

“The Parousia of God”

2 Thessalonians - More About the End Times

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

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Jeff: I'll let you know what's happening in my life and you can be praying for it. My wife tripped this past week and she broke her foot in five places.

Brave Men: Oh!

Jeff: Yes, it's kind of an ugly break. So she's going to need surgery this week. So if you'd pray for her that would be great.

Ted Wood: Jeff, you have more problems in your life than the majority of us do.

Jeff: Well you know, *“The LORD disciplines those He loves.”* I'm just hoping He loves me a whole lot. *(Laughter)* Okay, Don. *(Music)*

Okay, let's pray. Father, thank You. And we rejoice in You. We rejoice in You not because of our present circumstances, though they may be difficult or mundane. But we rejoice in You because You are God. And You've revealed Yourself to us so thoroughly in the Lord Jesus Christ, but not just revealed Yourself to us. You humbled Yourself, taking on our form in the likeness of sinful flesh, that we might indeed have life through Your blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, as we come we come through Him, having every benefit that He has poured out upon us in that union, and delighting in it as we pray to You this morning. And we ask, Father, that Your kingdom would come more and more in our lives, that Your name would be hallowed in all the earth.

And Father, we pray that as we come and study Your word this morning that we would be blessed. We pray that Your Spirit would do His work in us, leavening that Word into our lives that we might embody the teaching, not just to know it but to embody it, that we might live it out to others—to our families and to our friends, to our coworkers and even those who may not like us all that well. But Lord, we just ask that You will bless us and strengthen us.

Father, we pray for our nation. We ask that You will turn our hearts back to You. We pray that we will repent. There is so much talk today about abortion and the right of abortion and things of that nature. Those things are contrary to Your law. So Lord, we pray that You would turn our hearts away from those things and help us to see the absolute abhorrence of those things, that we might see Your absolute glory. Father, we ask that You'll help us. And we pray, Father, that You'll give us courage to speak into our culture.

Father, we ask that You will do this because You are God, and You enable us to do these things as Your sons. But more than that, Father, the world needs You. And we pray that we would be bright shining lights, carrying Your gospel. And so, Father, we ask that You'll do these things for Your glory. We ask now, Lord, that You'll help us as we study. Bless us, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well let me have you turn this morning to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. I planned this study to be done in one sitting. But I realize pretty well that this study is about the man of lawlessness; it's about the antichrist. And so my guess is that there's going to be some level of interest. And I don't ever plan on getting a study done in one sitting with

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you men anyway. *(Laughter)* So that’s fine. But I want us to think about the antichrist today.

I also want us to go into this study with a level of reality in check. And what I mean by that is that this is the mystery of lawlessness here. And so if you’re expecting me to give you hard solid answers to your probing questions you’re going to be disappointed. So let me just disappoint you early and get you prepared for the disappointment. Do not be shocked by it. But anyway, there are obviously some answers. But I think that it’s a mystery for a reason, and we’ll see how that plays out.

So let me have you turn with me to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and I’m going to read the first twelve verses of this text, unless Don has it.

Don Maurer: Yes.

Jeff: And then Don, I’ll invite you to read it.

Don: My translation will clear everything up.

Jeff: Let me read it. *(Laughter)*

Don: *“Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

“Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. And the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. Well, let’s think about this. And let me give you the road map again as to where we’ve been and where we’re going. First of all I want us to notice that the God who hears and the idea of prayer in 1”5 really encapsulates the whole. And he even extends his teaching on prayer into the third chapter in the first six verses. So we’re going to take up a little bit of prayer a couple of different times as we study 2 Thessalonians.

But what I want you to notice is that right in the middle of the lesson today we’re going to start looking at the man of lawlessness. Now that’s 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Here’s the outline for today that I’m working with. *What time is it? When will the man of lawlessness come? When is the rebellion? Who is the man of lawlessness?* All of those seem very definitive like I’m going to give very solid answers. *(Laughter)* Well I hope I’m going to give some answers to those things. But I hope you’ll forgive some of the vagueness or ambiguity.

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So let’s get started. I want to start with a couple of introductory things. But I want us to start with some things that we already know, things we’ve been through just to remind you; for instance, the *Parousia*. We looked at that in the last five verses of the last chapter.

