

**The Man of Sin  
in Second Thessalonians**



**by  
Rev. Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel  
Lee**

**Professor of Systematic Theology  
and  
Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church  
History**

**Queensland Presbyterian Theological  
College,  
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# The Man of Sin in Second Thessalonians

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At midnight there was a cry...Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.  
(Matthew 25: 6,7)

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## **Publisher's Comment**

The daily reading below is an excerpt from Dr. Lee's multi-volume work "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" -- which examines every Bible text of eschatological significance from Genesis through Revelation. That is why the footnotes in this excerpt run from notes 3907 to 3949.

Val W. Finnell, MD  
President  
The Historicism Research Foundation

Second Thessalonians 1 & 2

"Don't soon be shaken in mind...as if the Day of Christ is present! Let nobody by any means deceive you! For it shall in no way come -- except first the falling away; and the man of sin [or lawlessness] be unveiled, the son of perdition.... The lawless one shall be unveiled, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His Mouth.... May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself...keep on strengthening your hearts...in every good word and work!"<sup>3907</sup>

Even after Paul's *First Epistle to the Thessalonians* was received and read by those Christians, their problems were not allayed completely. For their persecutions and tribulations continued.<sup>3908</sup> Indeed, over the next decades and centuries, such tribulations would sometimes recur.

At times, the Thessalonian Christians no doubt feared that any additional persecution would be unbearable. Consequently, some of them understandably yet **erroneously began to believe and to hope that the specific persecution they were then enduring, would be the last** -- and that the Lord Jesus would come at any moment in Final Judgment of the wicked and thus spare those tested Christians from any further and worse tribulation.<sup>3909</sup>

For this reason, Paul found it necessary to write to the Thessalonian Christians a *Second Epistle* -- shortly after sending them the *First Epistle*. Hopefully, the first had convinced them that there would be no rapture of the saints from out of this wicked World -- and no History which would thereafter continue among the wicked on an all-evil Earth.

But now in his *Second Epistle*, he thought it imperative to explain to the Thessalonian Christians very clearly -- that they should **not even expect a soon return of Christ at all**. Instead, **they** should **now** rather **work hard and long** to advance **His Kingdom** right **here** on **Earth** -- even in spite of numerous then-increasing persecutions.

In this *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*, written in about A.D. 51 soon after the *First Epistle*, Paul does at least three things. First, amid the persecution and tribulation of the Christian Church in Thessalonica -- he stresses the **certainty** of the ultimate and **far-future Final Coming** of the Lord. Second, he explained the **nature** of the **increasing opposition** to the Gospel -- which the Christian Church would ultimately overcome **before** Christ would come in

Final Judgment. And third, he indicated how the Church would victoriously overcome that opposition -- even amid tribulation.

The first point concerns the certainty of the far-future Final Coming of the Lord. Paul complimented the Thessalonian Christians that their "faith keeps on growing exceedingly" and that their charity "toward each other keeps on abounding" -- even in the midst of "all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure."<sup>3909</sup> But the Apostle also hastened to explain that these Thessalonian Christians' God-given patience should and would make all their afflictions endurable and worthwhile -- because it was certain that Jesus will one day come back to this Earth.

He would vindicate His cause both in repeated temporal judgments during History -- and in Final Judgment at the very end of History. He would do so, especially "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven together with His mighty Angels"<sup>3910</sup> -- finally, at the end of History. For "it is a righteous thing with God to pay back tribulation to them who keep on troubling you; and [to pay back] to you who are troubled, rest" from trouble.

So although the tribulation would continue for the Christians in Thessalonica and in Jerusalem and elsewhere during the then-immediate future, it would finally be terminated altogether -- for God's elect. But then, "tribulation" and indeed even the wrath of God would be meted out in earnest on the reprobate -- "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven together with His mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not acknowledge God, and on on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, away from the presence of the Lord, and away from the glory of His power -- when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe (because our testimony among you was believed), in that Day."<sup>3911</sup>

Indeed, on that Great Day, God will "pay back tribulation to those who trouble you. And to you who are being troubled, [He will reward you with] rest, together with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven."<sup>3912</sup>

The second point concerns the nature of the increasing opposition to the Gospel -- which the Christian Church would ultimately overcome before Christ would come in Final Judgment. This opposition would come from both Judaists and Gentiles. For the persecution the Thessalonian Christians were then suffering, especially from Judaists but also from Gentiles, would not soon end.

To the contrary, it would first even **increase in intensity**.<sup>3913</sup> Indeed, the "Day of Christ" -- that is, not only the coming of the Millennium but also the Final Day of the Lord (which terminates all tribulation for all Christians everywhere) -- was still in the then-far-distant future.<sup>3913</sup>

Furthermore, the visible Final Coming of Christ **could not** take place -- until quite some time **after** the arrival "**first**": (a) of "**the** falling away" (or "**hee** apostasia"); (b) of the subsequent unveiling of the "man of sin" [or 'man of lawlessness']; and (c) of Christ's later consuming "the lawless one...with the Spirit of His mouth"<sup>3914</sup> (by Christians proclaiming His Spirit's Word). Hopefully it does not need to be demonstrated that **the** "apostasia" is a great "**ethical** falling away **downwards**"; and **not** a "**physical** rapture **upwards**"!

It should be noted that "**the** falling away" is **never stated to be a falling away** of **baptized** people **from Christianity**. **Initially**, it could very possibly be the then "falling away" of circumcised though Christ-rejecting **Jews** from Jesus Christ as the one-and-only promised "Minister of the **circumcision** for the truth of God in order to confirm the promises made to the fathers."<sup>3914</sup> Thus: Whitby; Vitringa; Westcott & Hort; Warfield; and Boettner.

That would certainly agree with the known facts of the first-century Judaistic apostasy from the True Religion of the Older Testament. And it would also agree with the known fact of first-century apostate Judaism's vicious persecution of Christianity as the one-and-only orthodox continuation of the True Religion of the Older Testament. For Paul warned the Thessalonian Christians that it would apparently be some time **after** "the falling away" of the Judaists from the True Religion of the Older Testament -- yet long **before** the visible and Final Return of Christ at the Last Judgment -- that the "man of sin" or "man of lawlessness" would be unveiled.

Paul gave an urgent warning to the Thessalonian Christians. Said he: "We beseech you, brethren, by the presence [or **coming**]<sup>3907</sup> of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering **together unto** Him, that you **don't** soon be shaken in mind or be troubled (either by spirit or by word or by letter from us) -- **as if the Day of Christ is present**;<sup>3913</sup> or even 'nearby' or 'close at hand.'

"Let nobody by any means deceive you! For it **shall in no way (ean mee) come** -- **except** first **the** falling away; and **the man of sin [or lawlessness] be unveiled**." Such is "the son of perdition, who keeps on opposing and keeps on

exalting himself against all that is called God or is worshipped -- so that he like a god **keeps on going into the temple of God to be seated [or enthroned] there**, claiming to be divine [or while claiming to reign in the place of God or to represent God]. **Don't you remember** that when I was still with you -- **I told you these things?**

"And now, **you know what keeps on holding back** [the unveiling of the man of sin or lawlessness], **so that he might be unveiled at his time.** For the mystery of lawlessness [of the man of sin or lawlessness] **already keeps on working.**

"Only, **he who now keeps on holding back** [the unveiling of the man of sin or lawlessness -- will keep on holding back] until he [who keeps on holding him back] be out of the way. **And then shall the lawless one be unveiled**, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the manifestation of His presence -- him whose presence is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them who perish -- because they did not receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved."<sup>3914</sup>

Now this "man of sin" or "man of lawlessness" would be unveiled some time after Paul wrote his *Second Epistle* to the Thessalonian Christians in **A.D. 51**. But what power would falsely claim to be divine (or to represent God) -- yet itself be destroyed by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth and with the manifestation of His presence?

