

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:7-12**

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, 10 and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, 12 so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

First and second Thessalonians are letters of encouragement to a young Christian community that is plagued with opposition providing them with confidence that the opposition will be terminated. According to the Bible, Christ will appear as a surprise at an unknown time and only God knows when. The doctrine of Second Thessalonians tells us that the Day of the Lord will come but the struggle with evil must come first. There are restraints on the lawless one that will disappear and the world will be plagued with evil. The church will struggle in the world and must continue with steadfast faith when it is surrounded by opposition. Faithful tenacity is emphasized in the words of Christ and other places in the Bible. People of faith are to keep serving God especially in the face of persecution. The second coming will be on God's time. We know from the Bible that even Christ does not know when. Some things are not meant to be known. The scriptures teach us that we are not to obsess over when Christ returns but to make sure we are ready when our day comes.

The recipients of the letter are facing persecution. The writer tells the audience that the worst is yet to come. We receive assurance that God will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very important concept. We must obey the teaching of Jesus. Many teach their own ideals of right and wrong but do not do what Jesus actually said to do and they teach others to think like they do instead of actually following the teachings of Jesus.

Today's Scripture is sharp, tough, and hard hitting. The lawless do not live by the gospel. The lawless seek to deceive people that are easily led astray because they do not love the truth. Lawlessness is already at work in the world today but it is restrained. We do not know who the lawless one is that is referred to in the Scripture. We do not know the details of what the lawless one does. The Scripture does not describe the figure. The Scripture describes what the lawless one does. He is full of wicked deception, aligned with Satan, and deceives those that do not love the truth because they believe what is false.

There is trouble to come before the Day of the Lord. The world will get worse before God intervenes and makes things right. The lawless force will fool people with the power of Satan. It will reach a point, like it has in the past, where the world will be so bad that God will have to take action to stop evil forever. It is important to know that this is a repeat of scriptural events. The world was so evil that God intervened during the flood. The nation of Israel was so evil that they were destroyed in the Exile. The realm of religion was so bad that God sent Jesus into the world. They are all forms of rebellion against God.

We are to live responsibly and remember that God's judgment will come. There is no escaping it. The Day of the Lord is taught through various interpretations. The evil one mentioned is not the Antichrist that is popular within mainstream society. In fact a futuristic Antichrist is not even biblical. The evil one will be destroyed but not until the world is lead astray. I think an important contemporary lesson is to notice how a rebellion against God in modern times relates to biblical times. The rebellion comes first, as is happening in our world today. Then the whole world will be lead astray and then the Day of the Lord will come. We can look at the multiple theories about the decline in faith today. Regardless of our own beliefs and opinions we repeat the mistakes of history when we turn away from God. We need to recognize it is a repeat of history and has a strong positive correlation to the devastation that awaits us in our future before God intervenes. Religions of the world today try to attract numbers for the sake of the institution and focus on pleasing the audience in order to attract members instead of educating the people on what Jesus actually said and did. It is very popular in our society today to live by a doctrine that is known as cheap grace. This concept teaches that God loves you and will reward you regardless of your faith and devotion. This doctrine of faith totally neglects the important lessons from Jesus on the necessity of devotion, following his lessons, and being born again.

Are you ready now? The Lord's accomplishments are not complete. We are saved by faith. We have received transformation from the Son of God. We are adopted into the family of God. We are set free from the consequences of sin. When Christ came into the world, he set up a future salvation for God's people and judgment on those who reject him. Our responsibility is to live faithfully as God calls us to do but remember that God allows people to be seduced by evil due to their failure to believe the truth about God and to live by the will of God and the teachings of Jesus.