And I want to remind you of this because there is this certain sense in which 2 Thessalonians sort of helps you move from the general to the specific. And what I mean by that is that if you’re looking for sort of a full-orbed, broad scope teaching on eschatology in the book of 2 Thessalonians you’re not going to find it. What you are going to find in 2 Thessalonians is five verses that really give you a summary of how the whole thing is going to really unfold. And then in chapter 2 he narrows them into something really specific.

And you know, think about that. One would think that oh, he’s going to talk to us about any number of things related to the end. But he narrows it down to the very specific thing of the man of lawlessness. And so it’s an interesting thing.

So we’ve been looking at this in general. And the coming of the Lord Jesus was put to us in three prepositional phrases; remember, they each tell us something: the Lord’s present location, so He’s coming from heaven. He’s accompanied by the angels of His power. And His appearance is going to be in flaming fire. And we looked back in Isaiah, and noticed that Isaiah has the context for that. Go ahead, Don.

Don: Do you mean prepositional or propositional?

Jeff: Did I say propositional?

Don: No; you said prepositional.

Jeff: I meant prepositional.

Don: Okay.

Jeff: You know, *in* flaming fire.

Don: Oh, all right; that makes sense.

Jeff: Yeah? You know, it’s not always that I’m able to get one up on Don. (*Laughter*) It may be never that I’m able to get one up on Don. So with those three prepositional phrases (which are propositional in character)—thank you, Don—“*Laughter*), we find the coming of the Lord Jesus described for us. And remember, I said to you that really the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament is in the fact that the Yahweh who promises to come is now coming in the Lord Jesus Christ. So the Lord in the Isaiah passage is the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. It’s not that They’re the same Persons. But certainly the coming of the Lord, Yahweh, is viewed in the coming of His Son.

So now about the coming of the Lord, let’s now move to chapter 2. What time is it? I think this is an important question for us to ask when we look at the book of 2 Thessalonians and when we look at the New Testament in general. What time is it?

Don: 6-50 a.m. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: You knew that was coming, didn’t you? (*Laughter*) Don, I just have a question for you. How do you know what time to start? You started right at 6:32. How do you—

Don: Yeah; it’s radar in me, Jeff.

Jeff: You’re like a bat.

Don: A bat, yes. (*Laughter*)

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Jeff: All right; I’m just checking. *(Laughter)* So what time is it? Well, how would you describe what we find in terms of the time we’re living in now? Here’s what I want to say to you. I want you guys to know that you may disagree with what I say to you, because I think, just in terms of the years that we’ve had together, I think that maybe I detect various eschatological positions among us. And I’m going to reveal my hand to some degree today as to what eschatological position I hold to.

Now I understand that not everyone will agree with it, but we see that all the time; not everyone embraces truth. *(Laughter)* So you may not be where I am in regard to this. *(Laughter)* But I want you to be with me. And so I’m going to try and argue my best and have you come to the right side of things, okay?

In all seriousness, as I go through this, if you detect something that you’d like to ask a question about—and I know you will,—please don’t hesitate to ask. So I think we’re in the last days. All right, I’m just going to throw it on the table; we are in the last days.

Now I know that not everyone agrees with that statement. I know, for instance, that that terminology is sometimes for some reserved for that later moment in the future. But what I’m saying to you is that I believe that we are in the last days now.

Now I know what you’re saying. You’re saying, “Prove it.” Some of you are saying, “I don’t believe you; you’re all washed up. I think you’re going to have to show me this.” So let me show you this.

In Acts chapter 2, when Peter stands up among the brethren and among those unbelievers who are among the Jewish people, he says to them in Acts 2:16-17, “*For these people are not drunk.*” Remember he starts preaching and they go, “Ah, they’re drunk.” They start hearing them in other tongues, and so on. “*For these people are not drunk, as you suppose. ... But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days.’*”

Now do you see what that means? Do you see what Peter is saying? Peter is saying that “what you are seeing right now was prophesied long ago by Joel. And Joel said that in the last days you will see these things.” And Peter is saying, “That’s what you’re seeing.” And therefore the conclusion is that these are the last days.