We answer this question in four stages, showing the following. First, this "man of sin" was **already** embryonically present when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 51 A.D. Second, the "man of sin" would only begin to persecute Christians in earnest **after** another equally well-known power (a restraining power that kept on holding back the unveiling of the man of sin) had been removed. Third, the "man of sin" in its initial phases is altogether compatible with its identification as the power of Heathen Rome. Fourth, **Heathen Rome** was only the start but not at all the end of the development of "the man of sin" -- for it is clear that **Pagan Rome** would be succeeded by **Papal Rome** in its place.<sup>3937</sup>

First. This "man of sin" or lawlessness was **already** embryonically present while Paul was writing to the Thessalonians in 51 A.D. For, wrote Paul, even then the secret of evil alias "the mystery of lawlessness already keeps on working."<sup>3915</sup>

Indeed, Paul had **already told** the Thessalonians about

these things when he was previously with them in A.D. 49 while the Church was being established there amid persecution.<sup>3916</sup> This helps identify the "man of sin" or lawlessness -- at least in his first phases -- as **the antinomian human head of the Pagan Roman Empire** that was still spreading out during that first century A.D.

It had indeed been the unbelieving apostates or the "fallen away" Thessalonian **Judaists**, who had initially stirred up the thug element among the unbelieving Thessalonian Gentiles -- against Jason and his fellow-believers. Yet the Judaistic indictment against the Thessalonian Christians had nevertheless been that all Christians had "turned the [**Roman**] World upside down"; and that they "all act contrarily to the decrees of **Caesar**, saying that there is another king -- one Jesus." As a result of that indictment, "the rulers of the city [being agents of the **Roman Emperor**], when they heard these things," took "security from Jason." Acts 17:5-7.

Paul never failed **openly to denounce** the unbelieving **Judaists** as the **chief** opponents of the Christian religion -- at that time. He could do so, because the Judaists had no direct political power,<sup>3918</sup> especially outside of Judaea. But Paul **did hesitate openly to identify** the Heathen Roman Empire as the (then-soon-future) great opponent of Christianity.<sup>3919</sup> For that would then have invited direct and widespread persecution of Christians everywhere.

Second. This already-present "man of sin" would only begin to persecute the Thessalonian Christians in earnest **after** another equally well-known power had been removed -- the factor of "fallen away" or apostate Judaism. It was apostate Judaism which "held back" the **full** unveiling of the "man of sin" in his first phases. For that "man of sin" would not be unveiled **fully**, until apostate Judaism was first "out of the way"; removed from the Jerusalem temple precincts;<sup>3914</sup> and indeed thereafter threatened



with deprivation of its status as a permitted religion alias a *religio licita* throughout the Roman Empire.

As Paul told the **first-century Thessalonian Christians**:  
"And now, **you know** what keeps on holding back" the unveiling of the man of sin and the son of perdition who will keep on going into the temple of God to be enthroned there. He "will be seated there, while claiming to be divine."<sup>3920</sup> Indeed, there he will "be unveiled -- at his time.

"For the mystery of lawlessness [of the man of sin] **already** keeps on working. Only, he who now keeps on holding back [the **full** unveiling of the man of sin -- will keep on holding back], until he [who keeps on holding him back] be out of the midst [initially also of the Jerusalem temple]. And **then** shall the lawless one be unveiled."<sup>3921</sup>

It is submitted then, that (in the first instance) the real restraining or "withholding" factor holding back **early Roman** persecution of Christians -- was the (state-protected) status which Judaism then enjoyed throughout the Roman Empire **until** the A.D. 66-70 destruction of Jerusalem after a three-and-a-half years' long siege by the pagan Romans. That commenced just sixteen years after Paul was writing his *Second Epistle* to the Thessalonians. As long as Judaism was tolerated by the Romans, **Christianity appeared to the Roman authorities to be little more than a new sect of Judaism itself.**<sup>3922</sup>

Before 66.5 A.D., Christianity was therefore **tolerated by the Romans.**<sup>3923</sup> Yet it was not then tolerated by the apostate or "fallen away" Judaistic leaders. They persecuted Christians whenever they could; and they would soon incite the A.D. 54f Pagan Roman Emperor Nero and his Judaistic wife Poppaea Sabina against the Christians in 64 A.D.<sup>3924</sup>

However, after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when the Roman power destroyed that rebellious city -- Judaism ceased to be 'in the midst' of Jerusalem.<sup>3925</sup> Then Rome herself -- in the person of her General the later Emperor Titus -- actually went and sat in that temple of God in Jerusalem, and claimed to be divine (before destroying that temple).<sup>3926</sup>

However, even **after** that -- Christianity nevertheless continued to expand quite independently of shattered Judaism. This caused the Roman power (quite correctly) to cease regarding Christianity merely as a Jewish sect. Henceforth, Pagan Rome would (correctly) regard Christianity as the ever-expanding nemesis which would challenge and ultimately destroy the very basis even of the mighty Pagan Roman Empire itself.

As soon as Pagan Rome realized this, it was obvious her Emperors would at least sometimes viciously persecute Christianity just because it is Christianity -- and viciously persecute Christians just because they are Christians. For Pagan Rome would then rightly regard Christianity as a direct threat to the continuing existence of the Heathen Roman Empire itself.<sup>3923</sup>

Third. The description of the initial phases of the "man of sin" soon to be unveiled even to the A.D. 51f Thessalonian Christians -- is altogether compatible with its identification as the Heathen Roman power.<sup>3927</sup> For this power would fully be unveiled precisely after "the falling away first."

This falling away was **important**. For it is called "**the** apostasy." We are not told it would be a falling away of **Christians from Christianity**. Such would be impossible -- for: 'once saved; always saved.' Yet it would indeed be **the** apostasy -- somewhat like the falling away of the unsaved first-century Judaistic leaders from the Biblical and Christian teachings of the Older Testament.<sup>3928</sup> Indeed, such in fact **foreshadowed** "**the** apostasy" which would occur later -- when a **papalizing Church** would fall away from true **Christianity** (viz. from the teaching of both the Older and the Newer Testaments of the infallible Word of God).

Now the "man of sin" to be unveiled after the "taking out of the way" of Judaism as the withholding agent -- would be the "son of perdition" or the great destroyer. This corresponds to Daniel's fourth or Roman Empire or Beast,<sup>3929</sup> which would ultimately itself go into "perdition."<sup>3930</sup> But before its own destruction, this Roman Beast would first oppose every other religion -- while demanding the worship of the Heathen Roman State itself.<sup>3931</sup>

Even as Paul was writing to the Thessalonians, the Roman Beast would soon sit in the temple of God in Jerusalem and claim to be divine (as Heathen Rome did in 70 A.D.).<sup>3932</sup> And this Roman Beast, essentially wicked, would come and make its appearance there "according to the working of Satan,<sup>3934</sup> with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish -- because they [who perish] did not receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved."<sup>3935</sup> Instead, they rather received the mark of the Roman Beast (to avoid persecution) -- and so ended up by being damned.<sup>3936</sup>

Fourth. Although (in that apostolic period A.D. 49-70f) **Heathen Rome** was obviously the **beginning** of this development -- it was **not** the **end** of the development of "the man of sin." For it is clear<sup>3937</sup> that **pagan Rome** would in

time be succeeded by **Papal Rome** in its place.

