

# ANTICHRIST CANNOT APPEAR UNTIL...

That Presently Preventing this Man's Appearance

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ [‘the Day of the Lord’] is at hand.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [‘the apostasy’] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition:

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things?

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let [‘he who now hindereth will hinder’], until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (II Thess. 2:1-9).

That seen in II Thess. 2:6, 7, preventing the appearance of “the son of perdition” (the Beast, Antichrist), has been an enigma to numerous Bible students over the years, though it shouldn’t be. Exactly as seen in other passages of Scripture, presenting similar

problems for many (e.g., I Tim. 2:12-15; Heb. 6:4-6), *understanding and interpreting Scripture contextually and in the light of related Scripture can only shed a flood of light on the subject.*

God simply has not stated things in His Word which cannot be understood through the method which He has provided — *comparing Scripture with Scripture.* And the converse of that is equally true.

But, comparing Scripture with Scripture, one invariably finds himself involved in the numerous ways God has structured His Word (Heb. 1:1, 2), which would have to include things such as *types* and often *metaphors* and *signs.* And *a person simply cannot interpret Scripture in the light of itself apart from recognizing and utilizing this structure, understanding and interpreting the Word accordingly.*

## I Thessalonians

First, let's note the whole of that which has preceded in I Thessalonians, leading into that then dealt with in II Thessalonians. Then we'll center more on the text and immediate context in II Thessalonians chapter two, working from there out into other related Scripture.

I Thessalonians could be summarized as *a dissertation to those in "the church of the Thessalonians" relative to the contents of Paul's gospel,* with the word "gospel" (Gk., *euaggelion*), as it is used throughout the epistle (used seven times), referring to this particular facet of the overall gospel message (1:5; 2:2, 3, 8, 9; 3:2, 8).

Paul's gospel, having to do with "the mystery" revealed to him at the outset of his ministry (Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6), was a message *to the saved, not the unsaved.* It had to do with the continued good news one was to hear *after* he had heard and responded to the gospel of the grace of God (e.g., the gospel of grace seen in Eph. 2:8, 9, with the continuing aspect of the good news, corresponding to Paul's gospel, seen in v. 10).

(For additional information on Paul's gospel, refer to the author's article titled, "Paul's Gospel, the Mystery.")

Note also that the word "gospel" in the epistles is used far more often relative to *the gospel of the glory of Christ* [that aspect of the overall

gospel message which Paul referred to as "my gospel," "our gospel" (cf. II Cor. 4:3, 4, NKJV, NASB, NIV)] than it is used relative to the gospel of the grace of God.)

This aspect of the good news is introduced in I Thess. 1:5 as "our gospel," setting the stage for the use of the word *gospel* throughout both epistles. And, as Paul referenced this aspect of the good news different ways in Romans chapter one ("gospel of God," "gospel of his Son," "gospel of Christ" [vv. 1, 9, 15, 16; cf. Rom. 2:16; 16:25]), he does the same thing in I Thessalonians ("gospel of God," "gospel of Christ," "good tidings ['gospel'] of your faith" [2:2, 8, 9, 3:2, 6]).

Note II Thess. 2:14 pertaining to the content of Paul's gospel:

*"Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Then note the crux of the message, emanating from a proclamation of this good news which Paul was writing about to those in this Church, as seen in I Thess. 2:11, 12:

*"As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.*

*That ye walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (cf. I Peter 5:6-10).*

This then merges into a section on the rapture and that which lies beyond the rapture relative to the Son's coming kingdom, seen in the latter part of chapter four and the first part of chapter five (4:13-5:10). Then, the remainder of the book has to do with Paul's closing remarks.

## **II Thessalonians**

The second epistle to the Thessalonians simply continues from where the first left off, beginning with *two types of Christians at Christ's coming*, at the end of the Tribulation. I Thessalonians left off with matters surrounding the rapture and subsequent accounting of Christians, preceding the Tribulation (4:13-5:10),

wherein these two types of Christians had been seen — *the faithful, who had heeded Paul's exhortations; the unfaithful, who had failed to heed these exhortations.*

For one (the faithful), removed from Man's Day into the Lord's Day, "salvation" awaited; for the other (the unfaithful), removed from Man's Day into the Lord's Day, "wrath" awaited (5:1-9).