Now what would have triggered the last days? That’s the question that we have to ask ourselves. And the answer to that is the Lord Jesus Christ. His coming is the trigger for the last days. Jesus actually flipped the switch if you will, and turned on the last days.

Let me give you some New Testament passages that will indicate what I’m saying. First of all, Hebrews 1:2: “*In these last days God has spoken to us by His Son.*”

How about 1 Peter 1:20? “*He was foreknown before the foundation of the world. But He was made manifest in the last times for your sake.*” Okay? So Jesus is the One who triggers the last days.

How about this one? I’m going to come back to this one later. But this is 1 John 2:18. “*Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour.*” So it’s not just the last days, the last times, the last hour.

Now I know that a lot of people will divide those up and say that’s all the way in the future. The last days are in the future. The last times are in the future; the last hour is in the future. All that stuff is occurring in the last hour. But I think these are general terms to

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indicate that Jesus has come. And as the fulfillment of all things He has thrown the switch and started the last days.

So the last days are from the first coming of Jesus, and they will last to His return, okay? So from the way I speak, the last days will indicate that whole period of time.

Okay, let me introduce another topic, one where I'm likely to have tomatoes thrown at me. But that's okay. Let's introduce the idea of the millennium.

Now you say, why would you introduce the idea of the millennium? You divisive person, you! (*Laughter*) No, it's not because I'm divisive. It's because I think that introducing the millennium at this point will help us to understand something about our text.

Now there are three millennial positions, okay? One of them is right; the rest of them are wrong. (*Laughter*) Okay, let me give them to you. Actually there are more than those, but they are divisions of the three.

First of all there is the *pre-millennial* position that you hear so much about. And the pre-millennial position is basically held by dispensationalists, progressive dispensationalists, and so on. And this is the idea that there is going to be a whole eschatological clock that begins to tick after the church is raptured out of the world. And that then becomes the focal point. The millennium and all of that sort of thing becomes the focal point at the end when Jesus comes and deals with His people Israel.

That's one. There's another view of the millennium that's called *post-millennialism*. And this is actually interesting. Older post-millennialists believed in a literal thousand-year millennial reign. But there are other post-millennialists who believe that the millennium is a figurative period of time. But nonetheless it doesn't matter how you view it. The post-millennialist says that the millennium is a time where things will get better and better. And then Jesus will return, and it will be like hey, He was already here to begin with; things were so good! Now He's here! All right! It's almost unbelievable. (*Laughter*)

And I'm not a post-millennialist. I have post-millennial friends. And I always ask them, “When is it going to get this good? Tell me when it's going to get this good?” And they usually say to me, “Long after I'm dead.” (*Laughter*) And I say to myself, “Yeah; that's about right.”

Then there is what is called the *amillennialist* position. With the amillennialist position you say, well why is the “a” in front of it? It's sort of like moral: moral and amoral. One means you have morals and the other means you don't have morals.

I think this is a bit of a misnomer. To say that amillennialism is no millennium is a bit wrong. It's just that amillennialism simply says that the millennium is a figurative time period. Now that figurative time period is what I'm calling the last days. In other words, when I refer to the last days—

Transcriber's Note: Don Maurer stands up to take off his coat.

Jeff: Don, you're such a post-mil guy that you're leaving.

Don: Oh no; I'm standing up affirming what you have to say. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: He plays “Stand Up for Jesus,” and he can't get it out of his blood.

Don: By the way, Jeff, is there such a thing as a Kellogg's millennialist? You know: Post, Kellogg's? (*Laughter*)

Brave Man: That was good.

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Don: Thank you very much. I’m a cereal punster. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: So there are other millennial positions, but those are generally the three. But what you need to know from what I’m telling you today is that the last days, which extend from the coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ—that period of time is also the millennium, okay? It’s a symbolic period of time.

Now that’s first. What’s the point of the millennium? Do we know what the point of the millennium is? And I think we do. And what I want you to do is that I want you to go to Revelation, because this is the only place in the Bible that mentions the millennium. And I want you to see what it says, because it does tell us what the point of the millennium is. And I’m going to start reading in verse 1. I’m going to read down through verse 3, and you’re going to know what the point of the millennium is.

Brave Men: What chapter?

