



"Shaken"

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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-2 Thess 2:1-12 -

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.

2:1-2

Bible expositor Dr. Warren Wiersbe said: *"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 (Mt 24:36, 42). Date-setters are usually upsetters, and that is exactly what happened in the Thessalonian assembly."*

In these very intensive days on earth, its easy to panic a little, (or a lot!) just like the believers in Thessalonica in Paul's day. Rumors and stories abounded then as they do now...everyone has a theory, everyone has the 'facts' and of course what to do in light of those perceived facts! Ironically, Jesus experienced and spoke of these same issues in Matthew 24.

It seems things haven't changed much. Today we have Christians who are extremely politically and secularly involved. They are buying generators and stocking up on canned goods in their storm shelters. How are we to prepare and live in light of the rapture of the church and our

Lord's return? Shall our actions be merely defensive? Are we meant to hunker down and attempt to just "survive" in these last days?

Is that why we and the Thessalonians are being told these things?

Firstly, Paul is dealing with this issue because he desired that the believers 'not be shaken'... not be worried...not be troubled concerning this issue. The believers there obviously saw the world in such a light that led them to grow concerned that their beliefs were incorrect or that the "train had left the station" and they missed it. Had they been "left behind?"

Across the board it is clear that we are living in stressful days. We have higher living status than at any time in human history. Better health care. Better financial well-being. More toys. More comfort. More free time. And the result? Unprecedented crisis levels of mental health. People are acting out in response. Mass shootings, road rage, run away fentanyl addictions, anxiety and depression. While what is happening in the secular world is not only understandable but expected, the adverse effects upon the Christian community is a head scratcher. Because we live in this world, I don't think it is reasonable to expect to be immune to such, however, if life as a reborn child of God does not bring peace, what is the problem?

Jesus is called the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Paul refers to "the God of all peace" (Romans 15:13, 33; Galatians 6:16). Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" He had also told His followers that "*in this world you will have many troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). So peace is not the absence of trouble; it is the presence of God. Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). When the "God of all peace" comes to live inside a believing heart (1 Corinthians 6:19), He begins to produce His own characteristics in that life.

Inner peace comes from knowing that circumstances are temporary and that God is sovereign over all (Isaiah 46:9–11). Peace comes from exercising faith in the character of God and His Word. We can have peace in the midst of challenges when we remember that "all things work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). We can choose peace rather than give way to fear and worry. Inner peace resulting from a relationship with God allows us to keep things in proper perspective. We can accept difficult situations on earth by remembering that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

For many, this issue of the end of days plays into this potential stress and worry. The truth is, little information has been left to us concerning the details of end-day's events. But what *is* certain is what *was* given was not to motivate us to move into 'survival mode' and stock up on camo-gear and obsess over every titillating conjecture in the news and every Hollywood presentation.

All that we have been given is clearly to motivate us live differently in light of that imminent return of Christ. It has been given to us so we might be reminded that this world is not our home and all this stuff will be lost and everything outside of the eternal will end and will not matter. It is meant to motivate us to holiness, commitment and faithfulness. Thus, while the “end of days” issue is an issue indeed, it is but a mere part of the greater dynamic of what a believer’s life should exude.

A lot of folks worry about all of the apocryphal signs and world crisis. They *stress* over these issues but seldom act in light of their truth. We can in our anxiety either arm up, drop out, or try to block it out completely. But Christ's intent and attitude was this: John 9:4 “*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.*” I find it frustrating as a pastor to watch how the passing of time affects people...many negatively and many benignly. Meaning many *cannot* or *refuse to* keep up and grow up, and others live like they are going to be here forever and the basis for their decisions and priority pursuits are not on God and kingdom but still rather for the material, the experiential, and the worldly. As a pastor I often want to jump up and down and scream in an effort to gain attention to God's word and God's warnings, as the world...even the Christian world, seems to be overtly "asleep at the wheel."

