

# Grappling with Radical Evil

## 2 Thessalonians 2

Is God really in control of the world? This question, asked by ordinary people when they read the newspaper, strikes a deep chord in the human heart. Followers of Jesus are not immune to bad news.

In every generation following Jesus is hard. But in some generations it is especially hard when political, social, cultural and religious forces gang up against the beleaguered Christian church. It is normal for believers to experience pressure because they live in two worlds at once: the new age inaugurated by Jesus, and the old age which persists until Jesus comes again. But in this study the apostle Paul envisions a day when the powers of evil will be "incarnated" in a widespread rebellion (an anti-kingdom) and personified in a single individual (an antichrist). As we will discover, this encounter with radical evil is the experience of every generation of Christians waiting for the end, but especially the generation that precedes the glorious coming of Jesus again.

1. What pressures from society most frustrate your desire to live by the teachings of Jesus?

2. Read 2 Thes. 2. What alarming situation in the church in Thessalonica prompts Paul to address the subject of end times (2 Thes. 2:1-2)?

3. In what ways will the coming of the "man of lawlessness" mean to us as Christians (2 Thes. 2:3-4)?

Where was the "Temple of God?"

4. Suppose the Thessalonians believed the false teaching that the Lord had already come at the Rapture. What would the prospect of encountering the man of lawlessness then mean to them, or to us?

5. In what ways does Paul account for the fact that the full mystery of evil is not yet apparent in the world (2 Thes. 2:5-8)?

6. What is going to happen when the “lawless one” comes according to these verses (2 Thes. 2:8-12)?
  
7. What evidence do we have that this man of sin is not already here?
  
8. Who is “he that will be taken out of the way” according to situation described in the passage?
  
9. What can the Thessalonian believers do to become equipped to stand firm in the face of present and future threats (2 Thes. 2:13-15)?
  
10. How has God prepared as Christians to stand fast?
  
11. Taking this passage as a whole, why should believers not be taken by surprise at the Second Coming of Jesus?
  
12. Knowing what we now do, what actions should you take to live faithfully through the difficult times now and at the end of the last days?