Either way, the 'man of sin' would keep on going into the "temple of God" alias the **Church** -- **to be seated [or enthroned] there** and, cunningly, keep on claiming to represent "God" and thus to be in His place. Thus the Early Patristic Fathers; John Calvin; the *Dordt Dutch Bible*; and Matthew Henry *etc.*

So, in his *Theme of the Second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians*, Dr. John Calvin states that Paul "disproves a...fanciful belief about the **imminent** return of Christ.... He does so by arguing that **first** there must come **apostasy** in the **Church**, and a great part of the **World** turn from God in faithlessness. Indeed, **Antichrist** must reign in the **temple of God.**"

**Now never since** 70 A.D. could the man of sin enter the old "fallen down" Judaistic "temple of God" in Jerusalem. But he did keep on entering into the new "fallen away" **Papal** "temple" later headquartered in Rome, to sit enthroned **there**. Too, many of the Pre-Reformers identified precisely the **Papacy** as **Antichrist**. Thus: the Waldensians; Eberhard of Salzburg; John Milicx; John Wycliffe; Walter Brute; Jan Huss; and Girolimo Savonarola.

So too **all** of the Reformers without exception were **Protestant Historicists**, who denounced the **Papacy** as **Antichrist**. Thus: Luther; the *Articles of Smalcald* (II:4); Melancthon; Osiander; Flaccius Illyricus; Nigrinus; Chytraeus; Funck; Zwingli; Calvin; Bullinger; Beza; Tyndale; Knox's *Geneva Bible*; and Cranmer. So too: Pareus; James I; Mede; the *Preamble to the Decrees of Dordt*; the *Dordt Dutch Bible*; Thomas Goodwin; the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:6); Gerhard; Jurieu; Alsted; Turretin; John Brown of Haddington; Whitby; Sir Isaac Newton; Gill; Thomas Newton; Matthew Henry; Wesley; Bengel; Adam Clarke; Albert Barnes; James Denney; and many others.

Howling in rage at this denunciation, the **Romish Preterists** then countered by alleging that not their later Papacy but precisely the A.D 54-68 Pagan-Roman Emperor Nero was the antichristian 'man of sin' in Second Thessalonians. Sadly, certain inconsistent Protestants today agree with this.

There were, of course, antichristian **seeds** in Nero. Too, it is evident that even Papal Rome has been followed by some Post-Papal 'Neo-Roman' **fruits** (such as the 'Treaty of Rome' European Common Market, and perhaps soon even the pride of a new Euro-dominated international trade area) -- which might falsely claim 'divine' power.

Significantly, this is exactly what the **world humanistic system** is more and more doing precisely at the advent of what sinful mankind thinks is **its** millennium. Yet it is in fact still our **Christ's** third millennium -- **A.D!**<sup>3938</sup> The **error** of **Dispensationalistic Futurists**, however, lies in **divorcing** all this -- from its **ongoing papal engine**.

**Early Church Fathers** like Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian of Carthage, Hippolytus of Portus, Lactantius of Gaul, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hilary of Potiers, John Chrysostom of Constantinople, Jerome of Bethlehem, Augustine of Hippo-Regius -- not to mention also the Mediaeval Fathers Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Primasius of Hadrumetum and Remigius of Rheims and Theophylact of Achrida -- were neither Preterists nor Futurists. Like all the later Protestant Reformers, they too were all **Historicists**. Indeed, they identified **Antichrist** as a **mediaeval (religious) tyrant**, to **arise on the ruins** of the **Roman Empire** (as the **former withholding agent**).

Thus the A.D. 185 Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* V:25-30) affirms that "**Antichrist**" would be the 'man of sin' and 'the lawless one' of Second Thessalonians. This describes what would occur at the **dismemberment** of the **Roman Empire** as the Fourth Kingdom predicted in Daniel 7:8-23f & 8:12-23. "**Lateinos** has the number '666'; and it is **very probable** this is the name of the Last Kingdom. For **the Latins** are they who **at present** bear rule.... Yet we will not incur the **risk** of pronouncing positively as to the **name** of **Antichrist**."

Around 190f Tertullian (on the later unveiling of the 'man of sin'), says in his *Apology* (ch. 32): "We know that a mighty shock impending over the whole Earth...is retarded only by the continued existence of the Roman Empire." In his *Resurrection of the Flesh* (ch. 24), he implies that is what 'holds back' the unveiling of the 'man of sin' which must first itself 'be out of the way.' "What obstacle is there, but **the Roman State**, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce **Antichrist** upon its ruins?" Tertullian thus foresaw that the [Romish] **Antichrist** would **arise** -- upon the then-future "**ruins**" of "the **Roman state**" of his own day.

The A.D. 220f Hippolytus said in his *Scholia on Daniel* (7:7-19): "That there has arisen no other kingdom after that of the Greeks except that [**Roman Empire**] which stands sovereign at **present**, is manifest to **all**.... >From it **will** spring ten horns.... Now we ought to look for the **ten horns** which are **to spring** from it **when** the time of the Beast shall be fulfilled and the **Little Horn** which is **Antichrist** shall appear suddenly in their midst, and righteousness

shall be banished from the Earth.... The things will come to pass.... These things also shall certainly be fulfilled....

"It is...the Fourth Kingdom...from which also ten horns are to spring.... Amid these, another Little Horn shall rise, which is that of Antichrist. And it shall pluck up by the roots the three others before it...with the view of acquiring for itself Universal Dominion. And, after conquering the remaining seven horns -- it will at last begin, inflated by a strange and wicked spirit, to stir up war against the saints and to persecute all everywhere with the aim of being glorified by all and being worshipped as God."

Hippolytus adds in his *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* (28 & 48-50): "The legs of iron and the beast dreadful and terrible [in Daniel chapters two and seven] expressed the **Romans**, who hold the sovereignty at **present**. The [ten] toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of the kingdoms that are yet to rise. The **other little horn** that grows up among them, meant the Antichrist in their midst....

"John [in Revelation 13:11f]...speaks thus: 'Then I beheld **Another Beast** coming up out of the earth. Now he had two horns, like a lamb; but he spoke like a dragon.... The words 'he exercises all the power of the First Beast before him'...signify that, after the manner of the law of Augustus, by whom the Empire of Rome was established -- he too will rule and govern, sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself. For this is the Fourth Beast, whose head was wounded and healed again.... With respect to his name [the name of the **Other Beast** coming up after the **First Beast**,]...the blessed John understood it [as '666'].... It is manifest to all, that those who at present still hold the power, are Latins. If, then, we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes Latinus."

The 320 Lactantius of Gaul taught the first Christian Emperor Constantine, who also appointed him to educate his son Crispus. Yet Lactantius nevertheless boldly declared in his *Divine Institutes* (VII:15) that "the Roman name by which the World is now ruled, will be taken away from the Earth...and the West be reduced to servitude [Second Thessalonians 2:7].... Rome is doomed to perish, and that indeed by the judgment of God; because it held His Name in hatred.... Being the enemy of righteousness, it destroyed the people who kept the truth.... The Roman Empire and name would be taken away."

The A.D. 350 Cyril of Jerusalem predicted in his

Catechetical Lectures XV (9-33): "Hatred of the brethren makes room **next** for Antichrist.... God forbid that any of Christ's servants here or elsewhere should run over to the enemy! ... **Now** is **the** falling away.... The Church **now** charges you before the Living God! She declares to you the things concerning **Antichrist** **before** they arrive.... The **adversary**...is a **magician** [*cf. transubstantiation etc.*] and most expert in sorceries and enchantments of beguiling craftiness -- who **shall seize** for himself the power of the **Roman Empire**, and shall falsely style himself 'Christ' [or His sole and ultimate representative here on Earth]....

"This aforesaid **Antichrist** is **to** come **when** the times of the **Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled**.... There shall rise up together **then** king[dom]s of the Romans, reigning in different parts perhaps, but all about the same time. And after these an eleventh, the Antichrist, who by his magical craft shall seize upon the Roman power [Daniel 7:7-21]. At first, indeed he will put on a show of mildness (as though he were a learned and discreet person), and of soberness and benevolence; and by the lying signs and wonders of his magical deceit....