Then II Thessalonians chapter one begins with events occurring at a time at least seven years later, following the Tribulation, following Christ's return. And again, *two types of Christians are seen.*

The faithful are seen realizing an inheritance, realizing the "salvation" of I Thess. 5:9, in "his kingdom and glory" (II Thess. 1:5, 10-2:1); and the unfaithful are seen being denied an inheritance in His kingdom, realizing the "wrath" of I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:6-9).

(To understand the preceding any other way, as so many do, [e.g., seeing I Thess. 5:1-10 and II Thess. 1:5-12 dealing with *the Tribulation* and *saved-unsaved issues during and following the Tribulation*, or see I Thess. 5:9 and II Thess. 2:1 dealing with *the rapture*], is to throw about any type sound Scriptural interpretation one can think of to the winds — plain reading of the text, contextual, comparing Scripture with Scripture, etc.

When this is done on a scale which encompasses almost the whole of Christendom — which is exactly what is currently happening — is it any wonder that today's Christendom finds itself described in the words of Rev. 3:15-17, because of that seen in Matt. 13:33?)

With the preceding in mind, note how II Thess. 2:2ff continues from the way that the book is introduced, drawing from the whole of Paul's prior message to the Thessalonians in his first epistle.

In the first chapter of II Thessalonians, Paul projects matters, as they relate to Christians, out into the Messianic Era (with the groundwork having been laid in his first epistle to the Thessalonians).

Then moving into the second chapter, someone had evidently spread false information among the Thessalonians relative to the matter at hand (via "word" or "letter," as from Paul), making the Christians in Thessalonica believe that they were presently in the Lord's Day, leaving them quite confused.

(The Day of the Lord, the Lord's Day [II Thess. 2:2, "the day of Christ" should be translated, "the Day of the Lord"], has always been in existence, but not on earth. *The Lord's Day begins on earth only at the end of Man's Day, at the end of the Tribulation following Christ's return.* This is the manner in which the matter is set forth anyplace this is dealt with in Scripture [e.g., Joel 2:1ff; 3:1ff; Zeph. 1:7-18].

This is why, in I Thess. 5:2 and Rev. 1:10, that Christians removed from the earth in the rapture, removed from Man's Day, *will find themselves in the Lord's Day.*

And the widespread, erroneous teaching that the Lord's Day overlaps the last seven years of Man's Day is one of the main causes of the numerous false teachings in I, II Thessalonians, among other places.)

Now, with the preceding in mind, note that II Thess. 2:2ff deals with the Lord's Day *on earth*, not in the heavens. The Thessalonians had evidently been taught that they were now in the Lord's Day, in the Millennium. *And nothing about existing conditions matched that which was supposed to exist on earth, where they still resided, during that future day.* Understandably, they could only have been confused.

Paul begins straightening matters out by calling attention to two things which must occur before the Lord's Day could exist on earth — things, with related events, which had not yet occurred.

*An apostasy must occur first* ("a falling away" [v. 3, KJV] is from *apostasia* in the Greek text, meaning "apostasy"), and the man of sin (*the one who will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*) *must also be revealed first* (v. 4).

Neither of these had occurred.

"The mystery of iniquity" (v. 7), which could only relate to *Christians* (dealt with in the continuing part of this article), was already working. *But this must reach a final stage, which, according to related Scriptures, would be complete apostasy* (cf. Matt. 13:33; Luke 18:8; Rev. 3:14-20).

And, as previously stated, *the man of sin must be revealed, along with an outworking of the things stated about him* (vv. 3-12).

*Only then* could the Lord's Day exist on earth.

Then Paul stated that there was *one thing*, in conjunction with the apostasy, which must occur before the man of sin could be

revealed, allowing Man's Day to subsequently end and the Lord's Day to begin on earth.

And that *one thing* is spoken of as something presently in existence *which held back* the appearance of the man of sin (v. 6), something *which had to be removed* before the man of sin could be revealed (v. 7).

But, at what point during the Tribulation will the man of sin be revealed — seen by his actions at the beginning (Rev. 6:1, 2), or seen by his actions starting in the middle (Rev. 6:3, 4)?

Things spoken of in II Thess. 2:3ff about the revelation of the man of sin have to do with events occurring in the middle of the Tribulation and extending throughout the last half (Matt. 24:15ff). But, within the revealed mannerism which he will exhibit in that day (vv. 4a, 9) there appears to be an allusion to his actions throughout the Tribulation.

