



### *The Antichrist Will Be Revealed*

**2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 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. 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. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.**

There's a saying that goes, "If you don't stand for something, you fall for everything." The Lord would have us Christians stand firmly on the foundation of his Word of truth, which is centered on Jesus and his redeeming work (John 17:17; 5:39; Eph. 2:19-20). The core message of Scripture is that we are saved from sin and death by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16-17; Hab. 2:4). God has saved us entirely by grace, which means our good works in no way contribute to our coming to faith or meriting heaven (Eph. 2:8-9; Romans 11:6). Anyone who would deny, undermine, or contradict these truths is opposed to Christ and an enemy of his church and is therefore allied with Satan. While hostile forces surround the church without, in our previous devotion Paul warned that the most dangerous enemy would arise from within. Paul calls this "the man of lawlessness," which is another term used to describe the Antichrist.

When we piece together Paul's portrait of the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, a clear picture and identification immerses. Let's review the evidence we considered last time regarding this man of lawlessness: his coming would correspond with a great falling away from Jesus, and the Antichrist would arise to take Jesus' place by setting himself up in God's temple, the human heart, claiming to be God. This subversive spirit was already at work beneath the surface in Paul's day as shown by greedy and power-hungry false teachers and false apostles, but so long as faith in Christ ruled in the hearts of Christians, the Antichrist was kept in check and could not take control. However, once love for Christ and his word would cool, the Antichrist would be allowed by Jesus to operate out in the open until Jesus will finally defeat and destroy him with the splendor of his coming on the Last Day.

The only entity that fits this description and spans the duration of the New Testament era is the office of the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. While this pronouncement is unpopular in our society and results in much criticism and censure of confessional Lutherans, it is none the less accurate. For any who would say that the Catholic Church is the bastion of Christianity, consider that among its official doctrines and decrees are teachings such as these that set the papacy against the rule of Christ, his Word, and salvation by grace through faith:

- “As pastor of the entire Church [the Roman Pontiff] has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church.”<sup>1</sup>
- The Roman Pontiff together with the college of bishops has the authority to establish doctrines that must be believed and adhered to going even as far as the Scriptures themselves.<sup>2</sup>
- “If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing but trust in the divine mercy which forgives sins for Christ's sake, or that we are justified by this faith alone, let him be damned.”<sup>3</sup>
- By their prayers and good works, the Virgin Mary and the other saints cooperated in their own salvation and added their merits to those of Jesus Christ, which are then dispensed for the salvation of the rest of believers.<sup>4</sup>

These and many other false teachings enable the papacy to deceive those who refuse to love the truth of God's Word. They create the illusion of support for these blasphemies from centuries of their own traditions, which they have made equal to the Bible. In addition, Paul tells us to expect that Satan would also assist the Antichrist by enabling him to perform counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles of which there is no shortage of claims within the Catholic church—be that of miracles performed by prayers to dead saints or weeping or bleeding statues. Thus, while claiming follow Christ, the papal hierarchy within the Catholic Church undermines his divine rule by assigning his authority to the pope and including good works in our being declared righteous before God. We thank God that through the Apostle Paul he has revealed the identity to us and work of the Antichrist so that we are safe from his power and able to warn all who are still trapped under his deceptions to return to the truth of the gospel.

*Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, give us the courage to stand fearlessly on your holy Word. For it is the only spiritual weapon you have given us to fight against Satan and the Antichrist. Although we struggle now, give us the confidence that you will finally and visibly prevail against these and all your enemies when you return on the last day. Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*; Paragraph # 882.

<sup>2</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*; Paragraph # 891.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon XII.

<sup>4</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*; Paragraph # 1476, 1477.