is the unholy counterfeit warrior against God Dan 7:1-8

**Christ** is the divine warrior fulfilling imagery all through scripture

The **false prophet** desires that people not worship him, but the beast

The **Holy Spirit** desires that people not worship him, but Christ

The **false prophet** works false miraculous signs

The **Holy Spirit** works true miraculous signs

The **false prophet** forces a mark on his subjects

The **Holy Spirit** puts a mark on all believers

**Satan**, the **beast** and the **false prophet** make an **unholy trinity**

The **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit** make a **true trinity**

**Babylon** is the false and corrupt church

The **church of Christ** is the true pure church

(references are in the reformation study Bible 2298)

I will try to remember to put these notes with the recorded sermon today on SermonAudio so you can refer to it if you like.

Application- Our safety is found in **deepening our fellowship with Christ**.

This has been true in **every** period of time. We can never go wrong with this. It is **always** the answer. Know Christ. Worship Christ. Grow in appreciation for the **love of Christ** and the **grace of Christ**. This prepares us for anything bad that may happen to us in this life. Know that Christ is good. Know that Christ is worthy of **all praise** and of **any sacrifice**. This is the greatest preparation for both life and death, whether or not the global government under Satan arises in our lifetime. Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are ultimately safe, no matter how it might look and no matter what the news headlines say. Christ will shepherd his flock perfectly. Christ will always **love His children** and He warmly anticipates being with us for eternity.