"Now these things we teach not of our own invention but, having learned them out of the divine Scriptures used in the Church and chiefly from the prophecy of Daniel [7:23] just now read.... That this kingdom is that of the **Romans**, has been the **tradition** of the **Church**.... The fourth kingdom **now** is that of the **Romans**....

"**Antichrist** forsooth...'seateth himself in the Temple of God' [Second Thessalonians 2:4].... God forbid that it should be the one in which we are! Why do we say this? So that we may not be supposed to favour ourselves.... He says [in Daniel 7:21]: 'I beheld, and the same horn made war against the **saints**'.... In another place, Daniel [12:7] says the same thing, 'And He swore by Him Who lives for ever, that it shall be for a time, and [two] times, and half a time'.... For this reason, **we** must hide **ourselves**....

"Guard yourself, then, O man! You have [received the knowledge about] the signs of Antichrist.... If you have a child according to the flesh -- admonish him of this **now**! If you have begotten one through catechizing -- put him also on his guard, lest he receive 'the false one' as the True! For 'the mystery of iniquity already works' [Second Thessalonians 2:7]. I **fear** these wars of the **nations**. I **fear** the **schisms** of the **churches**....

"Thus much concerning **Antichrist**.... May the God of the whole World keep you all in safety, bearing in mind the signs...and remaining **unsubdued** by Antichrist! ... Guard 'that which has been committed to you' [First Timothy 6:20]

concerning Christ! And be conspicuous in good works -- so that you may **keep on standing** with a good **confidence** before the Judge, and **inherit** the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Around A.D. 360, Hilary of Potiers, in his *Contra Auxentium*, rebuked the luxury-loving churchman Auxentius: "Beware of **Antichrist!** ... **The Church of God** -- which you wrongly venerate -- exists in houses and buildings. Among these, **you** wrongly find the name of peace! Is it doubtful that in these, **Antichrist** will have his **seat?**" Thus Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in his *Preface to Francis King of France* (6:2).

Around A.D. 395, John Chrysostom of Constantinople wrote in his *Third Homily on Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (2:1-9): "When the **Resurrection** will be, he has **not** said; but that it will **not** be **now**, he **has** said.... He is discoursing concerning the Resurrection and our gathering together. For these things will happen at the same time....

"He seems to me to intimate that certain persons went about, having **forged** an epistle **as if** from Paul, and '**showing**' [hyperpreteristically!]...that the **Day of the Lord** is **at hand** -- so that **they** might lead many into **error**.... So that they [the Thessalonian Christians] might not be deceived, Paul gives **assurance** by the things **he** writes....

"He discourses concerning the **Antichrist**.... He calls him **apostasy**.... He is a **man**, 'and opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or is worshipped.' **For he will...be** a kind of **opponent** to God.... He **will** be **seated** [or **enthroned**] in the **temple of God**, not that in Jerusalem only, **but also in every church**.... So, also having heard concerning the coming of Christ, they [the Thessalonian Christians] again needed **letters** to give them composure....

"'And now, you know what keeps on restraining.... There is one that now keeps on restraining -- until he be taken out of the way'.... What is that which **keeps on withholding?** ... Because he [Paul] said this of the **Roman Empire**, he naturally glanced at it and speaks covertly and darkly.... For if he had said that after a little while **the Roman Empire would be dissolved** -- they would immediately even have overwhelmed him as a pest....

"'For the mystery of lawlessness already operates.' He speaks here of Nero, as if he were the **type** of **Antichrist**.... **When the Roman Empire is taken out** of the way -- **then** he [**Antichrist**] **shall** come... The kingdoms **before** this were destroyed.... So will this also be, by the **Antichrist**; and he, by **Christ**.... These things Daniel

delivered to us, with great clearness."

The testimony of Jerome is even more interesting. In A.D. 406, he (in his own *121st Epistle*) wrote to Algasia that 'he who withholds' -- alias the power that was then holding back the unveiling of the 'man of sin' of Second Thessalonians 2:3-8 -- was the Roman Empire ("*eum qui nunc tenet, Romanum Imperium ostendit*"). Indeed, declared Jerome, "**Antichrist will not come -- until the Roman Empire has **first** been **destroyed**."**

Paul, he added, did not "openly write this, foreseeing that to have done so would have led precisely to a wave of **persecution** against the Church in her tenderest infancy."

Three years later in A.D. 409, Jerome (in his own *123rd Epistle*) wrote to Ageruchia that the revelation of the 'man of sin' here in Second Thessalonians 2:3-8 -- later seen to be the appearance of the papacy in A.D. 606 -- was not too far ahead, even in his own day. Even in 409 A.D., the Roman Empire of Daniel's Fourth Beast was beginning to break up into its ten horn-kingdoms.

This, predicted Daniel, would occur **prior** to the emergence of the Antichristian 'little horn.' But that latter would ultimately become a very big horn. For it would soon become 'more stout' than those other ten 'fellow'-horns, and then start to speak 'great words' of blasphemy and start to 'wear out the saints' by persecuting the true Christians. Daniel 7:7,8,20,25.

Wrote Jerome to Ageruchia in 409: "The whole country between the Alps and the Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the Ocean, has been laid waste by hordes of Quadri, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alans, Gepids, Herules, Saxons, Burgundians, Allemanni and...Pannonians... The powerful cities...have fallen to Germany -- while **the [ten!] provinces** of Aquitaine and of the Nine Nations...are...one universal scene of desolation.... The Spains are on the brink of ruin, and tremble daily. All that was ours once, from the Pontic Sea to the Julian Alps in days gone by, has ceased to be ours. For thirty years the barbarians have burst the barrier of the Danube, and fought in **the heart of the Roman Empire**."

In one word, concludes Jerome (*idem*), the Roman Empire in A.D. 409 was the 'withholding agent' (of Second Thessalonians 2:3-8). For "whilst I talk about the 'cargo' [of the Roman Empire], the 'vessel' [or the City of Rome] itself is beginning to founder [or to buckle]. 'He that keeps on withholding' [alias the Roman Empire], is being taken out of the way -- and yet we do not realize that **Antichrist is near!**"

As Jerome adds in his *Commentary on Daniel* chapter



seven (III:1101): "Let **us** therefore say what **all** ecclesiastical writers have delivered to us.... When the **Roman Empire** is to be destroyed, **ten kings** [or kingdoms] will **divide** the Roman World among themselves -- and **then** will the '**lawless man**' be unveiled, the 'son of perdition' who will venture to **take his seat in the Temple of God**, making himself as God."

Here, Jerome is extremely explicit. He predicts that Antichrist alias "the 'son of perdition'...will...**take his seat in the Temple of God**" -- that is, in the Christian **Church!**

Also Augustine states in chapter nineteen of his famous A.D. 413-426 *City of God* that as regards "what the Apostle Paul says in writing to the Thessalonians [2:1-11]...., he wrote this of **Antichrist** and of **the Day of Judgment**.... He declared that this day would **not** come, unless **he** first came who is called the **apostate**.... In this passage, **Antichrist** means not the prince himself alone, but his whole body -- that is, the mass of men who adhere to him along with him their prince.... We should render the Greek more exactly, were we to read not 'in the temple of God' but 'for' or 'as the temple of God' -- as if he himself were the temple of God, the Church....

"**Some** think that the Apostle Paul...alluded to **Nero**, whose deeds already seemed to be as the deeds of Antichrist.... But I wonder that men can be so **audacious** in their conjectures....

"These words of the Apostle: 'Only let him who now restrains keep on restraining **until** he be **taken out of the way**' -- refer to the **Roman Empire**.... '**Then** shall the **lawless one** be unveiled'...means **Antichrist**.... There is **no doubt**...that Christ will **not** come to judge both the quick and dead, unless **Antichrist** His adversary **first** come to seduce those who are dead in soul."

