

God's Timetable

2 Thessalonians 2:1–12

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 196–200.



EVERY

Member | Event | Time

NEW MERCIES CHRISTIAN CHURCH | JOHN 4: 28-30

Come Experience *God's* New Mercies!

2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 (NKJV)

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 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.

3 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,

4 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.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

8 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.

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a calendar, but to build character. Paul emphasized this fact in both of his Thessalonian letters, and our Lord warned us not to set dates for His coming (*Matt. 24:36, 42*).
- Date-setters are usually upsetters, and that is exactly what happened in the Thessalonian assembly.

- Someone had deceived the believers into thinking they were already living in the Day of the Lord. The teaching probably first came through a “*prophetic utterance*” in one of their meetings, and then it was further enhanced by a letter claiming to come from Paul himself.
- The believers were instantly shaken by this teaching, and continued to be deeply troubled. Had God changed His program?
- They remembered Paul promised them deliverance from the Tribulation?

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV)

and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- To calm their hearts and stabilize their faith, Paul explained that they were not in the Day of the Lord.
- The reason was simple: that Day could not arrive till certain other events had taken place.
- Paul then stated for them the prophetic events that make up God's timetable.

The Rapture of the Church

(2 Thes. 2:1, 6–7)

2 Thessalonians 2:1 (NKJV)

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 Thessalonians 2:6–7 (NKJV)

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

Please Calm Down!

- Paul appealed to them to “calm down” on the basis of the truth he had taught them in his first letter: the Lord would return and catch up His own to meet Him in the air (*1 Thes. 4:13–18*).
- This is “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and ... our gathering together unto Him” (*2 Thes. 2:1*).
- Not two separated events, but one great event that will occur suddenly and without warning.
- We all leave together!

- Once the church is out of the world, Satan and his forces will unfold their program.
- **The Day of the Lord is the period that follows the Rapture of the church.**
- It will be a time of Tribulation for the people on earth: Satan and his hosts will be working on earth, and God will send righteous judgments from heaven.
- Revelation 6–19 describes this period for us.

God Is The Restrainer

- Why is Satan unable to reveal his “man of sin” sooner? Because God is restraining the forces of evil in the world today.
- Satan cannot do whatever he wants to do, whenever he pleases.
- Our sovereign Lord is able to make others obey and serve His purpose.

God Is The Restrainer

Psalm 76:10 (KJV)

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

**In 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7,
Paul mentioned a
restraining force that even
today is helping keep
everything on schedule.**

- The Holy Spirit of God is the Restrainer.
- This restrainer is now at work in the world and will continue to work till it *(or he)* is “taken out of the midst” *(literal translation of 2 Thes. 2:7b)*.
- Many identify this restrainer as the Holy Spirit of God. Certainly, He is “*in the midst*” of God’s program today, working through the church to accomplish God’s purposes.

- When the church is raptured, the Holy Spirit will not be taken *out of the world* (*otherwise nobody could be saved during the Tribulation*), but He will be taken *out of the midst* to allow Satan and his forces to go to work.
- The Holy Spirit will certainly be present on the earth during the Day of the Lord, but He will not be restraining the forces of evil as He is today.

- **In spite of its weakness and seeming failure, never underestimate the importance of the church in the world.**
- People who criticize the church do not realize that the presence of the people of God in this world gives unsaved people opportunity to be saved.

- The presence of the church is delaying the coming of judgment.
- Lot was not a dedicated man, but his presence in Sodom held back the wrath of God (*Gen. 19:12–29*).

- There are two programs at work in the world today: God's program of salvation, and Satan's program of sin, "*the mystery of iniquity.*"
- God has a timetable for His program, and nothing Satan does can change that timetable.

- Just as there was a “*fullness of the time*” for the coming of Christ (*Gal. 4:4*), so there is a “fullness of the time” for the appearance of Antichrist; and nothing will be off schedule.
- Once the restraining ministry of the Spirit of God has ended, the next event can take place.

The Revelation of Antichrist

(2 Thes. 2:3–5, 8a)

2 Thessalonians 2:3–5 (NKJV)

3 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,

4 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.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

The Revelation of Antichrist

(2 Thes. 2:3–5, 8a)

2 Thessalonians 2:8 (NKJV)

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.

