

# The Lord Jesus Christ: Coming In Glory

January 30, 2011

Scripture: [2 Thess. 2:8-12](#)

Series: [Staying the Course When You're Tired of The Battle \(5/10\)](#)

By: [Colin Smith](#)

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.

(2 Thessalonians 2:8, NIV)

Here is this man who has not yet come on the scene, the antichrist, in whom human evil will reach its diabolical worst. He will be more powerful and more evil than Hitler or Stalin or Nero or any other person you can think of in the history of the world.

## *How Will the Antichrist be Overthrown?*

### **Christ will blow on him**

Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth... (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

The Son of God will be revealed and he will blow a breath, like a child blowing out a candle. This is how evil is overthrown.

When the Bible speaks about the last battle, Armageddon, don't imagine that this is some titanic struggle in which Jesus barely wins. One breath from Him and all His enemies are overthrown—that's sovereign power:

The wicked... are like chaff that the wind blows away. (Psalm 1:4)

[God]...reduces the rulers of this world to nothing... he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. (Isaiah 40:23-24)

Do not fret because of evil men... for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. (Psalm 37:1-2)

Do you see how wonderful this is? What a wonderful glimpse of the sovereign power of Jesus, and He is your Savior!

### ***Christ will blind him***

Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will... destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Saul of Tarsus is a man who makes things happen, a mover and a shaker, a man who's going to the town of Damascus to make his mark. Suddenly he is stopped in his tracks, and he's lying helpless on the road. Why? The splendor of the risen Christ appears to him, and he can't move or see.

Earlier this month there was a partial solar eclipse<sup>1</sup> (the moon passing between the sun and the earth<sup>2</sup>) that was visible from much of Europe, North Africa, and central Asia.

I enjoyed an article in the *London Times* that began by saying that the weather forecast was for clouds over Britain, so there wasn't much chance of seeing it there. Typical!

Nevertheless, the government issued a warning—obviously concerned that the sun might actually be visible in some parts of the country!

While clouds are likely to obscure the partial solar eclipse this morning, doctors have warned that looking directly at it in clear spells, even for seconds, will cause permanent eye damage.<sup>3</sup>

The brightness of the sun is so great that it would blind you to look at it for just a few seconds. If that is what the splendor of the sun could do to me by looking at it for a few seconds, what then is the splendor of the Lord who made it?

"The Lord Jesus, will destroy [the antichrist] by the splendor of His coming" (2:8). This Lord is your Savior! Does this not make you glad that you are His?

Remember, this chapter is about "wisdom for discerning the battle." To prevail in any battle, you need to know what you are up against. Last week we looked at the battle we face as Christians—the root of sin remains in us. That is why we experience this inner conflict, a conflict that will continue until Christ ends it by bringing us into his presence.

Today, we'll look at the mystery of sin in the life of an *unbeliever*. What does this secret power look like in the life of your unbelieving friend, relative or neighbor? This person does not see anything of the splendor of the Christ and does not yet have the life of Christ in his or her soul.

This is of huge importance for this reason: What you believe about sin will shape your convictions about missions and evangelism. How we engage in this work, and what we think needs to be done, will in large measure be shaped by what we believe the human problem really is.

Someone told me a few weeks ago that he was witnessing to a colleague at work. He said, "You know, Colin, this guy lives like the devil, but he is good at heart." I said, "Well now,

wait a minute. How can he be good at heart if he lives like the devil? Surely if he lives like the devil, there must be something wrong with his heart!"

What does sin do in the life of an unbeliever? Jesus said:

Out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality... greed, malice... envy... arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean' (Mark 7:21-23).

Sin is a secret power, working in the soul. These verses give us a devastating analysis of its power and its effect. We've seen what sin *is*, now we will discover what sin *does*.

## *Seven Bitter Fruits of Sin*

This is what sin produces in a person's life. This is what sin *does*:

### **1. Deception**

Every sort of evil that deceives... (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

Notice what the Scripture says, "evil... deceives." Satan makes sin look attractive. This is the nature of sin; it always does that.

Some sin will disgust you. You will wonder to yourself, "How could anyone do that?" But some forms of sin will be attractive to you. That is where Satan deceives, and it goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

### **2. Perishing**

Evil that deceives those who are perishing. (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

Notice the present tense. There is a theme that runs right through the life of a person who is without Jesus Christ. There is an unraveling of life that is going on now, a taking down, a becoming less. This is a process that has already begun. By nature we are perishing.