Indeed the world is giving plenty of reasons to stress out today. And to make matters worse we have a generation of people who have been raised with a propensity to huddle in a corner in a fetal position when the going gets tough. So the combination is making for a wave of reactions...pills to relax, pills to keep going and pills to handle the pills. The world is trying to handle things, but the psychoanalysis, the pharmaceuticals, the alcohol and recreational drugs, the visual and sexual distractions, and the material pleasures, none of it is giving us any peace.

And when discussions of any kind concerning "the end" of the show come up, people start getting fidgety and uncomfortable because in their mid they personally feel they haven't *started* yet and we're talking about *ending*! This because their pursuits have been shallow, temporal, or fleeting.

The exact order of the end times events have been a source of controversy for hundreds of years, and today we have pervasive prophecy conferences to rehash the topic again and again. But I cannot miss the fact that the details of it all have been conspicuously left out of scripture. I cannot help but believe that was overtly on purpose. So let us not torture the text to make it say something that is not readily evident, but rather ask ourselves why we are given what we have been given?

For the Orthodox Jew, it is an absolute certainty that the temple will be rebuilt and the sacrifices will begin again according to Old Testament directives. Of course there is an immediate problem with this plan. Today the Mosque of Omar, the Dome of the Rock, the third most holy site of Islam sits on the very spot where most see the temple is to be rebuilt. To destroy it would start a holy war of unbelievable proportions, as 850 million Muslims would rise up and go to war with an unstoppable furor. Yet recently a number of Jewish archaeologists have begun to contend that the Dome of the Rock Mosque does not sit on the site of the Holy of Holies. Their research says that the actual Holy of Holies lies just to the North of the Dome, where nothing prevents it from being rebuilt.

Conventional thinking then says that the Anti-Christ will rise to power and mediate a peace agreement with the Palestinians that would include the Temple being rebuilt on this sight with a wall to separate the two. Ezekiel seems to have prophesied this also in Ezekiel 42:20. By doing this...by finding peace that has alluded the Jewish nation as well as the Palestinians for centuries, this Anti-Christ figure will be exalted and praised! But in the midst of his rising popularity, this "man" will exploit his popularity and walk into the temple and demand to be worshiped, "showing himself that he is God," and the horrific second half of the seven-year Tribulation will follow.

Revelation, and other scripture gives us this series of events which portray a reverse image of Jesus and his earthly life. Upon the anti-Christ's rise to power, there will be an assassination attempt upon him. He will appear to be dead but will revive...a "return from the dead" if you will. His political power will span the countries of the world. He will do what appears to be 'miracles.' He will be militarily powerful and successful. He will demand obedience and eventually even worship. He will establish economic controls which will utilize the "Mark of Beast" in some form. (666...whatever that means.)

He will increasingly oppose Christians in every way. He will war against them and kill many. Eventually he will find himself in a place called "Armageddon" where he will attempt to either literally or symbolically make war against God Himself. There he will be defeated by Christ, with merely a word from the mouth of Jesus.

Scripture tells us that before all of this, there will be a great "falling away." What this "falling away" is that will occur before the Anti-Christ appears is a great point of debate. Most consider it a "falling away" from religion in general, and if that is the case, we are no doubt in the midst of it.

2:5-8

What Paul was telling the believers in Thessalonica was not something new. He was reminding them of what he had already taught them. But their hearts were troubled by the events around them, just as ours tend to be today.

Paul says something very interesting here and certainly pertinent to us as believers. He says that there is something “restraining” or holding back these events, and once God is ready, this ‘blockade’ will be removed. This is universally understood to be none other than the very Holy Spirit of God. This does not mean that the world will be void of the Holy Spirit as the events continue forward. But it means that the Holy Spirit will step away from blocking these events and let mankind march forward into the abyss that He has desired for centuries.

Today however, the Holy Spirit is still magnificently in action, which means this is ‘our day.’ A time when we can work for the kingdom and for the souls of men. 2 Corinthians 6:1 says “... *the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.*”

We are reminded of the sure and final outcome of all of these events: “*the Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendor of his coming.*” So the end is assured for Satan, the Anti-Christ and us too! So we can be consumed with the details of the events, or we can be consumed with the kingdom pursuits in light of them.

