

This is the Way the World Ends

2 Thess 2:1-12



Background: “This is the way the world ends, Not with a bang but a whimper.” With these words T.S. Eliot ended his poem *The Hollow Men*. The Thessalonian Christians were very concerned about the end of the world. Paul commended their faith, love and hope as a shining example to others. Their hope was in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they were uncertain what that would entail, and therefore anxious. We come to one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament in which Paul seeks to calm their nerves. But he does so in a manner that has generated both wild speculation and baffled confusion.

Sermon Text: 2 Thess 2:1-12 (NIV)

¹ Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

⁵ Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, ¹⁰ and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sermon questions (pick 3)

- What good news did you hear from the service Sunday?
- In Bernard's intro, he listed several resources that have shaped end-time theology in the US for a few generations. Have you read any of those books or seen any of the movies? If so, how have they shaped your view of the end-times? If not, could you explain how you understand the end-times in a few sentences?
- Bernard said the Thessalonians are "scared out of their wits" about the end times, and need some assurance about where they stand. What do you do when you have doubts? What Biblical texts provide you assurance?
- "Dare to be Daniel. Dare to stand alone." In other words, stand up for God in the public space. Is that encouraging for you? Why or why not?
- The man of lawlessness is a personification of anyone who uses power to deceive and destroy, while exalting himself/herself to be worshiped. Bernard made a point of saying that this mentality is prevalent in all areas of society.
 - Have you run into it?
 - If so, how did you deal with it?
 - Practically speaking, what does it look like to be faithful and obedient in the face of these kinds of people?