**The church in Thessalonica was under attack. We do not have any specific history, but Paul’s writing makes it clear that they were being subjected to “persecutions and tribulations” (Chapter 1 verse 4). In Chapter 1, Paul offered them prayers for God’s grace and peace. He also offered them HOPE, in the form of the promise of our Lord’s return.**

**The Thessalonians wanted to hear more – specifically WHEN the Lord would return. In his first letter he had told them that the Lord’s return would be unannounced and sudden – like a thief in the night. Now he was prepared to tell them more, but still without setting a date. In this chapter, Paul describes two great events that would take place before Jesus’ return. The first has to do with the church: a “falling away”, which had already begun but would reach great proportions. The second would be the appearance of a person whom he calls “the man of sin”. We will go into some detail trying to understand this person more fully.**

**Our former president has made popular the term “The Big Lie”. Paul associates this term with the appearance of the man of sin and the return of Jesus Christ. Like the former president, the man of sin will powerfully and persuasively convince millions of people of the biggest lie of all.**

1. **Read II Thessalonians 2:1-5. Why was Paul concerned about the Thessalonian saints? What were they hearing? (v. 1-2)**
2. **What were the three possible sources of this “misinformation”? (v.2) Answer: It had come to them by , , or . (See also Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:29-30; II Peter 2:1-3; Jude 1:4)**
3. **What is Paul’s prayer and command for the church? (v. 3) Answer: Paul says, “Let no man you by any means.” (See also Matthew 24:2-5, 24; Galatians 6:7-8; Ephesians 5:3-7; II John 1:6-7)**
4. **Have you ever been deceived? How did you feel about it? What did you learn from the experience?**
5. **What TWO events will precede, or happen before, the return of Jesus Christ? (v. 3)**

**Falling Away**

**The phrase “falling away” is the English translation of the Greek word *apostasia*, which means “defection from the truth”. We get the English word “apostasy” from this, which means the same thing. For Christians, it means to reject Jesus as Savior and Lord – the exact opposite of salvation. There are three basic sources for Christians to turn away from Jesus:**

* **TEMPTATIONS to SIN (repeatedly and unashamedly), especially in matters of worship and/or moral conduct (See I Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5-7);**
* **DECEPTIONS caused by accepting false teachings or beliefs – heresies (See Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24; Romans 16:17-18; II Corinthians 11:13-15; II Peter 2:1-3; Jude 1:4);**
* **PERSECUTIONS, especially those that try to force Christians to deny their faith or face sufferings and death (Acts 26:9-11; II Corinthians 11:24-27; Hebrews 11:35-38).**

**The “Man of Sin”**

**The falling away will be followed by the appearance of the “man of sin”, a term that Paul uses to describe the person that the apostle John calls the Antichrist (I John 2:18, 22) and the beast (Revelation 13:18). This “man of sin” will be indwelt and energized by Satan himself and will lead a world-wide rebellion against God. In sharp contrast to our Lord, who spread the message of salvation, forgiveness and love, the man of sin will spread a message of pride and hatred. Jesus came to serve; the man of sin comes to rule and be worshipped. He will gain a world-wide following by his power of speech (as the prophet Daniel foretold) as well as “signs and wonders” that establish his supernatural power – but their source is satanic (Daniel 7:7-12, 16-26; Revelation 13:1-7, 13-14).**

1. **How else does Paul describe the “man of sin” in verse 3? Answer: Paul describes him as the of (Greek *apoleia* – destruction, ruin or loss) See also John 17:12; II Peter 3:7)**
2. **What does this “man of sin” attempt to do? Does this remind you of someone else? (v.4-5) Hint: Read Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-16**
3. **Read verses 6-12. This passage tells us more about the “man of sin”. Why had he not yet appeared (two reasons)? (v. 6-7)**
4. **What other name is given to the “man of sin”, and what kind of things will he do when he is finally allowed to appear? (v.8-9) See also Exodus 7:19-22; 8:5-7, 16-19; Revelation 13:11-15, 16:13-14**
5. **How will his “reign of terror” end? (v. 8) See also Revelation 19:11-21**

1. **Sadly, many people will share the awful fate of the “man of sin”. Who are they, and why do they follow this wicked leader? What did they believe? (v. 10-12) See also Romans 1:18-32; Revelation 20:11-15**
2. **Read verses 13-14. Paul turns from the “man of sin” and those who follow him, to the Thessalonian believers. What does he call them? Who “chose” them to be saved? How should this make you feel? (v. 13) See John 15:16-19; I Corinthians 1:26-31; Ephesians 1:3-6**
3. **Who called us into the church, and by what means? (v.14) Romans 1:16; II Timothy 1:7-11**
4. **Read verses 15-17. What TWO things does Paul exhort (strongly encourage or urge) the Thessalonians to do? Hebrews 6:13-15; Hebrews 12:1-7; James 5:10-11; I Peter 2:19**
5. **What is the source of the “traditions” onto which the Thessalonians were encouraged to hold? What are some other sources of church traditions? Do we need to hold on to them too? See Mark 7:5-13; James 2:1-4**
6. **Paul ends this chapter with a benediction. What THREE THINGS had God ALREADY DONE for the Thessalonians (and us)? (v. 16)**
7. **What will God CONTINUE DOING for the Thessalonians (and us)? (v. 17)**

**Conclusion**

**“What’s this world coming to?” Then, as now people look at current events and wonder how things could get much worse. Then, as now many Christians took the bad times as a sign of the Lord’s imminent return. The persecutions of the Thessalonian believers made them wish for this day. Unfortunately, some of them had been misled to believe that it was already here. Some had believed this so sincerely that they stopped their everyday living. Paul wrote this letter to correct their thinking. In this chapter, he told the Thessalonians that before Jesus’ return, there was a “man of sin” coming who would bring destruction and eternal judgement on all of those who would believe his lies. He would go so far as to proclaim himself to be equal to God. This wicked one has not yet appeared, thanks to the restraining power of our Lord. But God has appointed a time for him to be revealed.**

**In His great “Olivet Discourse”, Jesus warned His disciples to not allow themselves to be deceived by the “false Christs and false prophets” that would come before His return (Matthew Chapter 24). Sadly, today all over this world, there are false messiahs who have tricked people into believing that the time has come, and that total obedience to their teaching and leadership is the only way to survive. In doing so, these unfortunate disciples have “fallen away” from the genuine faith.**

**The third and last chapter of this short letter shifts from the prophetic future to the practical present. Paul deals with those in the church at Thessalonica who had stopped working (expecting the Lord’s return) and were now expecting the church to support them. Personal productivity and church discipline are the main themes of this chapter.**