

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry  
for the Christian community*

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## 2 THESSALONIANS 2 v 1 – 12

### Background notes

#### A. The ages of history and the times of God's wrath

To understand the ways in which God has conducted His relationship with mankind throughout history we can identify seven different ages (or eras, dispensations, "administrations of grace"). At the end of each era there is a short period of God's judgement, or His wrath, on that period. Those events are shown here in brackets. The Church age is no exception and that judgement time is a seven-year period commonly known as the Tribulation. Most of Revelation concerns the Tribulation. This passage in 2 Thessalonians is also focusing on some of the definitive details of that time of God's wrath, as they will clearly signify the imminent return of the Messiah for His millennial reign on Earth.

The age of Innocence – Creation to the Fall (a curse on creation)

The age of Conscience – the Fall to the Flood (a worldwide flood)

The age of Humanism – the Flood to Babel (all peoples divided by language)

The age of Promise – Abram to Sinai (plagues on Egypt, esp. the tenth, and the loss of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea)

The age of Law – Sinai to Pentecost (Israel's loss of the temple, Jerusalem, and the land)

The age of Grace, the Church age – Pentecost to the Lord's Return to Earth as King (seven years of tribulation)

The age of the Kingdom – the Millennial Reign (a final rebellion, Revelation 20 v 7 – 10)

#### B. The role of the Messiah

From God's promise to Satan in the Garden of Eden, that the offspring of the woman would crush his head, the scriptures have constantly told of a Messiah (or the Christ) who would rescue the world from Satan and the effects of his evil power, and bring about a wonderful new world order. Although the disciples came to believe that Jesus was indeed the promised Christ, they failed to distinguish the two aspects of the Messiah's anointing found in the prophetic scriptures; He would come first as a suffering Servant, and then come afterwards as a reigning King. Sadly, many Christians make the same mistake today and see His two roles as joined together at the same time now. Apart from being unscriptural, this is a logical nonsense. Jesus is not yet King over all the world; probably a majority of the world's population do not even believe in Him. He is the Lord (or should be!) of those who accept Him as Saviour, and we call that the Lordship of Jesus (1 Corinthians 12 v 3b). The first real insight into the disciples' mistake was given by Jesus Himself to the two walking to Emmaus (Luke 24 v 13 – 27). By the time the disciples met Jesus at His ascension six weeks later they had begun to understand the two roles of the Messiah (Acts 1 v 6 – 8), but were told that the message of the suffering Servant (the Gospel) would have to be preached throughout the world first, and then He would return as the reigning King, and it would be in God's time, no one else's.

### Exegesis

#### v 1 – 2 The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul is essentially dealing here with confusion over the timing of the Lord's return as the reigning King, but he is also referring to our being gathered unto Him (the Rapture), which is a separate but related event. This latter point he had dealt with in his first letter (1 Thessalonians 4 v 13 – 18), but refers to it here in v 6 – 7 as well. Paul wants them to fully understand the order of events in this whole matter, and not to get unsettled about it – a balanced and satisfying approach that is very necessary for us today as well. By the way, some folks say that this will be "the end of the world", but more correctly it should be seen as "the end of the world as we know it today".

### v 3 – 4 The coming of the antichrist (the man of sin, the man of lawlessness, the beast, etc.)

The antichrist has to come first, before Jesus comes to reign, and he will be the dominant figure in the time of judgement at the end of the Church age. Antichrist will be universal in his rule and influence, bringing about unparalleled political and economic mayhem. This judgement will be worldwide because the Church age also will have been worldwide in its scope, bringing the Gospel of God's grace to all nations. The coming of this powerful deceiver had been expected among the Jews. The religious leaders in Jerusalem accused Jesus of being the fulfilment of those expectations (Matthew 12 v 22 – 37), and in doing so they had committed the unforgiveable sin. However, Israel as a nation will be redeemed when they all accept Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 23 v 37 – 39). Especially since the Second World War, we can see that the world is looking for a figure (a man, not God) who will bring about world government and domination. The antichrist is depicted symbolically at the very beginning of the Tribulation as the arrival of the first horse of the apocalypse (Revelation 6 v 2) and is given a more in-depth description in Revelation 13. There he is seen working closely with a worldwide religious leader (the false prophet), and it is also very important to realise that today there are powerful moves towards one universal religious structure and authority.

### v 5 “Don't you remember?” - we've been told!

For about 200 years now the Holy Spirit has been revealing to the Church great scriptural truths about the end of the age and the return of the Lord. He has pointed out to the Church many biblical references to two world wars, the return of Israel, increasing apostasy and wickedness, etc., in confirmation of the Lord's own words (Luke 21 v 28), and with the clear instruction that we are to warn the world (Ezekiel 33 v 1 – 9). What have we done with this great body of revelation? Instead of sounding the warning as watchman on the wall, much of the practising Church is carrying on as if the Church age will continue indefinitely, and without any millennial reign to follow.

### v 6 – 7 The great restraining influence

Paul points out that there has always been a spirit of lawlessness, or “anti-God's law” influence, in the world. John also mentions this in 1 John 2 v 18 – 23. Jesus warned that many would come, very plausibly claiming His authority, but they would be deceivers (Matthew 24 v 23 – 24). We have certainly had, and still do have, plenty of false, anti-God religions, philosophies and nutters. However, since the Day of Pentecost there has been a great restraining influence in the world, preventing the full revelation of the true and personal antichrist. We are not to relegate this to some allegorical battle of good against evil. There is only one power present in the world that could prevent the full onslaught of satanic control, and that is the Holy Spirit. He is not some vague presence in the ether, benignly keeping a watching brief, but He is present in every born-again Christian. In other words, it is the presence in the world of Spirit-filled Christians that has restrained the full intentions of Satan. How much evil would have occurred over the past 2000 years without the influence, prayers and activities of the people of God? The full force of the antichrist can only happen once this restraint has been removed, which must therefore refer to the prior Rapture of the true church.

### v 8 – 10 The reign and character of the antichrist

Once the Church has been removed there will be a great outpouring of evil, the like of which the world has never yet seen. But satanic counterfeit powers and miracles will be so deceptive that vast multitudes will accept and believe in the antichrist. There will be those who are still proclaiming the truth against this deception, and they will be the Jewish evangelists mentioned in Revelation 7, plus the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11 v 1 – 13. Those brought to repentance under their ministry, the tribulation saints mentioned in Revelation 7, will not be part of the Bride of Christ, as she has already gone, but will be the friends of the Bride mentioned in Matthew 25 v 1 – 13. God's grace will still apply during the Tribulation, for it will still be within this age of grace, and that only comes to an end when the time of judgement is brought to an end by the physical return of Jesus as the reigning King (Zechariah 14 v 3 – 5).

### v 11 – 12 The nature of God's judgement

The nature of God's judgement is not only the world's exposure to antichrist and all the upheavals experienced during that seven-year period, but also the powerful delusion that God visits upon those unwilling to believe what is going on, as explained by the Jewish evangelists, and so refusing to take the mark of the Beast. This is exactly the same as God's judgment on unbelieving Israel in the time of Jesus, when God hardened their hearts (Isaiah 6 v 9 – 10 and John 12 v 39 – 40). That hardening was not the *cause* of their unbelief, but the *consequence* of their unbelief. The God who said that He will not always strive with mankind, is the God of grace who gives many opportunities for repentance. But with His foreknowledge God alone knows when a person so hardens their heart that further grace is unwarranted. That is the point at which God says that the die is cast, which has to be the ultimate ground of their judgement. Sadly, we have seen that happen all too often in many of those who have come under the sound of the Gospel in our day.