Jeff: Chapter 20; Revelation 20. All right now, listen to this. You’re going to know the point of the millennium when I’m done reading these verses.

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon—that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan—and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit and shut it, and sealed it over him so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.”

Now what is the point of the millennium? What is the point of this thousand-year millennial reign? And the answer is exactly what you find in verse 3: that he might not deceive the nations any longer.

So now I’m going to say that now here is the ascension of Christ, okay? And here is the second coming of Christ. These are the last days or the millennium. And what is the purpose of Satan being bound in the millennial period? It’s that he may not deceive the nations any longer.

Now let’s think about this. I know you have a lot of questions. I appreciate you hearing me out; this is so good. You know, Bishop, I didn’t expect this. I kind of thought that maybe bombardment was on the menu. *(Laughter)* But they’re listening patiently.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes, of course.

Jeff: They really are.

Bishop: that’s because you’re speaking truth. *(Laughter)*

Brave Man: Do you need anything? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay, so let’s think about this for a minute. You now know what the purpose of the millennium is. It is that Satan may not deceive the nations. Now one thought you’re thinking is this. I’m going to come back to this but I want to acknowledge it now because I know you’re thinking it. You’re thinking to yourself, what about 1 Peter 5:8—that Satan roams about like a lion, seeking those he can devour? You’re thinking that, I know. I just want you to know that I know what you’re thinking. *(Laughter)* But my point is that this is figurative language that he’s bound and thrown into a pit. Obviously he is not bound and thrown into a pit because he’s roaming about like a roaring lion.

So this is figurative language that’s telling us about something pertaining to the devil at this present moment. What is it telling us? That he’s not allowed to deceive the nations any longer. Okay; you got it; let’s just go forward. No, let me explain a little more.

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Prior to Christ, what was the condition of the nations? Prior to Christ the condition of the nations was that they walked in darkness. All right. So in the Old Testament from let's say Genesis 3,(but really we could say from the time of Babel on), to the time of Christ the nations walked in darkness.

Now think about that. What was Israel supposed to do? Israel—small, little Israel—was made a nation, given a land so that they could do what? So that they could export the gospel all over the world! What did they fail to do? Export the gospel all over the world! So the nations walked in darkness.

Okay. Now they walked in darkness; the New Testament describes this. When it describes the nations it describes the nations as having been in a time of ignorance. It describes them in Acts 17:30 as *“having walked in their own ways.”* The New Testament affirms this idea of the Old Testament nations going their own way, walking in darkness, living in ignorance. So at this Old Testament time they were walking in darkness.

Let's think about this. What happens next? Key texts are Psalm 2, Daniel 7 and Matthew 28. What do I mean? Let me explain.

I've said this to you before and it's worth thinking about again. Psalm 2 is a Messianic Psalm used many times in the New Testament. One of the things that we see in Psalm 2 is that we see different characters speaking. The Psalmist speaks, then God speaks, then the Messiah speaks. And one of the things that the Messiah says is that *“the Father told Me to ask of Him, and He will give Me the nations as an inheritance.”* So all the way back in the Old Testament we find in Psalm 2 the Messiah speaking and saying that *“when I become the mediatorial Savior, the Father told Me to ask of Him, and He will give me the nations as an inheritance.”*

Now Jesus comes. He lives His life perfectly, dies on the cross. And then at the Ascension in Daniel chapter 7 we're told what happens. In Daniel chapter 7 the Son of Man goes to the Ancient of Days. And the Ancient of Days gives Him the nations.

Do you see that? The Son is told to ask for the nations. He asks and at His ascension the Father gives. Now in anticipation of that moment is Daniel 7:13 and 14.

Transcriber's Note: Daniel 7:13-14, NKJV.

*“I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.”*

Jeff: In anticipation of that moment Jesus, just prior to His ascension, says to His disciples, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”* *“The nations have been given to Me. Therefore go and disciple the nations.”* And it's at that point that the binding of Satan is a reality. It's at that point that the gospel goes forward to the nations uninhibited, at least not inhibited as it was in the Old Testament.

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And what do you see? You see all of the nations around the Mediterranean coming to the gospel. You see the gospel extending to Spain. Later you see it extending up into England and northern Europe. And then it works over and goes to the United States and right to the Americas. And you see it expanding all over the world, unlike in the Old Testament.

