

I. THE TEXT.

- A. 2Th. 2:1-2. The Day of the Lord Not Already Present.
 - 1. **[v1]** Paul gives instructions concerning the coming of Christ.
 - 2. **[v2]** Do not:
 - a. Be quickly shaken.
 - b. Disturbed by a message from:
 - 1) A spirit (a communication through a prophet).
 - 2) A word (a communication by oral means).
 - 3) A letter (a written communication).
 - c. Believe that the day of the Lord has already come.
- B. 2Th. 2:3-12. Events to Precede the Coming of the Lord.
 - 1. **[v3]** Let no one deceive you. Before Jesus returns:
 - a. The apostasy must come.
 - b. The son of destruction (perdition, man of lawlessness) must be revealed.
 - 2. **[v4]** The son of destruction:
 - a. Opposes Christ and Christians.
 - b. Exalts himself against every other object of worship.
 - c. Takes his seat in the temple of God (this is usurping God's position; taking a place and position that rightfully belongs to God).
 - d. Displays himself to be God.
 - 3. **[v5,6]** Important point: Paul, while in their presence on a previous occasion, has told them of these things in greater detail than what is Written here, hence, there is difficulty in knowing exactly who he is talking about.
 - 4. **[v6,7]** Paul uses the neuter and the personal pronoun(s) in describing the restraining force. Meaning that the force could be either a person or a thing, or even that for a time it is a thing and later a person.
 - 5. **[v7]** Lawlessness is already at work, ready to be revealed when the restrainer is removed.
 - 6. **[v8]** But when the man of lawlessness appears the Lord will overcome.
 - 7. **[v9,10]** A description of the lawless one and his works:
 - a. He is in accord with Satan.
 - b. He comes with power, signs, and false wonders.
 - c. He deceives the wicked because they have rejected and refused to love the truth (Deut. 13:1-4).
 - 8. **[v11,12]** God then sends:
 - a. A deluding influence (example: OT plagues and Pharaoh).
 - b. Those who reject the truth and take pleasure in wickedness will be judged.
- C. 2Th. 2:13-15. Thanksgiving and an Admonition.
 - 1. **[v13]** Christians should give thanks because God has chosen you:
 - a. For salvation.
 - b. For sanctification by
 - 1) The Holy Spirit.
 - 2) Faith in the truth.
 - 2. **[v14]** We are called by the gospel to gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13,14).
 - 3. **[v15]** So, because of all of the above:
 - a. Stand firm.
 - b. Hold on to the traditions received.

- 1) From the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 1:2; 2Th. 3:6).
 - 2) Not those of men (Mt. 15:3,6; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8).
- D. 2Th. 2:16-17. A Prayer for the Thessalonians.
1. **[v16,17]** May Jesus Christ and God the Father give:
 - a. Eternal comfort (by grace).
 - b. Good hope (by grace).
 - c. Comfort and strengthen their hearts in every good work and word.

II. **AN EXCURSUS ON THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS.**

- A. Depending on your translation, he is known as:
 1. The man of sin.
 2. The man of lawlessness.
 3. The son of perdition.
 4. The son of destruction.
 5. The incarnation of wickedness.
 6. The representative of lawlessness.
 7. The lawless one.
- B. "The purpose of the writers (Paul) is clear. They wish to comfort and strengthen the Thessalonians in the midst of persecutions by assuring them of the final victory of the cause of God and the ultimate defeat of those who oppose His cause."
- C. "It is evident, therefore, that the passage yielded itself more readily to the understanding of the Thessalonians than it does to a modern reader. It may thus be that the writers intentionally designed the passage for a limited and local need."
- D. Various interpretations of the "man of lawlessness" are as follows:
 1. **A certain Roman emperor or a line of Roman emperors.**
 - a. Nero and Domitian are prime examples.
 - b. If this be true it helps explain the need for symbolic language in trying to protect the readers from further harm.
 - c. The restraining force would be the working of the Roman government in keeping Domitian out of power as long as it did. I believe that Josephus argues that Domitian wanted the throne when Nero went down. In a civil war, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were killed, but Vespasian ruled instead, then Titus, and finally Domitian came to power in 81AD. The persecuting beast that was (Rev. 17:8) was Nero, and the beast to come (Rev. 17:8) is Domitian.
 - d. But, for this interpretation to be true one might argue that the Roman empire must be in power when Jesus comes again.
 2. **The papacy and the apostasy of the Roman church.**
 - a. There is considerable support for this view in light of the practices of the Roman church as described (and condemned) in the following passages:
 - 1) False christs and false prophets will arise (Mk. 13:22-23).
 - 2) Forbidding marriage and abstaining from certain foods (1Tim. 4:1-5).
 - b. The restraining force would be the pagan (or temporal) power of the Roman Empire that kept the religious power from fully taking hold for many years.
 - c. But, this interpretation may not be true because the claims of the papacy are not always as blatant and unlimited as those of the man of sin.
 3. **The devil himself.**
 - a. Since the work of Satan will be in the world, and increasing through the years, only to be destroyed at the second coming of Christ, such a one so wicked could only be the devil himself.
 - b. The restraining power, in this view, is the Holy Spirit, working through the word to save the lost and keep the saved, saved.
 - c. But this interpretation may not be true for two reasons:

