

March 16

Scriptures: Read 2 Thessalonians 2

Key Verse: “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1,2)

Overview

Paul, Silas, and Timothy heard that the Thessalonian church had been “shaken” by the rumour that the Day of the Lord had already come. They wrote this second letter to allay Thessalonian fears and quash the rumour. They state categorically that the “Day will not come unless the falling away [rebellion — NIV] comes first, and the man of sin [man of lawlessness — NIV] is revealed” (v. 3). What they mean has given rise to endless speculation. Over the years, this “lawless” one has been dogmatically identified by would-be interpreters as Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and others. And, of course, all these speculations have been proven dramatically wrong. So a strong caution should be encouraged here — avoid vain speculations.

But what can we gather from these words? First of all, remember that Paul was very well educated in the thought of Judaism, which had been deeply influenced by the apocalyptic writing of Daniel (Dan.9:27; 11:36,37; 12:11). Jesus also knew of Daniel’s warnings (Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14) and had incorporated them into His teaching. Secondly, history had seen the rise of despicable despots with aspirations to deity. In Israel’s past, Antiochus Epiphanes had slaughtered a pig in the Holy of Holies; and just twelve years before 2 Thessalonians was written, Caligula had tried to set up his statue for worship in Jerusalem’s Temple. The “lawless” one would be someone with similar characteristics — someone who would declare himself God. Thirdly, this man and the accompanying “rebellion” are seen as future realities. Paul doesn’t identify the man nor give a date, and neither should we. But we should be warned — the man and the “falling away” are coming.

Prayer

Please read 2 Thess. 2:16 & 17.