So what’s the purpose of the millennium? It is that Satan could not deceive the nations any longer. Does that make sense to you? Okay; all right. Go ahead.

David Miller: Can you name any nations today that are not being deceived by Satan?

Jeff: Can I name nations today that are not deceived by Satan? Yes, what is it? The 10/40 Window or the 40/60 Window? What is that window?

Bishop: 10/40.

David: The 10/40 Window is the window that has not had the gospel yet.

Jeff: That’s right.

David: So they’re not being deceived by Satan?

Jeff: Sure; absolutely.

Don: They are, or they are not?

Jeff: Well, I think a very low percentage of those people are believers, right? Obviously we’re not yet at the consummation of all things, right? But—

Don: But what about Islamic nations that ban the gospel, or—

Jeff: So that would be in the 10/40 Window, right?

Don: Yes.

Ted: But natural man will always not believe.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: Forget Satan.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: The natural man will always not believe. And I would say that what you’ve just said holds up. Forget the 10/40 Window.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: I mean, it still holds. The gospel is going out. In Turkey there are Christians and it’s growing. The Iranian refugees in Turkey are coming to know Christ through the witness of indigenous Turks. It’s like that in every place.

Jeff: Yes, and I’ll give you an example. I was in Belarus. Condolezza Rice called it *“the last dictatorship in Europe.”*

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: A few years ago, right?; she was right at the time. But when I was over in Belarus, one of the things that I had this one pastor say to me was “Do you know our history?”

“I guess I really don’t.”

And he said, “Let me tell you our history.” It was so funny because I thought he was going to go back fifty or sixty years. He goes “Four hundred years ago,” you know? (*Laughter*) And I’m like wow!, you know?

And so the Reformation came to Belarus, right? And so it was at one time a gospel-believing part of the world. Now it isn’t; it’s a dictatorship. But I would say to you that one of the things that we’re going to see is this. I mean, take a look at our own nation. We are not where we were when the Pilgrims set foot on our shores. And we’re not where we

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were in the first Great Awakening. We're not even in sniffing distance of the Second Great Awakening, right? Liberalism has gripped our theological halls and secularism has gripped the minds of our people, and we are not what we once were. And so you have this happening.

But one of the things that I would say to you is that you can't say that the gospel has not been here. It's been here and it's been rejected. And so there's a sense in which the gospel has gone out in a way that it has not gone out in the Old Testament. Yes, Bob?

Bob Busted: Just help me with something simple here.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bob: With these millennial views maybe you can unravel it. So His ascension was a couple thousand years ago.

Jeff: Yes.

Bob: This is talking about a thousand years. We've already passed that some time ago relative to when the Second Coming is going to happen. So help me to unravel a thousand years in terms of our present-day thinking.

Jeff: Yes. So I think that Revelation is dealing with numbers in a symbolic way.

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: So for instance I think the thousand-year millennial reign is a symbolic number indicating a period of time. So the millennium is the last days, no matter how long the last days happen to be. It's like the 3-1/2 days, or the sevens that are in Revelation. These are symbolic numbers, and not—

Don: Or *“The LORD owns the cattle on a thousand hills.”*

Jeff: Yes. But specifically in Revelation there is a lot of numerology that is just symbolic. Yes?

Ted: I really don't want to get off into this, but that's very interesting in terms of all these numbers in the Bible, because the Lord has cattle on a thousand hills; that is poetic.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: But saying that Satan will be bound up for a thousand years, that doesn't sound poetic; it sounds historical.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: So that would say—

Bishop: A long period.

Ted: Maybe that would just say something about a lot of things, about a lot of the use of numbers in the Bible.

Jeff: Yeah.

Jeff: So, for instance, the book of Revelation talks about the same period of time using different ways of figuring: 1260 days, right? What's another way of saying 1260 days?

David: 3-1/2 years or 42 months.

Jeff: 42 months, and it uses 42 months. And so you get the same period of time being expressed in different ways. And my own view is that I think that a lot of that has to do with the symbolic nature of the use of the numbers rather than an actual number. You may not agree with that, but that's okay. Anything else so far? Yes, Bob?