### **3. Refusal to love the truth**

They perish because they refused to love the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

These people heard the truth and they refused to believe it. But the real issue here is that they refused to *love* it. The heart governs the life more than the head. The greatest barrier to faith lies not in the doubts of the mind but in the desires of the heart.

Long ago, I heard the story of an atheist who visited an old church. On one wall were written the words of the creed. On the other wall were written the words of the Ten Commandments.

The atheist looked at the creed and he said to the pastor, "This I cannot believe." The pastor pointed to the commandments on the other wall and said, "Are you sure it isn't these you will not obey?" The root of unbelief lies not in the head but in the heart.

#### **4. Delight in wickedness**

All will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

"Delight[ing] in wickedness" is the explanation of "not believ[ing] the truth." Where the heart loves wickedness, the mind cannot embrace the truth. It's impossible! Jesus said, "How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from... God?" (John 5:44).

#### **5. Powerful delusion**

For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion. (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

The reason is that they refused to love the truth. This is looking down the line of what happens when a person persists in resisting and pushing Christ away. Here are folks who've heard the truth and they've refused it.

You cannot get away from God's activity here, "God sends..." God gives them what they desire. They do not want the truth, and so now they're unable to receive it.

I want to press home on all who've not yet received Christ, the danger of continuing to refuse Him. As you hear the Word, some of you are putting off a response to Jesus, "I'll become a Christian later. I'll respond to God in my own time." Even right now you would push away Jesus Christ.

You say, "I can become a Christian later," but you may not be able to. The secret power of sin is at work in you. That's why the Bible says repeatedly, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15). Warren Wiersbe says it well:

The human heart becomes harder each time the sinner rejects God's truth.<sup>4</sup>

You feel Him reaching out to you and you're pushing Him away. Every time you hear the Word of God something happens in your soul. The Word of God that you are hearing today will make you softer or it will make you more resistant to Christ. It never leaves you the same.

Jesus said, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you” (John 12:35). Sinners refuse to love the truth and down the line they end up with a delusion, and they can no longer see what they used to see.

This is how God’s judgment works in this world. God gives sinners what they want. That is why a life of resisting God and running from God ends up in an eternity apart from God—in the darkness, with the God-haters, outside the light and the joy of His presence.

## **6. Faith in the lie**

God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.  
(2 Thessalonians 2:11)

“The lie” goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Satan said, “You will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). “You’re a good person. You don’t need Christ’s sacrifice. You can work it out yourself.”

When a man feels that he is the captain and commander of his own life, that he is his own god, his own law and that he can stand on the merits of his own goodness, you know that he has swallowed the lie. He is living under a powerful delusion.

## **7. Condemnation**

All will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

This is a terrible word. Don’t you shudder when you hear the word, “condemnation?” We rejoice in the word that says, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

But the reason that has meaning for us is found right here: “All will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2:12). To those who have resisted the claims of the Savior, who have not loved the truth, but have believed the lie, Christ will say, “Depart from me I never knew you” (Matthew 7:3).

Then Jesus used an awful phrase, “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30). Did you know that Jesus said that phrase seven times? I do not want that for you. Those who pray for you do not want that for you.

These are the seven bitter fruits of sin: 1. Deception, 2. Perishing, 3. Refusal to love the truth, 4. Delight in wickedness, 5. Powerful delusion, 6. Faith in the lie, and ultimately 7. Condemnation.

That's why we need a Savior. That's why Jesus Christ has come into the world. This is what we need saving from—the mystery of sin that is at work in every human life. Every time you push Christ away, you add another layer to the hard shell of your resistance to Christ.

## *Three Ways to Use This Massive Truth*

Use this truth...

### **a. ...to mature beyond naïve optimism about the human condition.**

Years ago back in England, Karen and I were enjoying an evening with some good friends who served alongside us in the church. We were playing a game where one person secretly answers a question, and then the rest of the group has to try and guess their answer.

The question was, “By nature, are people good at heart, bad at heart or somewhere in between?” The answer our friend chose was, “By nature, people are good at heart.” We had some good conversation about it, but I still remember how distressed I was driving home.

I'd been preaching the Bible in this church for 10 years and one of our closest friends, who loves Christ, attends church every week, is deeply engaged in ministry and reads the Bible, believes that by nature people are good at heart. How is this possible?