But all information on a subject is not given one place in Scripture, which is why Scripture must be compared with Scripture in order to begin seeing a more complete picture.

(These and other related things are dealt with in the continuing part of this article, which center on showing that which is preventing any present revelation of this man.)

### **Central, Overall Message to the Thessalonians**

As previously seen, Paul's first epistle to Christians forming the Church in Thessalonica had to do with *the central message which he had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world*. Paul referred to this message as "my gospel," "our gospel," connecting it with "the mystery" which had been revealed to him at the outset of his ministry. One was part and parcel with the other (I Thess. 1:5; cf. Rom. 2:16; 16:25; Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6; Col. 1:23-28).

In the first three and one-half chapters of I Thessalonians (1:1-4:12), Paul dealt extensively with *things pertaining to this central message which he had been called to proclaim*, which is "Christ proclaimed among you, the hope of glory" (correct textual reading

of Col. 1:27b [note an inseparable connection with “the mystery” in vv. 26, 27a]).

Then, beginning toward the end of chapter four and continuing into chapter five (4:13-5:10), Paul dealt with *the rapture and succeeding events* (clearly seen in other related Scriptures to occur *before* the Tribulation) — showing two types of Christians removed from the earth at the end of the dispensation (faithful and unfaithful [those who had heeded his exhortations and warnings, and those who hadn't heeded these exhortations and warnings, seen in 5:1-9]), with events surrounding the judgment seat in view. And the remainder of the book simply forms Paul's closing remarks for his first epistle.

Then, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul began at a time following the Tribulation, continuing from his first epistle.

And the Tribulation is not seen in these events concerning Christians both preceding and following the Tribulation, for Christians have nothing to do with the Tribulation. Rather, the Tribulation is “the time of Jacob's trouble,” with Israel and the nations in view, not the Church.

The thrust of Paul's opening remarks in his second epistle, covering all twelve verses of the first chapter, has to do with the place which Christians will occupy in the future kingdom of Christ, following Christ's return at the end of the Tribulation.

Some, the faithful, will occupy positions of glory and honor in Christ's kingdom, seated on the throne with Christ as He exercises power over the nations, realizing the “salvation” spoken of in I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:5, 10-2:1; *cf.* Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21).

Others, the unfaithful, will occupy places of shame and disgrace and have no part in Christ's kingdom. They will not be privileged to ascend the throne with Him as He exercises power over the nations, realizing instead the “wrath” spoken of in I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:6-9; *cf.* Rev. 3:15-17).

Then chapter two begins with a continuing statement from the closing verses of chapter one, remaining within the same subject matter — faithful Christians “gathering together unto him” at the time of His return at the end of the Tribulation.

This was Paul's way of introducing a dissertation to correct

erroneous teaching which had found its way into the Church in Thessalonica, purporting to have come from him (vv. 2ff).

(It is commonly taught that the “gathering together unto him” in II Thess. 2:1 has to do with the rapture. And a lesser number of Christians try to see the rapture taught in the third verse of this chapter through a rather strained usage of the Greek word *apostasia*, using the thought of “departure” for the meaning of the word and then trying to apply it to the Church being removed at the end of the dispensation.

Though “departure” is the idea behind the meaning of the word *apostasia* [literal meaning, “to stand away from”], attempting to see the rapture in either of these opening verses of the second chapter [vv. 1, 3] is clearly both textually and contextually wrong. And this can easily be seen by simply reading both in the light of their contexts.

Again, Scripture must be interpreted in the light of Scripture. A failure to do this, attempting to see the rapture in either of these two verses, has done away with any correct understanding of these verses. And, as a result, interpretation is negatively affected elsewhere in the chapter.

In the preceding respect, along with not understanding the overall picture beginning with chapter one in I Thessalonians, it is little wonder that Bible students have trouble understanding and identifying that which presently exists in II Thess. 2:6, 7, preventing the appearance of the man of sin.)

### **That Preventing the Appearance of Antichrist**

Aside from the “falling away” (“the apostasy”), which, contextually, could only be *a concluding work* of “the mystery of iniquity” (vv. 3, 7), the passage centers on *something unnamed that is preventing the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition*. And that being referenced (which, contextually, could only be associated with the apostasy [a Satanic work against that being referenced]) *must be removed, taken out of the way, before this man can be revealed*.

