

# God's Prophetic Timetable for Christ's Return

*This is part two of a two-part article. Find part one at [this link](#).*

In his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica, Paul promised them future deliverance from the wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9). When someone deceived them into thinking the present afflictions, harassments and persecutions they were experiencing were part of the prophesied day of the Lord, Paul wrote a second letter to calm their fears and settle their faith.

He carefully explained that no matter the difficulties they were experiencing, they would not be part of the future day of the Lord's judgment and wrath because that day could not unfold *until* certain other events had taken place. He then reviewed God's last-days timetable for the church.

## Rebellion and Lawlessness

In his first letter, Paul taught them how the Lord Jesus would return and "catch up" His own to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18. Also see Matt. 24:19-21, 1 Cor. 15:50-53, Rev. 14:14-16). Then, in his second letter, he spoke "concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him" (2 Thess. 2:1b, ESV) and explains, "That day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God" (vv. 3b-4).

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Some professing believers will deconstruct their faith spiritually, and the corrupting influence of an emerging man of sin (or lawlessness) will precede the day of the Lord. The Greek word used here for “rebellion” is *apostasia*, which is transliterated in other versions as “apostasy” and means a “falling away.” It will not be a passive proclivity but an active spiritual rebellion.

## **The Revelation of the Antichrist**

The term “Antichrist” is only used in the New Testament by the apostle John in his short epistles (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7), where he also warns there are other, lesser antichrists at work today. He identifies these as deceitful, destructive and divisive “believers” who withdrew from the fellowship and mutual submission of the saints.

The Greek prefix *anti-* has two meanings: “against” and “instead of.” Satan not only opposes Christ, but he wants to be worshipped and obeyed *instead of* Christ. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and the counterfeit Christ will begin as a “mostly peaceful” dictator who unites nations politically into powerful blocks of godless entities (Rev. 6:1-2).

Satan is restricted from revealing this “man of sin” earlier by a restraining force that remains uncertain to us (2 Thess. 2:6-7). Some believe it is the church before the rapture. Others think the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. Still, others believe it to be the archangel Michael, as mentioned in Daniel 10:13, 21 as having a protective relationship with the Jews. The restrainer is removed or “steps aside” and allows the Antichrist to assume his ultimate role until he is cast into the lake of fire with the false prophet (Rev. 19:20).

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## **Stay Faithful and Stand Fast**

Second Thessalonians 2:13-17 brings these end-time realities to a personal and practical conclusion for believers. Knowing God called and chose us for salvation at this significant time in His story is comforting, and knowing He will complete what He has begun in us is most encouraging. Now, we need to stay faithful and stand fast in our righteous pursuits.

The process of doing that is said to be “through sanctification” (v. 13), which is another way to translate the word for “holiness.” The Holy Spirit cultivates His holiness in us and through us to obtain and give glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our steadfast faith and belief in the gospel’s truth is a commitment to God’s grace so we may be “established in every good work and word” until our Lord Jesus returns to receive us unto Himself.

Come, Lord Jesus!

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