

I spent four days this week at a workshop in Des Moines studying Isaiah. It was amazing.

One of the sessions we had was a training session called Text and Framework.

The focus was this: Each of us has a framework, a paradigm, ways that we think. We all do.

Often our frameworks are shaped by people we have heard, what we like, or experiences we have had.

And then we open our Bibles and read, and we try to fit what we are reading into our framework.

If it doesn't fit well, we make it fit. After all we don't like being wrong. It is uncomfortable.

Are you ready to get uncomfortable? We have just had an election.

Some people think that the wrong guy won. "How could this happen?" they ask.

We prayed. This new guy is in favor of abortion and against Biblical families!

He's not the guy I wanted and what about all the possible cheating and injustice?

Isn't it ultimately God's will that America get back to our Biblical roots and honor God? No.

No. That is not in the Bible. Not even close. I'll point out just one problem with that thinking.

If you read the Bible you know that we need to live like Jesus is coming soon.

Do you know what the Bible actually says about His coming?

Things will get worse before Christ returns.

In the first chapter of his second letter to the Thessalonian church we learned a little about their situation.

The Christians in Thessalonica were suffering persecution, tribulations, and hardship.

In verses 3-5 Paul was encouraging them to trust God, love one another, and to persevere.

After that he urged them to take comfort in the coming of the Lord... for two reasons:

1. The Lord will come and bring justice upon their enemies. (vs. 9)

2. The Lord will come and bring glory for all who believe in Him.

So, they ought to keep going, keep working, keep honoring Jesus. (vss. 11-12)

And now, in chapter 2 we come face to face with the principle reason that Paul wrote this letter.

They have been shaken in their faith by false teaching.

Nearly every book in the New Testament and many in the Old warn God's people about false teachers.

Deuteronomy 18:20

Acts 20:28-30

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Jeremiah 14:14

Romans 16:17-18

Titus 1:10-14

Jeremiah 23:16

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Titus 3:10-11

Ezekiel 13:9

Galatians 1:6-9

2 Peter 2:1-3

Matthew 7:15-20

Colossians 2:8

2 Peter 3:17

Matthew 16:11-12

1 Thessalonians 5:21

1 John 2:18-22

Matthew 24:24

1 Timothy 4:1-3

1 John 4:1-5

Luke 6:26

1 Timothy 6:3-5

2 John 1:10-11

John 8:44

2 Timothy 3:5

Jude 1:4

We learn in the Bible that false teachers are all around trying to get people to follow them.

They are greedy for power over people and money.

They gossip and cause dissensions and arguments.

They attack pastors, prophets, and evangelists that are teaching the truth.

They take advantage of vulnerable people who are easily led astray.

They use fear and anger and manipulation, and they tell people what they want to hear.

But worst of all is this: They teach things that are not true... about God, Christ, and people.

I. Do not be disturbed by false teaching.

2:1-2

We do not know the precise nature of the false teaching that Paul was here confronting.

But we do know some and we can figure out quite a bit more.

1. This false teaching has to do with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and His gathering of us.

2. It has rattled the believers in Thessalonica.

3. Those who are teaching this are pretending that it comes from Paul.

4. They are saying that the "Day of the Lord" has already come. You believers missed it.

When I was in college, I was influenced by a theology that is similar in many ways, though not nearly as bad.

I know that some of you have been as well. You may still believe it. It goes like this:

Jesus is going to come at any moment. So far so good.

When He comes it will be secret and all the believers will be taken away to be with the Lord.

There was a book series and then a movie made about this.

Then there will be a seven-year Great Tribulation marked by great suffering.

We will not be part of this tribulation because “we are not destined for wrath.” (1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9)

During this tribulation the Jewish people will be saved.

Halfway through this tribulation the Antichrist will appear and lead the world in rebellion against God.

He will be defeated in a great battle, Armageddon, and Jesus will come visibly this time with all of us.

Then comes the 1,000-year reign of Christ on this earth.

Have you heard that? Much of it comes right out of the Bible! Except for one part.

There is no place in the Bible that you can find any teaching of a secret gathering, rapture, of God’s people.

I remember discussing all of this with another student when I was in seminary.

He asked me a question that I will never forget. “Have you read 2 Thessalonians 2?”

“It will put a torpedo into the hull of your dispensational boat.”

I didn’t like that much, but I did read it and it did just that.

You see, what the Thessalonians had been taught by Paul was being distorted by these false teachers.

They were taking **1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9** and saying that it meant we won’t be on earth during God’s wrath.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 was going to happen before the Great Tribulation.

Which contradicts Jesus’ teaching in **Matthew 24:29-31**.

Which caused me in seminary to ask my dispensational professor about it.

He, in order to be consistent with his framework, explained that Matthew 24-25 was not written to me.

That was the second torpedo in my pre-tribulation rapture boat, and the ship was beginning to sink.

Then these teachers were saying to them that God does not want them to suffer. More on that tonight.