Bob: This is a little off the subject, but I hope it will be relevant.

Jeff: Yeah.

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Bob: In terms of the Second Coming, I have a guy that I know that is very set in his mind.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bob: He says that the Second Coming isn't going to happen soon in our relative time frame—

Jeff: Yes.

Bob: Because of what we see out there in the stars.

Jeff: Oh?

Bob: And the universe. And he says that God didn't put all those things out there just to keep us in awe. He put them out there so that eventually we're going to find out about what's out there a million light years away. And until we know more about that, and His purpose in putting them there, He's not going to come for a second time.

Jeff: I see.

Bob: I just wanted to share that because I think it's solid thinking and maybe it has some relevance.

Jeff: Yeah. Well, it's solid thinking. But I would ask him where you would find that in the Scriptures, right? When I look at the Scriptures it talks about an imminent return; He'll come like a thief in the night. We won't know the hour and the time. There's a sense of imminence that we live in, despite the fact that it's been a couple of thousand years.

I'll show you something that I think is really interesting in the Scriptures in terms of imminence, and living in light of that Second Coming. But—

Bob: But it begs the question. What will the country become?

Jeff: That's right. Okay. Well, let me press on. What about 1 Peter 5:8? *“Your adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* I don't think that this takes away from what we've said. I think what this does is a couple of things. I think first of all that it indicates that Revelation 20 is symbolic in nature, in terms that he is not in an actual pit. He is still active. But if I can put it this way, he's been placed on a shorter leash. Whereas the nations were once his, they are not now. And he is able to be active and he's able to deceive, but not on the grand scale that he was in the Old Testament. So it's of a different scale. So he is still active; he's still there. And we're going to see that in our text, right? So he won't be able to deceive the nations any longer; that's Revelation 20.

But what is the activity of the man of lawlessness? It is the activity of Satan himself, which is deception. And so what we're going to see is, we're seeing that there is still activity. And that activity is consistent with Satan but not on the same scale. Go ahead, Gary.

Gary Dunbar: If you go all the way back in Job you see the leash of Satan being chained.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. So I just wanted to say that about that. Now Revelation 20 verse 7 goes on. And it says, *“And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out and deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth.”* In other words, when this time is finished he is going to be allowed to deceive the nations in a way that is consistent with what he did before.

Now I want to say this to you. I want to just plant this seed in your head. And maybe we'll come back to it later, but it's just to kind of help you in your thinking. We

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oftentimes read this as sort of linear, like there’s a chronology that’s happening here. This is the thousand years. And in the end, just before the Second Coming, there will be the short period where he’s off leash, right?

But the question is: could it be that this whole idea is symbolic and shows us a pattern of what life is like at different times and in different places in the world? So for instance, as I’ve already mentioned, here in America you had the gospel going forth in the landing of America, in the First Great Awakening and even in the Second Great Awakening. And then a decline happens. And so my point is, could it be that the Americans were not deceived. But that period of time in terms of their enlightenment is over. And now Satan has been allowed to deceive the Americans again. In other words, at different points on the globe we find the restraint of Satan and the letting loose of Satan at different places.

I’m just suggesting that. I don’t know if I can prove that in terms of a Bible passage. Here’s why I say it. If you’re thinking that Christ could come back at any moment, then you’ll always have to be asking on this continuum. We’re not there yet because Satan is not released. But if you look at it more in terms that this is the pattern of restraint and release, restraint and release, as it takes place all over the world at any given time,—for instance in Belarus at one point; now Belarus is in a totally different place in terms of spiritual thinking—if that happens, then there’s an injection of imminence that is allowed to be in the process of our thinking, right?

For instance, if you’re a post-millennialist and you’re waiting for the glory days, you’re going to say that’s thousands of years out from that. So the return of Christ isn’t imminent. What then do you do with the thief-in-the-night passages? But if you see that for instance in how I just explained it, you can now bring back the imminence of it. And I’ll show you a little bit more of that as we go along. But I wanted to plant that seed.

All right. Now when will the man of lawlessness come?

David: One more question.

Jeff: Yeah.

David: In Revelation 20 there are six times in there that it says “*a thousand years.*”

Jeff: Yes.