Even more significantly, a century **after** Jerome and Augustine, the Roman Empire was still clearly being identified as Paul's 'withholding agent' -- even as the embryonic Antichristian-Romish Papacy was then just beginning to be established in its place. Second Thessalonians 2:3-8.

Thus this identification was even made by the *circa* 438-533 Remigius, the very famous baptizer of the Frankish king Clovis. Paul, wrote that great 'Apostle to the Franks' (in *Bibl. Patr. Max. VIII:1018*), "spoke **obscurely** [about the Roman 'withholding agent'], lest perhaps some of the Romans who thought they would rule the World for ever, might understand that this *Epistle* [Second Thessalonians] was

against **them** -- which might **then** stir them up to persecute some of the Christians."

The **Antichrist** would be unveiled when **the Bishop of Rome** (that at first still only a 'Little Horn') would formally be declared '**Pope**' alias **Universal Father** in A.D. 606. And that was **after** the fall of the **Roman Empire** to the 'Fellow'-Horns alias the ten Kingdoms of the Roman Imperial Beast in Jerome's own day.

Now it should be noted that when the (papal) 'man of sin' would be unveiled, he would "keep on opposing and keep on exalting himself against all that is called God." Indeed, "he would keep on going into the temple of God to be seated [or enthroned] there, while claiming to be divine." Second Thessalonians 2:4.

Romanists object that their Papacy has never tried to exalt itself **above** God **Himself**. However, this text does **not** say 'the son of perdition...exalts himself **above** God.' It says: "the son of perdition...keeps on opposing and keeps on exalting himself **against** all that is **called** God or is worshipped, so that he (like a god) **keeps on going into the temple of God to be enthroned there**, claiming to be divine" -- while claiming to reign in the place of God or to represent God. Compare the Greek original: "*antikeimēnos kai hyperairōmenos epi panta legomenon theon ee sebasma, hooste auton **eis ton naon tou Theou (hoos theon) kathisai** -- apodeiknunta heauton hoti estin theos."*<sup>3907</sup>

Dr. Matthew Henry here rightly comments: "As God was in the [Jewish] temple of old and worshipped there -- so the Antichrist here mentioned, is some usurper of God's authority in the **Christian Church**." Dr. Albert Barnes agrees, and adds that the usurper keeps on "claiming the honours due to God."

In his book *Babylon the Church of Rome*, Canon Wordsworth states: "Naos, the word rendered 'temple,' is the **holier part** of the temple -- the **sanctuary**, where the **altar** is [compare the **Romish** doctrine of **transubstantiation**]. And *kathisai eis naon* [or 'keeps on going to sit in the temple' in Second Thessalonians 2:4], are words involving **motion**, and signify 'to be conveyed'-- [or 'to convey himself'] and 'take a seat' in the **Holy Place** of the Temple of God alias the Christian Church.

"There are about twenty-five passages in the *Acts of the Apostles*, where the Jewish temple is called *hieron* -- but not a single one where it is called *naos*. The *naos tou Theou*, in the mouth of an Apostle speaking to **Gentile** Christians, concerning the **future**, cannot mean the Jewish temple, and can only mean the **Christian Church**.... The

sitting of the man of sin in the **Temple of God**, signifies his being a **Christian by profession**, and that he would exercise his usurped authority in the **Christian Church**."

Wordsworth adds on the same verse, in his essay *Is the Papacy Predicted by St. Paul?*, "that the 'temple of God' does **not** here mean...the 'temple at **Jerusalem**' is clear from the fact...that the lawless one was to appear at the 'removal of the **Roman Empire**' [or rather **thereafter**]. But when the Roman Empire was removed [toward the end of the fifth century A.D.], there was **no temple** at **Jerusalem** for him to appear in. Nor has there been any, to this time. It therefore means the **Christian Church**, which is now the only Temple of God. And this is the opinion of **St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom**, and most of the Fathers" of the Early Church.

Not only did Augustine himself regard identifying 'the man of sin' with Nero rather than with the mediaeval Antichrist as "audacious." So too does Wordsworth, who rightly points out that Antichrist's other title -- 'the son of perdition' -- is elsewhere applied "not to an Infidel Power" like Nero but to the "**Christian Apostle**" Judas Iscariot. John 17:12. Consequently, the words "'son of perdition' may therefore fitly be applied to a **Christian Bishop**...if he betrays Christ. And if the **Bishop of Rome** is unfaithful to the trust he has received from Christ, they may well be applied to him."

This also means that Papal Rome came into the place of Imperial Rome -- once Imperial Rome had been removed ek mesou: "out of the midst." Hear the famous Leopold von Ranke in his *History of the Popes* (page 9): "Under the protection of the Emperor himself, there later arose the power of the Bishop of Rome!" Indeed, even the eminent Romish Historian Duc de Broglie states in his *History of the Church* (VI:424 & 456): "The **Bishop of Rome** mounts the throne voided by the **Emperors**"; and "grasps little by little the deserted place left vacant by the successor of Augustus."

Also the *Geneva Bible* has an interesting comment at this point. It explains: "This wicked Antichrist comprehends the whole succession of the persecutors of the Church -- and all that abominable kingdom of Satan of which some were bears, some lions, others leopards (as Daniel describes them); and it is called 'the man of sin' because he sets himself up against God."

Calvin's comment here is also very significant: By '**the man of sin**' -- explains the genius of Geneva -- Paul "is not speaking of one individual, but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan for the purpose of setting up a seat [or throne] of abomination **in the midst of God's temple**. This

we see accomplished in **popery**.

"The defection has indeed spread more widely. For since **Mohammed** was an **apostate**, he turned his followers the Turks away from Christ." And, indeed, "**all** heretics have destroyed the unity of the Church by their sects" -- and thus similarly qualify.

Indeed, "all the sects which have weakened the Church from the beginning -- have been so many channels of revolt which began to take the water away from the true course.... The sect of **Mohammed** [A.D. 570f] was like a raging overflow, which in its violence tore away about half of the Church.

"It remained for [the A.D. 606-666f papal] **Antichrist** to infect with his poison the part which was left. Anyone, even a ten-year-old boy, who has learned from Scripture what are the things that belong particularly to God, and who on the other hand considers well what the **Pope** usurps for himself -- will not have much difficulty in recognizing **Antichrist**....

"There is not one of these things which the **Pope** does not claim to be his own prerogative. He boasts that it is his right to bind men's consciences with such 'laws' as he pleases [cf. Daniel 7:25].... With regard to the Sacraments, he either institutes new ones at his own whim -- or corrupts and debases those which had been instituted by Christ....

"What, I ask, does it mean to be 'lifted above all that is reckoned to be divine'; if this is not what the **Pope** is doing? When in this way he deprives God of His honour, he leaves Him nothing but the empty title of God, while he transfers to himself the whole of His power.... Paul does not use the term 'God' by itself, but indicates that the pride of **Antichrist** would be such that he would: set himself apart from his position and rank as servant; mount the judgment-seat [or **throne**] of God, and would **reign** with a divine and not with a human power. Anything that is put in the place of God -- even though it does not bear the name of God -- is, as we know, an idol....

"The **Pope**...has a settled residence in the **Church**.... Paul sets **Antichrist** in the very sanctuary of God. He is not an enemy from the outside, but from the household of faith -- and **opposes Christ under the very name of Christ**.... It is **the Temple of God** in which the **Pope** holds sway. But the Temple has been profaned by sacrileges beyond number."

As regards the first-century A.D. Thessalonian Christians themselves, explains Calvin, "it added

considerable authority to his doctrine that they had heard it previously from Paul's lips.... He had given them 'early warning' about the reign of Antichrist -- and the devastation that **was coming** upon the **Church**.

"When as yet no question had been raised about such matters, he quite clearly saw that the doctrine was particularly useful for them to know.... Those whom he addressed, were **soon** to see much that would disturb them.... **Future generations** saw a considerable number of those who had professed the Christian Faith, abandon true religion....