Many Christians are utterly unrealistic about what we are up against when it comes to missions and evangelism. That may be one reason why we are often weak on prayer.

### **b. ...to shape your convictions about missions and evangelism.**

What you believe about the secret power of sin will shape your convictions about missions and evangelism.

People who have an optimistic view of human nature tend to have an unrealistic view of missions and evangelism. There's the informational view: “All we need to do is tell them.” There's the friendship view: “All we need to do is love them.” There's the environmental view: “All we need to do is connect them.” If Johnny has good friends, Johnny will be a good boy. All these things are necessary, but none of them are sufficient.

The fruits of sin are such that the salvation of your son or daughter, your colleague or neighbor can only be accomplished by a miracle of grace. The breath of Christ, the splendor of Christ is the only thing that's going to overwhelm this spirit that's at work in him or her. This is why missions and evangelism must have at its center—proclaiming Christ's splendor, praying for Christ's breath.

This is why the Apostles said, whatever else goes on in the church, we must give ourselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer (Acts 6:4).

Proclaiming Christ's splendor! Praying for His breath! That has to be the priority for every pastor, every missionary, every evangelist and for every Christian who wants to see sinners won to Jesus Christ. I do not say that it is the only thing; it is the central thing.

Here's what I have to do in my preaching, and here's what you have to do in your witnessing: Proclaim His splendor. Try to explain why Jesus Christ is compelling to you. Jesus said, "When I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32), so lift him up!

Don't attack another person's lifestyle. That's not the way to do it. Lift up Jesus. Exalt Him. Commend Him. Tell people what you have found in Him. The way to overcome the mystery of sin is to proclaim the mystery of Christ.

"God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). So, Paul says, "We proclaim him..." (Colossians 1:28). As you proclaim Him, pray for His breath. Pray that Christ will give life to this person, that he will breathe the breath of his life into them.

Proclaiming Christ's splendor, praying for Christ's breath—that's the heart of New Testament missions and evangelism. Anything less would be like treating cancer with an aspirin.

### **c. ...to deepen your gratitude for the miracle of your salvation**

To all of you who love Christ, and believe in him today: Do you see yourself as a person in whom a miracle of grace has taken place? If you truly love Christ today, that is true of you.

Your story may be very simple. Mine is. I asked Christ to be my Savior at the age of six. I began to love Him and trust Him then, and with all my faults and failings, I love and trust Him today. That is a miracle of grace.

Where would the secret power of sin have taken me if it were not for His grace? Where would you be today? With all the contradictions that are in you still, why do you still love the truth and why do you believe the truth?

Answer: Christ has breathed his life into you. Christ opened your eyes to see his splendor. That is why you follow him. This is a miracle of grace, and it has happened in you! Never underestimate it.

My last word must be to the person today who says, "That hasn't happened to me." You need a miracle of grace. You need a new heart. You need a work of the Holy Spirit in your soul that will change what you love, and open your eyes to see the glory of Christ.

Having Christian friends won't do this for you. Reading and learning about Christianity won't do that for you. You need Christ to breathe his life into your soul and to open your

eyes to the glory of his splendor. You need him to bring you to the place where, like the first disciples, you know, “The best thing I can do with my life is to follow him.”

So I invite you to come to Christ today, not to push him away. Tell Him, “I need you, Jesus, to do for me what I now know I cannot do for myself.” Ask him, “Lord, will you breathe your life into me? Will you open my eyes to your glory? Will you change this heart that loves sin and resists you? Do this miracle of grace in me!”

And I give you this promise from Jesus Himself. He said, “Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away” (John 6:37).

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News, “*Partial Solar Eclipse Clouded Over in UK*,” January 4, 2011  
The next partial eclipse visible from the UK—in 2015, the next total eclipse—in 2090  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12109329>

<sup>2</sup> A *solar* eclipse (the moon passes between the sun and the earth so that all or part of the sun is hidden from our view) is different from a *lunar* eclipse (when the earth passes between the sun and the moon, blocking the sun’s light from reaching the moon).  
<http://www.mreclipse.com/Special/LEprimer.html>

<sup>3</sup> “*Solar Eclipse Warning*,” London Times, January 3, 2011

<sup>4</sup> Warren Wiersbe, Be Ready (series), “*1 & 2 Thessalonians*,” p. 153