# 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (Paul Wilson) 147028

Prophetic Terms, Prophetic Terms: The Apostasy (2:3)

There is much prophecy concerning this earth that must yet be fulfilled; and each prophecy relating to the future will come to pass to the smallest detail, just as did those prophecies concerning ancient cities and governments. We should not, however, try to force Scripture and fit the happenings of today into prophecy. Those who are real children of God may see some shadows of future events, but it is not given to us to look for developments of future prophecy. Everything will unfold with lightning rapidity after the Church is gone from the scene, but our special portion is to wait and watch for the Lord Himself. He is surely coming soon to call all His redeemed to meet Him in the air.

What then will be the condition on this earth following the departure of every true Christian? The answer to this question should probably be divided into two parts: that which concerns the great lifeless Christian profession left behind, and the condition of the Jewish people. The taking of every real Christian from the earth will not remove the profession of Christianity. In fact, it appears that there will be more show and pretension than ever before, by a dead, empty, and corrupt Christendom. There may be a temporary upset when the Christians suddenly disappear, but the devil will be ready with a lie to calm any fears of those who are left behind. The empty shell will take new life from amalgamation and soon boast of greatness. It will truly become "Babylon the Great."

Much evil is tolerated and condoned within the pale of the professing church now; then it will "become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2). Such is the description of the fearful state of that which began in simplicity and truth on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Those who dream of Christianity spreading throughout the world and converting it, so as to eventually establish a sort of millennium on earth, are being sadly disillusioned even now. What a glorious day it will be for the saved, when the Lord calls them home at His coming! What a terrible beginning and awful end for what is left behind! Christendom bereft of those who are real, will readily accept Satan's delusions.

The "gospel of the grace of God" will cease when the Lord comes for His own, regardless of a certain continuation of profession. The gospel door that has stood open for almost two thousand years, will suddenly close at the coming of the Lord. Those who have heard the message of grace and put off the acceptance of the Lord Jesus, will awake with consternation when it is too late.

Reader, on which side of that door would you be, if it were to close right now?

There is a false teaching abroad, that says there will be another chance for those who wait too long, and find themselves left behind. Some, probably well-meaning people, say that those on the outside will have a chance to accept the "gospel of the kingdom." But what does Scripture say? Read the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. It certainly offers no encouragement to such an idea. There were five foolish virgins and they represent millions in this and other countries, who are nominally called Christians, but they have not had any personal dealing with God about their sins. They have not accepted the Lord Jesus as their own Savior. They know of the "oil," but have never possessed it. They have never "bought" it. Buying suggests more than a knowledge of a thing; it implies a closing of a transaction so that it becomes one's own. After the "foolish" find themselves left behind, they will seek admittance, only to hear those awful irrevocable words, "I know you not."

O reader, if still unsaved, do not longer trifle with God's offer of mercy, or put your trust in any false hope of another chance, which will only land you in hell.

"Now is the day of salvation"—it is not promised tomorrow.

Then there is still a worse description of the condition of Christendom in 2 Thessalonians. As bad as "Babylon the Great" will become, a more shocking and debasing iniquity will quickly follow. The working of this error is already present, but it is yet restrained and will be until the Spirit of God leaves the world with the Church; then wickedness will increase very rapidly. At that time a certain wicked person will come on the scene "with all power and signs and lying wonders." There will be a "strong delusion" sent by God "that they should believe a lie." And why? Because they would not receive "the truth, that they might be saved." Think what an awful thing it will be for rejecters of Christ to be given over by God to believe a lie. What folly to think that one can refuse Christ now, and stand a chance of doing better when all the powers of darkness are turned loose against him!

This consummation of wickedness is spoken of as "a falling away," but more correctly, The Apostasy, in 2 Thess. 2:3. The attempt to overthrow even the name of God, and the substitution of the worship of man and Satan, will precede the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. How comforting to the child of God to know that he shall first be called up to be with and like Christ!

The Apostasy of the Jews will also reach its climax at the same time. They too will go into gross idolatry. The unclean spirit of idolatry, which so long afflicted the Jews, had gone out of them when the Lord was on earth. Idolatry is not mentioned as one of their sins after their return from the Babylonian captivity. But the Lord Jesus foretold that the time will come when the wicked spirit of idolatry, with seven other wicked spirits, will return to them, and their last state will be worse than the first (Matt. 12:42-45).

The same wicked man who will deceive apostate Christendom, will also deceive the Jews. He will show them great signs and wonders, even to the bringing fire down from heaven. He will place an idol, the image of the great political leader, in their rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and compel the worship of this man, and accept homage himself. He is the one whom the Lord Jesus said will come in his own name, and him they will receive (John 5:43). He is called the "king" in the latter part of Daniel 11, and also in Isaiah 30 and 57. He is the second beast—the

"beast" with "two horns like a lamb"—of Revelation 13. Figuratively he will have horns like a lamb to deceive as an imitation of Christ—God's Lamb. But his voice will betray him, for he will speak as a dragon. Satan is directly behind this "false prophet" and "antichrist." His deception will be so strong that if it could be possible, it will even deceive the "very elect" Jews (Matt. 24:24). The mass of the Jews still apostatize, but God will have an elect remnant among them who will suffer persecutions, many unto death, for their faithfulness.

The wickedness of man (both Jew and Gentile) reached terrible depths when they cast out God's Son when He came into the world in grace. Still God abounded in grace over their culminating sin, and sent forth the gospel of His grace to the Jew first, and then to the rest, beseeching them to be reconciled. When this grace is being wantonly refused on every hand, is it any wonder that God should finally give man up? No, the wonder is that He should bear with such wickedness and ingratitude this long. The explanation of this strange, lingering forbearance of God is found in 2 Pet. 3:9.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

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