"'Now you know that which keeps on restraining' [or withholding or holding back]. *To katechon* here properly means an impediment or occasion of **delay**. Chrysostom [400 A.D.] held that it can be understood only as referring to...the **Roman Empire**....

"He had good reason to do this.... Paul...in speaking of the Roman Empire...wanted to avoid an offensive expression. He explains why the state of the Roman Empire delays the unveiling of Antichrist. It is because, just as the monarchy [or sole rule] of Babylon was overthrown by the Persians and the Medes; and the Macedonians in their turn after the defeat of the Persians took possession of the monarchy; and they were finally conquered by the Romans -- so **Antichrist** was about to seize for himself the **vacant** rule of the **Roman Empire** [Daniel chapters 2 and 7]. There is not one of these things that was not later confirmed, in actual experience. Chrysostom therefore is speaking the truth, as far as History is concerned....

"Paul declared that the light of the Gospel must first be spread through every part of the [then-known] World, before God would give Satan his rein in this way.... The Roman Empire prevented the rise of Antichrist.... Satan had not yet amassed such strength, that **Antichrist** could openly oppress the Church.... The name 'Antichrist' does **not** designate a single **individual**, but a **single kingdom** which extends throughout **many generations**."

Paul predicted that the Antichrist's 'coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.' Calvin comments: "If this is to be contrasted with the kingdom of Christ, it must consist partly of false doctrines and deceptions and partly of false-miracles [such as the Romish Mass]. The Kingdom of Christ consists of the doctrine of truth and the power of the Spirit. Satan therefore puts on the mask of Christ, for the purpose of opposing Him in the person of His 'Vicar' [**the Pope**]....

"By 'lying signs' he [Paul] means not simply those that

clever individuals contrive with lies and deceit for the purpose of leading the simple-minded astray -- the kind of **fraud** with which the whole of the **Papacy** abounds, for they are part of the supremacy which Satan has previously made his own -- but he holds that falsehood consists in the fact that Satan **reverses** what are otherwise **truly** the works of **God**.... He deceives by means of his **trickery**, as we find in the case of **Pharaoh's magicians**. Exodus 7:11....

"Without any doubt we have a notable demonstration of this in the **Papacy**. No words can express how foul is the abomination of the Papists, how massive and shameful are their nonsensical superstitions, and how far removed their ravings are from common sense."

No differently does Calvin teach in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (IV:2:11f & IV:7:24f & IV:9:4). There, he insists: "As in ancient times there remained among the Jews certain special privileges of a **Church** -- so in the present day we deny not to the **Papists** those **vestiges** of a **Church** which the Lord has allowed to remain among them.... Daniel and Paul foretold that **Antichrist** would sit in the **temple of God**. Daniel 9:27 & Second Thessalonians 2:4. We regard the **Roman Pontiff** as the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom -- as least in the Western **Church**....

"I deny that their **Pontiff** is the Prince of Bishops -- seeing he is **no** Bishop.... The **Pontiffs** are so enraged against the reviving doctrine of the Gospel.... Shall we recognize the Apostolic See, where we see nothing but horrible apostasy? Shall he be 'the Vicar of Christ' who, by his furious efforts in persecuting the Gospel, plainly declares himself to be **Antichrist**? ... **Rome**, indeed, was once the mother of all the churches. But since she began to be **the seat of Antichrist** -- she ceased to be what she was....

"We call the **Roman Pontiff** '**Antichrist**'.... Paul's words...can be understood **only** of the **Papacy**. Paul says that **Antichrist** would sit in the **temple of God**. Second Thessalonians 2:4. In another passage, the Spirit...says that his reign would be with great swelling words of vanity. Daniel 7:25.... It is certain that **the Roman Pontiff** has impudently transferred to himself the most peculiar properties of God and Christ. There cannot be a doubt that he is the leader and standard-bearer of an impious and abominable kingdom.... Paul openly declares that **Antichrist** would have his seat in **the Temple of God**. Second Thessalonians 2:4."

This brings us to Paul's third point. He also indicated **how** the **Church** would **victoriously overcome** that

opposition -- even amid tribulation. Yes, **Christians were and are to gain victory** over tribulation and persecution and increasing opposition to the Gospel. For Paul confidently asserted that the man of sin would **be consumed by the Spirit of the Lord's Mouth** and be destroyed with the manifestation of His Presence.<sup>3939</sup>

Paul's statement is that "the Lord...shall destroy" that "man of sin" or "the lawless one" by "the manifestation of His Presence." For Paul's original Greek declares of "*ho anthroopos tees anomias*" or "*ho anomos*" that it is he "whom" [=hon] "*ho Kurios...katargeesei te<sub>i</sub> epiphaneia<sub>i</sub> tees parousias Autou.*" The King James Version renders it, less clearly: "the Lord...shall destroy [the lawless one] with the brightness of His coming."

Now **this "presence"** or "**parousia**" (or KJV "coming") of the Lord, is **not** centrally His Final Return (**on the clouds**). Nor is the "presence" or "**parousia**" (or KJV "coming") of the man of sin mentioned immediately in the very next verse -- to be construed as a coming **on the clouds**.

Consequently, the consuming and destroying of the "man of **sin**" by the Lord -- does not refer centrally to what will happen at Christ's Final Coming at the Last Judgment. Nor does it refer even to what happens at Christ's prior and repeated 'comings' in a whole series of temporal judgments<sup>3940</sup> (such as at the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem).<sup>3941</sup>

Rather does this consuming and destroying of "the man of sin" by Christ refer to the judgment-activity of His Holy **Spirit**<sup>3942</sup> working through His Spirit-filled **Church**<sup>3943</sup> in **her** powerful Biblical **testimony**. Thus the main thought of verses 8 and 9 is that "**the lawless one**" -- "whose **presence** is according to the working of Satan" -- is the one "whom **the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His Mouth** and shall destroy with the manifestation of His Presence" -- namely when He "shall consume [the man of sin] with the **Spirit of His Mouth**" (meaning His **Presence** in the **Presentation** of His Holy Word).

So it is especially through the **declaration** of the **Word of God** by the Lord Christ's Spirit-filled **Church**,<sup>3944</sup> that Jesus consumes the lawless one with "the Spirit of His Mouth." In this way too, Jesus progressively destroys "the man of sin" or the Papal Antichrist "with the manifestation of His Presence"<sup>3945</sup> through the ongoing powerful preaching of the successors to the Protestant Reformation.

The A.D. 220 Hippolytus foresaw this destruction of Antichrist by the testimony of the Scripture-believing Church. In the *Appendix* to his famous *Discourse on the End of the World and of Antichrist* (chapters 20 & 30 & 35),

he seems to have stated: "In every respect that deceiver seeks to make himself appear like the Son of God. Christ is a lion; and Antichrist is a lion...."

"Blessed shall they be who **overcome** the tyrant, then! For they shall be set forth as more illustrious.... These **overthrow** and **conquer** the accuser himself, the son of perdition. With what eulogies and crowns, therefore, will they not be adorned by our King, Jesus Christ! ... The deceiver and **Antichrist shall speedily be removed.**"

Also the A.D. 350 Cyril of Jerusalem predicted the Church's overthrow of its Antichrist, in his *Catechetical Lectures* XV (9 & 17 & 33). "God forbid," he wrote of the then-future Antichrist, "that any of Christ's servants here or elsewhere should run over to the enemy! ... Who then is the blessed man that **shall** at **that** time devoutly **witness** for Christ? ... In the time of Antichrist they **shall** do **battle**...."