Because they were suffering so terribly, Jesus must have already come, and they missed it.

They missed it because they were not living right and for that reason were now in the tribulation.

We know from verse 5 that Paul has already discussed these things with them when he was with them.

He is now confronting this false teaching in writing to give them further clarity.

He tells them that all of this just cannot be. It is false teaching. Why?

II. The Day of the Lord is still coming.

2:3-4

The term “Day of the Lord” comes from Old Testament prophetic literature.

It is a term for the Lord’s coming in vindication for His people and judgement on the disobedient.

There are “Days of the Lord” for Israel, Judah, Assyria, Babylon and so forth.

And there is a great Day of the Lord that is still future when Christ will come in glory to fulfill all things.

Paul is saying that this day, including the gathering of God’s people, cannot possibly have come yet.

Why not? 3 things must happen first... all of which come right out of Matthew 24.

Clearly Paul thinks that Matthew 24 is written for Christians.

1. The apostasy comes first. Apostasy = rebellion (ESV, NIV) or “falling away” (KJV)

Matthew 24:9-13

2. Then the “man of lawlessness” will be revealed.

Matthew 25:14-15, 21

3. Finally, that man of lawlessness will set himself up as God.

This is the Antichrist. **Revelation 13:7-8, 14-15**

Therefore, the great tribulation, which is suffering for the saints who persevere. **Revelation 12:11**

So, and this is the important part for you and me right now, suffering is part of the picture for God’s people.

As we await the coming of the Lord and our gathering together with Him, we need to be prepared to suffer.

Tribulation has always been the experience of God’s people.

Therefore, Paul writes what he does in **Philippians 3:8-11**.

III. The Man of Lawlessness will be revealed.

2:5-10

He has not been yet, as far as I know.

He wasn't Nero, though many Christians thought so at the time.

He wasn't Hitler, though it sure felt like that then.

He wasn't Obama despite what some people said.

He wasn't Trump despite what other people said, he's on his way out.

And he isn't Biden. Biden is just too old.

But many times in history it has seemed like the injustice and terrible suffering is tribulation-like.

Why? Paul explains. There is this mystery of lawlessness already at work. (vs. 7)

John called this the spirit of antichrist in 1 John 4:3.

Just as the Day of the Lord has little days of the Lord that precede it,

so this man of lawlessness has little antichrists that precede him.

We live in a world where sin is promoted, the unjust seem to win, where the rich rule and trample the poor.

We live in a world where God's people are often mistreated and where the truth is mocked.

This is the mystery of lawlessness. And God keeps a lid on it, keeps it from becoming as bad as it could be.

In verse 7 we read that "he who now restrains" will someday be "taken out of the way."

Some people say that this is the church.

Some people say that this is the Holy Spirit.

Some people say that this is something else. We just don't know.

There is no other place in the Bible that helps us to know what Paul is talking about.

When this "restrainer" is removed, then the antichrist will be revealed. (vss. 8-10)

We learn three things about him, each important for us today:

1. The Lord will slay him with the breath of His mouth. (vs. 8) Does Jesus have bad breath?

No! **Revelation 19:11-16** Jesus has Bible breath.

As Martin Luther wrote in his great hymn, "One little word shall slay him."

2. He comes in the power of Satan, working false miracles. (vs. 9)

People put a lot of stock in miracles. Some churches put a lot of stock in miracles.

But Jesus did not! In fact, He rebuked people for seeking after signs and wonders.

We are supposed to seek the truth and Jesus Christ and NOT miracles.

3. People are going to follow him. (vs. 10)

Because they "refused the love of the truth so as to be saved."

The only alternative to the truth is the "deception of wickedness." You got one or the other.

Some of you here don't put much effort into knowing your Bibles.

You think that it is what the pastor is supposed to do, and not you.

You eat three meals a day, but you rarely feed your soul with the Word of God, the truth.

You watch hours of news and TV, but you are not in the Bible more than 15 minutes.

You are devoted to social media, but you are lazy in your study of what God says.

It is time to change. Consider what is at stake.

IV. Many people will be deluded.

2:11-12

You need to "receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." This is not a one-time event. It is continuous.

Salvation is a road, a path with Jesus that we must endure with glory at the end. You need the truth on the way.

If you do not have the truth, if you are not in the Word, then you get "a deluding influence" sent from God.

Then you believe what is false. You will find yourself living for lies.

You will be judged by God as you take pleasure in sin.

Why do people sin? Because they want to. They want to sin because they are believing lies.

Why does a woman leave her husband and kids for an adulterer? Because she is believing lies.

Why does a man devote himself to work, neglecting church, family, and God? Because he is believing lies.

Why does a nation promote the wholesale slaughter of our unborn? Because we are believing lies.

It is time for you to cease being vulnerable to the lies and begin opening your heart to truth that God speaks.

It is time to prepare for the suffering to come by learning to love Jesus more than this world.