David: So my question is, how many times does it have to say it before you take it literally?

Jeff: Before you what?

David: Before you accept it as a thousand years? How many times does it have to say that? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Well, I guess that if it uses it symbolically once it’s going to use it symbolically six times. *(Laughter)* When will the man of lawlessness come? When will he come? Well, notice that he’s already at work among them. I want you to catch this. Look at verse 3; 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 3. He encourages them not to be quickly shaken in mind, or alarmed by a spirit, a spoken word or a letter seeming to be from them, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Verse 3: “*Let no one deceive you.*”

Now notice verse 10; look at verse 10. “*And with all wicked deception.*”

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: The coming of the man of lawlessness is by the activity of Satan, and that is with all wicked deception. In other words, deception is the work of Satan. And it is consistent with the work of antichrist. And so Paul is saying, “Do not allow the work of the man of

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lawlessness to be among you in terms of deception. Don't allow yourselves to be deceived.”

Okay. So his spirit is already at work among them. That's important first. But when will he come? Well, not until the rebellion. Now the question is, does the man of lawlessness come and then the rebellion? Or does the rebellion give rise to the man of lawlessness? It doesn't really indicate how we ought to think about that. There's no hard and fast answer to that. But we know that the man of lawlessness will be revealed when, or not until the rebellion comes.

We're going to talk more about that a little bit later. But let's go back then to verse 3. And there is this whole idea of the presence of his work.

Now he is already at work among them. Now let me ask this. I'm going to end with this; this is what we have been building up to. Have you ever heard anyone say this? Could he—that is, the antichrist—already be among us? I've heard that numerous times from people. Could he be among us? You know, maybe he's already been born. Maybe he's already in the world.

All right. Now let's think about that for just a minute. Think about the question of the writing of 2 Thessalonians. If we put it down here, it was written in the 50s, okay?

Ted: The early 50s.

Jeff: The early 50s.

Ted: Maybe 50.

Jeff: Okay, the early 50s. Now think about John's epistle. John epistle, 1 John, was written in the 90s.

Now that's about forty years, isn't it? That's about forty years; that's a generation, isn't it? That's enough time for these guys to be old and these guys to be young, right?

Now what I want you to grab is this. Look at 1 John 2:18 and 4:3. Notice what we find.

In 2 Thessalonians we found that his work is already among the Thessalonians. Now look at 1 John; we already looked at this first passage. 1 John 2:18: *“Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.”*

Now look at 4:3. *“And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of antichrist which you heard is coming, and now is in the world already.”*

Now think about that. It doesn't matter whether it's the first century, the second century, the third century or the 21st century. Antichrist is among us and it feels like it. So in 2 Thessalonians he says that his work is already among you. And then a generation later his work is already among you. In fact many antichrists have come, and his work is among us. Every generation in the millennium will feel like the antichrist is among them, which gives a sense of imminence to the return of Christ, okay? Even in the Scriptures it feels like He is imminent.

So when will he come? Well, we're going to talk about the rebellion next time; I'm not going to tell you. I'm going to stop there. *(Laughter)* So do you have any questions before we roll out? Don, are you just combing your hair?

Don: The temple in verse 4.

Jeff: Don, we're not there yet. Brother, we're not even there.

Don: All right.

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Jeff: Calm your jets. *(Laughter)* Man!

Ted: We’re playing the Eagles, not the Jets.

Jeff: Well look at him! He’s got an Eagles jersey on. *(referring to Don)*

Ted: Oh, he does.

Jeff: He might as well have. He’s worried about the Eagles eating the Penguins.

Don: The Eagles eating the Penguins?

Jeff: Or the Eagles eating the Steelers.

Don: Jeff, what was in your coffee this morning?

Jeff: Oh yeah; he’s always turning it around. *(Laughter)* All right. Any questions about *what we talked about?* No? Okay. Well, we’ll take it up the next time.

Let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day, for the blessing of life in Christ and for the time You’ve given us to study Your word. And we ask, Lord, that You’ll bless us. We pray, Lord, that we’ll live in light of Your coming. We pray, Lord, that we’ll have that sense of Your imminent return and delight in it. And we ask, Lord, that You’ll bless us in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*