"May the God of the whole World keep you all in **safety**, bearing...and remaining **unsubdued** by Antichrist! ... **Guard** what has been committed to you concerning Christ, and be conspicuous in **good works** -- so that you may **keep on standing** with a **good confidence**...and **inherit** the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Isaiah 11:2-4 is cognate to Second Thessalonians 2:8. It states that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest" upon the Messiah -- and that thus "He shall smite the Earth with the rod of His Mouth; and with the Breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked."

Here Calvin comments that the Son "came down to us and received the gifts of the **Spirit** so that He might **bestow** them upon **us**. And this is the anointing from which He receives the name of 'Christ' -- which He imparts to us...."

"Christ imparts to us the gifts which He received from the Father, so that He may live in us and so that we may live in Him.... The Prophet here extols the efficacy of **the Word**, which is Christ's royal sceptre. By the '**rod of His mouth**' is meant a **sceptre** which consists in **words**...."

"In the second clause, he repeats the same idea by the phrase 'the Breath of His lips' -- as if he had said that Christ will have no need to borrow aid from others to cast down His enemies and to strike down [just] everything that opposes His Government. For a mere '**Breath**' or a '**Word**' will be enough.... The Gospel is 'a two-edged sword'.... Christ is armed 'with the Breath of His lips to slay the wicked'...."



"Paul also...undoubtedly alludes to this passage, when he speaks of **the destruction of Antichrist**. 'And then shall the lawless one be unveiled, whom the Lord shall consume with the **Breath** of His **Mouth** and shall destroy with the **manifestation** of His **Presence**.' Second Thessalonians 2:7-8.... He shows that Christ...will drive away...the whole of them together and their very **head and leader** [viz. **the papal Antichrist**], by the sound of His **doctrine**....

"When the Prophet says 'by the Breath of His lips' -- this must not be limited to the Person of Christ. For it refers to **the Word which is preached by His Ministers**.... Hence it follows that all who reject the outward **preaching** of the Gospel, shake off this sceptre....

"The **doctrine** of the Gospel is His royal banner, which assembles believers under His dominion. Wherever therefore the doctrine of the Gospel is **preached** in purity, there we are certain that **Christ reigns**.... Hence it is evident how foolishly the **Papists** boast that the Church belongs to them -- when they order Christ Himself to be silent, and cannot endure the sound of **His Voice**."

There is indeed a **progressive "coming"** of Christ's Kingdom, here and now, through the expansion of His earthly Church. There was a "coming" of Christ and of His Kingdom at the Red Sea; at Sinai; at Paran; at Seir; and throughout subsequent Church History. Too, the great Protestant Reformer John Calvin declared that there will be a similar "coming" of the Lord yet again -- when He comes to destroy "the man of sin" **by our declaring** of His Word before His visible and Final Coming.<sup>3946</sup>

Paul, comments Calvin, "had predicted the **destruction** of the reign of Antichrist; and now describes the **manner** of his destruction. He will be annihilated **by the Word of the Lord**.... Paul does **not** think that Christ will accomplish this in a **single** moment....

"Antichrist would be **completely and utterly destroyed**.... Christ will scatter the darkness in which Antichrist will reign, by the rays which He will emit **before** His Coming -- just as the sun **before** becoming visible to us chases away the darkness of the night....

"This **victory** of the **Word** will therefore be seen **in** the **World**. For [the Spirit or] 'the **Breath** of His **Mouth**' means simply His **Word**; as in Isaiah 11:4, the passage to which Paul appears to be alluding.

"In that passage the Prophet takes 'the Rod of His Mouth' and 'the Breath of His lips' to mean the same

thing.... He also furnishes Christ with these very weapons, so that He may scatter His enemies.

"It is a notable commendation of true and sound doctrine, that it is represented as being sufficient to put an end to all ungodliness -- and as destined at all times to be victorious over all the devices of Satan. It is also a commendation when, a little further on, the preaching of this doctrine is referred to as Christ's 'coming' to us."

So too, even the 1560 *Geneva Bible* of the English Puritans explains that the phrase 'with the Spirit of His Mouth' here actually means "**with His Word.**" This is indeed the true meaning. For at the very beginning of the next chapter of this his *Second Epistle*, Paul himself urges the Thessalonian Christians to pray "**that the Word of God may have free course**" -- so that **Preachers** may be delivered from evil men, and so that **believers** may **confidently** be **established** or **strengthened** in their Christian Faith.

Thus Calvin, and the Calvinistic *Geneva Bible*. So too: the *Dordt Dutch Bible*; Matthew Henry; Adam Clarke; Albert Barnes; and many others.

The Future History of this great planet Earth, even here and now **prior** to Christ's Final Coming, does not belong to the man of sin. To the contrary. The Future History of our present Earth, belongs to the ever-expanding and more-and-more triumphant Church of Christ -- in spite of all present and even all future persecutions.

For Paul himself assured the Thessalonian Christians that "we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord. Because **God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification** of the Spirit and belief of the truth whereunto He called you by our Gospel, **to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

"Therefore, brethren, **stand fast**, and keep on holding onto the handed-down **doctrines**<sup>3947</sup> which you have been taught, whether by [preached] **Word**, or by our [written] **Epistle!** Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and even God our Father Who has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, **keep on strengthening** your hearts, and **keep on establishing** you in every **good word** and **work!**"<sup>3947</sup>

Calvin's comment is again illuminating. He shows that Paul "now makes a clearer division between the [Christian] Thessalonians and the wicked; so that their faith should not waver, through fear of the coming apostasy. At the same time, however, his purpose was to consider the interests not

simply of these -- but **also of future generations**.

"He not only establishes them, so that they may **not** experience the same **downward** plunge as the World." He also "uses this comparison to commend **further** the grace of God towards them. Though they see that almost the whole of the World is carried to destruction as in a wild storm -- their condition in life continues **peaceful** and **steadfast**, by the hand of **God**....

"When Christ offers Himself to us for our enjoyment by the teaching of the Gospel, and when the Spirit is given to us as a seal and pledge of eternal life -- we are not to grow despondent, even though the Heavens should fall.... The statement which he afterward adds, '[our Father] Who loved us and gave us comfort,' refers to the **confidence** which we have in getting what we ask for." Too, "'[good] **hope**' also refers to the same thing. They are to have a **sure expectation** that their gifts will continue without interruption...so that God may lift up their hearts -- by His **comfort**" or strengthening.

O Christian, may also you and I never wilt under persecution! To the contrary, may we yet more and more consume sinful man and all of his wicked establishments! May our testimony from the written Word of God bring down the Papacy! Yet this must be done chiefly through the very powerful **declaration** of the **Word** of God -- in the **Spirit** of the Lord's Mouth.

While **destroying** all **antichristian** powers, with the **increasing** manifestation of the Presence of God's Kingdom here and now on this great planet Earth -- we must ourselves **stand fast** and **strengthen** our hearts. So, by the grace of God, we must become **further** established in every good **word** and **work**.

We must keep on doing this until **the Word** of the Lord has **triumphantly** run its free course throughout the **World**.<sup>3948</sup> That is what will **destroy** the **Antichrist** -- and **before** Jesus will thereafter finally and visibly return, to be glorified in the saints and to be admired in **all** them that believe.<sup>3949</sup>

Speed that day, Lord! Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus! And, until then, onward, Christian soldiers! On, to victory!