- Paul did not use the term *Antichrist* in his letter. This term is used in the New Testament only by John (*1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7*).

1 John 2:18 (NKJV)

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the **Antichrist** is coming, even now many **antichrists** have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

- This is the name we use to identify the last great world dictator whom Paul designated as **“that man of sin,” “the son of perdition”** (2 Thes. 2:3), and **“that lawless one”** (2 Thes. 2:8, *literal translation*).

This is a man under the influence of Satan!

**Satan has been at war
with God ever since he,
as Lucifer, rebelled
against God and tried to
capture God's throne.**

Isaiah 14:12–15 (NKJV)

12 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

- The Greek prefix *anti* has two meanings: *against*, and *instead of*. Satan not only opposes Christ, but he wants to be worshiped and obeyed *instead of* Christ.
- Satan has always wanted to be worshiped and served as God (*Isa. 14:14; Luke 4:5–8*).
- He will one day produce his masterpiece, the Antichrist, who will cause the world to worship Satan and believe Satan's lies.

- Paul had explained all of this to the believers in Thessalonica, referring them, no doubt, to the relevant Scriptures in the Old Testament.
- We are fortunate to have the entire Bible to study, so we can get the total picture of Antichrist and his career.
- **Prophetic students may not agree on every detail; but the main facts, when they are related, give us the following description of Antichrist in the last days.**

The Peacemaker

(Rev. 6:1–2)

Revelation 6:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”

2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. **He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**

The Peacemaker

(Rev. 6:1–2)

- Certainly, this man will be on the scene before the Rapture of the church.
- He will be a peaceful political leader who unites ten nations of Europe into a strong power bloc (*see Rev. 17:12–13*).
- The rider on the white horse imitates Christ.

The Peacemaker

(Rev. 6:1–2)

Revelation 19:11 (NKJV)

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

The Peacemaker

(Rev. 6:1–2)

- He goes forth to conquer peacefully: he has a bow, but no arrows.
- He will bring a brief time of peace to the world (*1 Thes. 5:1–3*) before the storm of the Day of the Lord breaks loose.

The Persecutor

(Rev. 13:15–17)

Revelation 13:15–17 (NKJV)

15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The Persecutor

(Rev. 13:15–17)

- Most prophetic students agree that the abomination of desolation will occur three and one-half years after the Antichrist makes his covenant with the Jews. (*Dan. 9:27—“in the midst of the week” or three and one-half years.*)
- This will usher in a period of intense persecution and Tribulation. Jesus said, *“For then shall be great Tribulation”* (*Matt. 24:21*).

The Persecutor

(Rev. 13:15–17)

- Satan will vent his wrath against Israel. He will so control the world's economic system that citizens must bear *“the mark of the beast”* to be able to buy and sell (Rev. 13:16–17).
- People often ask, *“Will anybody be saved during the seven-year period?”*

The Persecutor

(Rev. 13:15–17)

- The answer is, yes! Revelation 7:1–8 states that 144,000 Jews will be saved *(probably as was the Apostle Paul, by a dramatic vision of Christ)* and will carry the Gospel to the nations.
- The Apostle John described a great multitude of Gentiles who will come out of the great Tribulation *(Rev. 7:9–17)* as converted people. Even though the Holy Spirit will be “*out of the midst*” as the restraining power, He will still work with redeeming power.

The Persecutor

(Rev. 13:15–17)

- However, it will cost dearly to trust Christ and live for Him during that time.
- Believers will refuse to bow down to the beast's image and will be slain.
- They will refuse to wear his mark and thus be unable to get jobs or make purchases.
- It will be quite a contrast to our situation now.

The Prisoner

(Rev. 19:11–21)

Revelation 19:11–21 (NKJV)

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

The Prisoner

(Rev. 19:11–21)

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

The Prisoner

(Rev. 19:11–21)

- Keep in mind that God has a timetable.
- Satan will not be permitted to control the world forever.
- Jesus Christ will return “in power and great glory” and take Antichrist and his associates prisoner—and also Satan—and cast them into the bottomless pit (*Rev. 20:1–3*).

The Prisoner

(Rev. 19:11–21)

- This will be the climax of the great Battle of Armageddon (*Rev. 16:16*) during which the nations of the world unite with Satan to fight Jesus Christ.
- This leads to our next event. *“The Return of Jesus Christ.”*