

The Coming of the Lord

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (New American Standard Bible)

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, regarding the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you **not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a message, or a letter** as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ **No one is to deceive you in any way!** For it will not come unless **the apostasy** comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, **displaying himself as being God.** ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that he will be revealed in his time. ⁷ For **the mystery of lawlessness** is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is removed. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with **all power and false signs and wonders,** ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because **they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.** ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them **a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,** ¹² in order that **they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**

Romans 13:11-14 (New American Standard Bible)

¹¹ Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. ¹² **The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let's rid ourselves of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** ¹³ Let's behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.**

Introduction

Once a year, around this time, I preach on Parousia (a.k.a. Christ's Second Coming) with two things in mind. First, to remind everyone that the Lord is coming. Every new day is one day closer to His return. Second, I would like to equip you with biblical ways to live out your life while we await His coming.

Today is that day for us. We are going to ponder the signs of His Second Coming and how we prepare for it.

As for Christ's Second Coming, please keep in mind the following three things: **Why** He comes again (the first time, He came to save people from their sins). But not this time. He will come to *judge the ungodly and the disobedient and bring justice and peace to all*, **How** He comes again (*in the clouds with a trumpet sound that no one will miss it*), and **When** it is going to be (*no one knows but God*).

Two things we ought not to do, while we wait for His coming: Panic or slumber. First, we ought never to panic. Apostle Paul urges the believers **“not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a message, or a letter.”**³ **No one is to deceive you in any way!** (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3). In other words, no matter who say anything about His coming, do not let your mind and heart be disturbed. Let no one deceive you in any way!

Once in the 18th century, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, *preached on the topic of end times. Afterward, he wrote in his journal as follows: “Preaching in the evening at Spitalfields on ‘Prepare to meet thy God,’ I largely showed the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was to end that night. But notwithstanding all I could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that, if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake. I went to bed at my usual time and was fast asleep by ten o’clock.”*

Don't panic. Instead, look forward to His coming. We the Bride are waiting for Jesus Christ the Groom. The Day of His Coming will be our wedding/reunion day with Christ. No bride who is truly in love with the groom panics or dreads the day of wedding. Neither does the Church. Any believer who is dreadful of Christ's coming is not a true bride of Christ. Let us rejoice and look forward to our union with Christ. Amen?! Do not panic.

Next, do not slumber (spiritually). Let us be ready for His coming. Pray without ceasing. Christ commands us to be ready, because we do not know the day or the hour of His coming (Matthew 24:44). Be on the alert in prayer.

Two Signs of His Coming

In today's text, Paul presents a couple of visible signs before Christ's Return. The apostasy in the Church. The lawlessness outside the Church.

The apostasy among the believers.

Apostasy is the abandonment or renunciation of faith. It has been happening in the American Church for some time now. We often wonder what happened to those days when almost everyone went to church and worshiped the LORD our God on Sunday. Since the

1960s, everything seems like a downward spiral. Have you ever considered, though, this is a sign of Christ's coming soon?

Let's listen to Paul again: "*For it (kc: Christ's Second Coming) will not come **unless the apostasy comes first,...***" (v. 3). Before Christ comes, the apostasy must come first. Where? In the Church. In other words, as a sign of Christ's Coming, people in the Church will abandon their faith and practice in Christianity. Christ even said, "*However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?*" meaning He won't (Luke 18:8). Let me show you one example of apostasy in the Bible.

Case Study of typical apostate who falls away from faith during the time of distress: King Ahaz in the 8th century B.C. in the Kingdom of Judah. He became king at the age of 29 and reigned for the next 16 years. From the beginning, he never followed the Lord. Instead, he continued making the images of Baals, burning incense to foreign gods, sacrificing his sons in fire, all of which were the abomination to the LORD. He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree--in other words, he built the altar to the idols in many places.

Let's think about why he did such things that the Lord detested. Mind you, he wasn't born that way to be the lover of idols and foreign gods. No. It may look that way on the surface, but here's the true reason. Deep down in his heart, he was a very scared, confused, unhappy, insecure, and unsuccessful king.

Let's consider the geo-political situation at that time. During his reign, his kingdom was constantly harassed and invaded by every neighbor kingdom. From Aram (modern day Syria), the Kingdom of Israel, the Edomites (Jordan), Philistines (Gaza), and Assyria (Iraq). And he lost every single battle with them and was humiliated by his enemy in front of his people.

He longed for any victory, success, and prosperity by the help of anything. The trouble was: he turned to the wrong places. He became more unfaithful to the LORD during the time of distress. He worshiped almost anything but the LORD. I believe, his humiliation, insecurity and the desire for prosperity madly drove him to worship the gods of all kinds, including those of his enemies. In every city of his kingdom, he made high places to burn incense, therefore, he provoked God to anger. The Bible says, his apostasy became the downfall of him and all his people (2 Chronicles 28:23).

Here's a lesson for us. Why, in America, do the believers leave the Church left and right? Is it because the Gospel message became so dull and powerless today that they abandon their faith? Or is it because they are so defeated in all areas of life that they started looking for another source of strength, prosperity, and success outside the LORD their God? Isn't it because their insecurity and the love of pleasure drive them searching for all other sources of power and strength but the LORD? Ahaz didn't care whatever it took as long as it gave him what he wanted. But the truth of the matter is that without the LORD, there's no security or prosperity. Remember: the apostasy is the sign of insecurity and also the sign of Christ's coming. In the last days, people of God will abandon their faith and worship other gods of every kind including idols, pleasure, money, and even themselves.

The next sign of Christ's coming is found outside the Church. The lawlessness.

The lawlessness among the un-believers.

The Greek word for lawlessness is 'a-nomia.' No Law. Without the Law of God. Without God's commandments. People in the world live outside the Law of God in the end times. Outside the Ten Commandments. In today's text, Paul the Apostle briefly mentions Antichrist and the final fate of those who follow him. Beginning in verse 7: *"⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is removed. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed, whom **the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;** ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because **they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.** ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them **a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,** ¹² in order that **they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**"*

Here's a summary in my own words. Antichrist will appear in the end times, and he will do all kinds of tricks, false signs, and wonders to deceive many people in the world. The Lord will eliminate him with His Word and bring to an end by His own appearance. Those who follow Antichrist will perish because they did not accept the love of truth so as to be saved. Because they hate the truth, the Lord will send upon them a deluding spirit so that they will end up believing what is false. They will be judged because they took pleasure in wickedness refusing to believe the truth.

Here's more from God's Word: *"But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, slanderers,*

disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power; avoid such people as these.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). The lawlessness in the world will increase as the Day of the Lord is near.

How to Live in the End Times

The same Apostle reminds us of the way we live in the end times as follows:

*¹¹ Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. ¹² **The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let’s rid ourselves of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** ¹³ Let’s behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.***

Once again, let me summarize what Paul urges us to do: Be awake from spiritual sleep. Put on the armor of light. Walk in the Way of the Lord. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember you represent Christ to the world. Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Do not give any chance to the flesh. Be on the alert.

Conclusion

Unless we are secure in Christ, we may fall into the same fate of apostasy like King Ahaz. Ask yourself today, am I secure in Christ? Who is my stronghold in the day of trouble? Where do I take refuge on the day of my distress? Is it the LORD my God? Or is it something, or somebody, or some other gods, but the LORD the one true God? Don’t be found at Christ’s Coming outside the Church. Be in Christ. Be ready. Be on the alert. Amen.