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3907. II Th. 1:3; 2:1-3,8,13,17. In 2:1a, we translate *parousia* as: "presence" (as too in verses 8 & 9). Yet in its context, it refers to the visible and Final Coming of Jesus. For: (1) it flows on from that, as discussed in the **previous seven** verses 1:6-12; (2) it is linked to "our gathering together unto Him" ("heemoon epi-sun-agoogeas ep' Auton") in 2:1b; and (3) all of that is in apposition to "the Day of the Lord" in 2:2. In 2:2,

"*hee heemera tou Kuriou*" (meaning "the Day of the Lord"), has as its variant reading "*hee heemera tou Christou*" (meaning "the Day of Christ"). Either way, it clearly means the Day of the Lord Christ's Visible Return in Final Judgment (cf. II Th. 1:6-10, I Th. 1:10); and **not** 'the day of the [secret] rapture of the Church' (*sic*)! See too n. 3913. In 2:3, 'Aleph & B etc. have: "*ho anthroopos tees anomias*" (meaning "the son of lawlessness"); whereas A & D & the *Textus Receptus* and other mss. have "*ho anthroopos tees hamartias*" (meaning "the man of sin"). In 2:4, the words "*hoos theon*" (meaning "like a god") are not in most of the oldest nor even in the majority of all the Greek manuscript copies.

3908. II Th. 1:4. 3909. II Th. 1:3f. 3910. II Th. 1:6f.  
3911. II Th. 1:7-10 cf. Acts 14:12. 3912. II Th. 1:6f.  
3913. II Th. 2:1-17. In II Th. 2:3, the Thessalonian Christians were told they were **not yet** at the end of History. **Nor** was the latter **even nearly at hand**. In fact, II Th. 2:2 may even refer to the (postmillennial) 'Millennial Day' -- rather than to the day of Christ's visible Final Coming (thus E.W. Johnson) -- inasmuch as the Scriptures consulted by the Thessalonians according to Acts 17:11 would seem to have been the *Septuagint* with its application of Isa. 2:1-5 to the latter-day glory and its contrasting of the (post)-millennial industriousness of Mic. 4:4 with the first-century "loafing" then going on in the Church at Thessalonica (I Th. ch. 4 & II Th. ch. 3)! Again, it is significant that the Greek word *enesteeken* in II Th. 2:2 should not really be rendered "at hand" as in the *KJV* but rather "being present" (thus even the Premillennialist Alford). Cf. Rom. 8:38 & I Cor. 3:33. Cf. too the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, IV:47, which renders *enesteeken* as: "were present."

3914. II Th. 2:1-10 & esp. v. 3 with I Th. 2:14-16; Col. 2:8-13; Rom. 15:8 & 11:11f (where "fall" means "fall away" or "apostasize"). See n. 3915. Because II Th. 2:3's *apostasia* is the **ethical** falling away downwards" and **not** a "**physical** rapture upwards" -- even II Th. 3:6's **restraining agent** (which "holds back" or "withholds" the unveiling of the man of sin), is initially **Judaism prior to about 65 A.D.** It is not any of the various other identifications proposed by Pretribulationists and certain other Premillennialists. For it is not Hal Lindsay's Holy Spirit (cf. his book *The Late Great Planet Earth* p. 110). Nor is it Needham's Satan (cf. his book *The Antichrist* p. 94). Nor is it Hogg & Vine's human law and order (in their *Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians* pp. 259f). Nor could it be the (always omnipresent!) Holy Spirit. As Wheaton College's Prof. A.J. Katterjohn remarks in his work *The Rapture -- When?* (220 E. Union, Wheaton, n.d., pp. 14f), in II Th. 2:7 "there is no word for (the *KJV*'s) 'taken' in the Greek, nor any thought of 'taken' implied"; so that II Th. 2:7b should actually read "until he become out of the midst." See n. 3925.

3915. II Th. 2:7. 3916. II Th. 2:5 & Acts 17:1f cf. our study for Sept. 8.  
3917. Acts 17:5-9. 3918. Acts 17:1,5 & I Th. 2:14-16.  
3919. Acts 17:6-9 & II Th. 2:3-8. 3920. II Th. 2:3f. 3921. II Th. 2:6-8.

3922. Mt. 27:11-37; Acts 18:12-16; 19:33-41; 24:5,14; 26:5; 28:19-23 (esp. v. 22).

3923. *Id.* & Jn. 18:38; 19:8-12; 16:20-38; 17:5-9; 22:25-29; 23:26-30; 24:22f; 25:14-25; 26:1-32. 3924. Jn. 20:19; 4:18f; 5:28f.

3925. II Th. 2:7 cf. Mt. 24:24-26,28; Lk. 21:20-24; Dan. 9:26f. Cf. too n. 3714. Note too that our rendition of II Th. 2:7's *ek mesou geneetai* as "be out of the midst" or "be out of the way" (or literally "became out of the midst") is entirely accurate. Cf. J.I. Wilmot: *Inspired Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, Reiner, Swengel Pa., 1975, pp. 166f: "Apart from the fantastic assumption that in the absence of the Holy Spirit and the Church, and within the surmised interval, though undergoing great tribulation during the reign of the Man of Sin 'a great multitude which no man can number' shall be converted from among all Nations -- it may be said in strict fact [that] the text [II Th. 2:7] does not signify 'taken out of the way' [or 'raptured'] at all. 'Become out of the midst' would be more correct. [Even the renowned Pretribulationist] Rev. Dr. S.P. Tregelles gives: 'Ye know that at present there is that which restraineth in order that he might be unveiled in his season and not before. For the mystery of lawlessness is already working (only there is at present one that restraineth), until it become developed out of the midst, and then shall the lawless one be unveiled.' The dispensational theory of the removal of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, erroneously based. This can be confirmed by an examination of the terms by the Lexicon. For '**be** taken' see, for example, Matt. 8:24; 13:21; John 3:25; Acts 6:1 etc., and 'out of the way,' Matt. 18:2,20; John 19:18; Rev. 7:17." See too n. 3914, and our main text at n. 3921.

3926. See too on II Th. 2, the relevant works of Josephus, Boettner, Gentry & Rushdoony.
3927. Heb. chs. 8 to 12; Rev. chs. 11 to 18; *cf.* Mt. 24:7-29.
3928. Rom. 11:12-28a; Gal. 4:4-31; Rev. 2:9; 3:9; I Th. 2:14f.
3929. *Cf.* our studies for May 23-30. 3930. Dan. 7:11,26 *cf.* Rev.13:1-10 & 17-11.
3931. II Th. 2:3f *cf.* Rev. chs. 13 & 17f.
3932. Mt. 24:15 (*cf.* Dan.7:19-25; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 & Rev. 11:2,8).
3933. II Th. 2:8 *cf.* Rev. 12:9 to 13:13f. 3934. II Th. 2:9 *cf.* Rev. 12:9 to 12:13f. 3935. II Th. 2:9f *cf.* Dan. 7:25 & 9:26f & 11:31 & 11:36-38.
3936. II Th. 2:11f *cf.* Rev. 13:14f.
3937. Rev. chs. 13 & 17 and Dan. 7:7-25 & 9:26f & 11:31 & 11:36-38 & 12:1,7,11.
3938. Rev. 16:12f. 3939. II Th. 2:8 *cf.* n. 2488.
3940. Hag. 2:6f; Heb. 12:26f; II Cor. 10:4f *cf.* n. 2488.
3941. Mt. ch. 24 *cf.* I Th. ch. 2 (esp. vv. 14-16) & II Th. 1:3 & 2:1f.
3942. Jn. 16:7-11. 3943. Jn. 14:16,26; 15:26; Acts chs. 2; *etc.*
3944. Eph. 6:10,17; Rev. 19:13-15; 17:14; 12:11; Acts chs. 2 & 4 & 6 & 13 *etc.*
3945. II Th. 2:8 *cf.* 3:1 & II Pet. 1:16-18.
3946. Rev. 11:15 *cf.* Col. 1:6,13f. *Comp.* too II Th. 2:8 with Dt. 1:1f & 33:2 & Heb. 3:2-4 with Ex. ch. 15.
3947. II Th. 2:13-16 & v. 17; *cf.* n. 1903. For proof that "traditions" here means "handed-down doctrines," see n. 3955.
3948. II Th. 3:1 *cf.* n. 3807. 3949. II Th. 1:10.
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