Today we as Christians can be so wrapped up in ourselves in our own desires and pursuits while mankind is passing into an eternity of “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Indeed, the “love of many has grown cold.” Perhaps we just don’t believe any of this. Maybe it’s all too Hollywood and we’re just not swallowing it. Or maybe, we just don’t really care...

2:9-10

What is coming is very real and is the culmination of all of mankind and all of time. Satan is already at work. He is here on earth and is attempting to waylay all mankind and he does it with lies. He is serious about his work even if we are not about ours. He would kill you dead if the Holy Spirit were to take his hand off of you. But in lieu of that, he will do whatever he can against you.

We can know this: all that he does is again wrapped up in lies and deception. He knows how we think and how things work in relation with us. We seem to believe that his methods are to tempt us to do evil and such conjures up images of depravity and blatant rebellion against God and holiness. And while some of that is no doubt true, the fact is most of what Satan does involves distraction, lethargy, and wrong priorities. We are simply busy trying to remain bound for heaven and blessing while walking just as close to the worldly and secular edge that we can.

Satan’s most successful ploys go on between our ears and in our heart. He causes doubts, and bitterness. He empowers such phrases as “that’s not fair” and “I don’t have to take that.” He fans the imaginations of the heart and the self-centered ideals in our heads to break communion and fellowship. To make us hate and hurt each other and ultimately ourselves in the process. He tries every day to mess with us, and that battle so often goes on quietly inside of us.

In the meantime he works to deceive the unbeliever too. He works to make sure they stay an unbeliever. But it's all deception. All 'smoke and mirrors.' The blindness is deep and entrenched. These folks are lost for eternity because they reject the truth. And from this side, it all seems so obvious and so crazy at times. We look at the ways of the world and wonder how it can be legal to kill unborn babies and to believe that these incredible bodies and all the wonder of nature came about by random chance! And it seems our world is full of such foolishness today. It's all "unrighteous deception."

Satan tells men they don't need a God. But doesn't that humanity read the newspaper or watch the evening news? Because it is truthfully a "train wreck" out there! He tells us that God will steal all our pleasure, our fun, and our joy....but then we never actually receive any of that from the world that really remains, and still we are unwilling to entertain the idea that we are being ripped off by Satan, not God.

2:11-12

Never before has mankind been so ready and so primed to see these events come about. Science, technology, and politics are quickly moving us into the realm of this reality. Can you imagine today being denied access to the internet? Your cell phone? Your debit card? How could we live without electricity and transportation?

When scripture says that we will not be able to 'buy or sell' without the 'mark' it is now clearly possible and plausible in today's world. We're there folks. There is no other event on the prophetic calendar that must transpire before the rapture of the church.

Jon Courson said: There are only two prayers a man can pray: Either "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done"—or "my kingdom come; my will be done." Certainly God is in control of all that happens, but He will not force people to believe nor will He force people to follow Him. There is a voluntary, rational choice made by people of every age who seek rather for the pleasure in unrighteousness.

God will confirm all of us in the decisions that we make. We as a church must follow in that same action: Mt 18:18 "*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*" That's why some folks get so angry at us as a church...because we, as Christ has done, will confirm their decisions...good or bad.

If we choose to follow Him...even when we are afraid and unsure of our future, God takes our hand and shows us his power and manifest glory. When we choose to reject God and His Word, He confirms that decision and gives us what we want. When we don't want to see, He will make us blind. When we *do* want to see, He opens our eyes to His truth and His wonder.

How does this passage hit you today? Does it motivate you? Make you 'time conscious?' Does it make you question your living? Your decisions? Because in reality, it should effect every aspect of your life. But that is only if you really want to see. If you choose rather to believe that everything will be fine and you have plenty of time, God will confirm that in you.