An interesting feature of the matter is that Paul didn’t need to identify that being referenced, *for those in Thessalonica could only have already known what he was writing about (v. 6), needing no explanation*.



But the same thing cannot be said of Bible students today. Most of them have trouble with this, and many of them simply leave it alone, not knowing what to do with it.

(Most Bible students today, seeking to explain what Paul was referencing, which the Thessalonians could only have understood, attempt to see *the Holy Spirit* as the restrainer.

They do this, to a large extent, on the basis of the Greek text's usage of both neuter and masculine words to reference the restrainer [neuter in v. 6, masculine in v. 7]. And "Spirit" is a neuter word in the Greek text, though the Spirit, at times, is spoken of in a masculine respect [e.g., John 16:7-11].)

But is this the way that those in Thessalonica would have understood the matter? If so, Why?

Instead of surmising about the matter though there is *a much better way* to answer these questions, which will, as well, leave us with the same mind-set as those in Thessalonica almost 2,000 years ago.

In this respect, answers are, in reality, quite easy to come by. Those in Thessalonica understood what Paul was teaching; but few Bible teachers today do so, which is where the problem lies.

Those in Thessalonica understood the content of Paul's gospel, seeing the message throughout as a message to the saved relative to the coming kingdom of Christ.

Bible students today, almost without exception, see Paul's gospel as simply another way to reference the gospel of grace, seeing the message throughout I, II Thessalonians as dealing largely with saved-unsaved issues, intermixed with a message to Christians, though not a message in keeping with the content of Paul's gospel at all.

Paul's gospel had to do with a message to those who had already heard and responded to the message of the gospel of the grace of God. It had to do with a message concerning Christian faithfulness, with a view to the coming kingdom of Christ. It had to do with the purpose for the present dispensation — *the Spirit sent into the world to call out a bride for God's Son, with a view to the bride ascending the throne with Christ during the coming age.*

In the preceding respect, Paul's gospel, as seen dealt with throughout I Thessalonians, had to do with the antitype of Genesis chapter twenty-four (*with I Thessalonians forming a commentary on this chapter*), set between the death of Abraham's wife (ch. 23) and Abraham again taking a wife (ch. 25).

Paul's gospel had to do with God sending His Spirit to the earth to find and procure a bride for His Son, Jesus (as Abraham, in the type, sent his eldest servant into the far country to find and procure a bride for his son, Isaac).

And the whole of the matter in the antitype occurs exactly as in the type. The Spirit's search for and procurement of a bride for God's Son occurs following Israel being set aside (looked upon as dead [John 11:1ff]) but before God restores and remarries the adulterous wife that He divorced.

In the type, following Abraham's servant procuring the bride, the servant removed the bride from the far country (accompanied by maidens, riding on evidently the same ten camels in the servant's possession when he had come into the far country to search for and procure the bride [ten showing *completeness*; *all went forth to meet Isaac, as all Christians will go forth to meet Christ*]).

And in the antitype, following the Spirit's procurement of the bride, the Spirit will remove the bride from the earth (*remove all Christians, with the bride revealed at the judgment seat*).

In the type, Isaac came forth to meet his bride; and, in the antitype, Jesus will come forth to meet His bride.

The preceding is seen in I Thess. 4:13ff and can only be an inseparable part of Paul's gospel. And when God's purpose for the present dispensation has been completed and the Spirit removes the bride, *there will then be NOTHING to prevent the man of sin from being revealed*.

Until this occurs, *he CAN'T be revealed*; after this occurs, *NOTHING will stand in the way of his being revealed*. And since the whole of the matter is seen in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, there was no need for any type explanation to those in Thessalonica concerning what Paul meant by something holding back the revelation of this man in II Thess. 2:6, 7. *He had already told them in his first epistle*.

Thus, that which is holding back the revelation of the man of sin is more than just the removal of the Spirit. *It has to do with the Spirit completing His dispensational work and removing the bride (which, as well, clearly shows a pretribulation removal of Christians).*

*God works with set times, set ways, particular individuals, nations (Israel, and the nations through Israel) through which His plans and purposes are worked out and brought to pass.*

Things referenced in II Thess. 2:1ff have to do with two different set times in this respect — *a removal relative to one, and a revealing relative to the other.*

*And until these set times arrive, NEITHER can occur; but when these set times arrive, BOTH must occur.*