- 1) Paul says that the coming of this lawless one is "by the activity of Satan" and not Satan himself.
 - 2) It seems a bit inconceivable that if the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, the He would be "taken out of the way."
4. **A borrowing from Babylonian mythology.**
 - a. This interpretation says that when Babylonian writers wanted to stress the conflict between the forces of good and evil they used similar styles.
 - b. But this interpretation may not be true, because, there are a great number of differences between all of the Babylonian mythological conflicts and the things spoken of in this passage.
 5. **The Antichrist.**
 - a. This view is in keeping with the pre-millennial view of Revelation, in that the prophecies thereof are to be fulfilled many, many years after they were originally given and discuss the events at the end of time before the second coming of Christ.
 - b. The *apostasy* (falling away) refers to the ungodly conditions that will be present in the world shortly before the Lord returns.
The *man of sin* is the antichrist who will rule the earth after Jesus has raptured the 144,000. This is the period of the great tribulation that is supposed to last for seven years.
That which hinders is the Holy Spirit, who will also be removed from the earth during the great tribulation, allowing sin and suffering to be incredible and unrestrained.
 6. **Judaism.**
 - a. This view says that the man of sin was a very powerful and high-ranking Jew that continually used his power and influence to persecute the church.
 - b. The restraining force would probably be the Roman government, only allowing this man to do whatever was within the limits of Roman, civil law.
- E. In drawing conclusions about the text and who or what the "man of lawlessness" is or isn't, dogmatism is not in order. Of the six interpretations offered, it seems that either one of these two are the most correct (having the fewest problems in proving).
1. **A certain Roman emperor or a line of Roman emperors.**
 - a. In Rev. 13, John identifies two forces that are real enemies of the church. The first beast (the sea beast, Rev. 13:1-10) symbolizes governmental, pagan power.
 - b. The lesson for the Thessalonians was one that said there would be a coming ruler in the Roman empire that would fit the description of 2Th. 2:9. They need not think that the day of the Lord has already come because this man of sin, that Paul had previously warned them about had not yet come.
 - c. A more permanent lesson here is that it makes no difference as to what pagan, governmental power rules, it will not overcome the church.
 2. **The papacy and the apostasy of the Roman church.**
 - a. The second enemy of the church identified in Rev. 13, is the second beast (the earth beast, Rev. 13:11-18) which symbolizes false religion, possibly papal power.
 - b. Some of the members of the Thessalonian church would not die until they saw the fulfillment of this prophecy. A man would rise up having tremendous religious power; power not authorized by the NT.
 - c. A more permanent lesson here is that Paul could also be referring to a succession of popes that would allow this prophecy to come true in the immediate future and continually for many years to come. If the prophecy concerned just one man, then Jesus would have to return shortly after the death of that one man. But, if the prophecy is actually about many men, all

claiming the same power (a success of popes) then the prophecy can last many, many years until Jesus comes again.

- F. "This lawless one may be movement, an institution, a system, or even an individual. Whatever may be his exactly identity, his doom is certain."

III. LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS.

- A. Too many times when this chapter is studied the emphasis so focuses on the "man of sin" that the overall lessons to be gained are lost. To avert that end, note the following:
1. The reason for writing is so that the Thessalonians will not be disturbed.
 2. The false doctrine evidently being taught was that the day of the Lord was already present.
 3. Paul warns the Thessalonians not to be deceived by such teachings.
 4. The ultimate triumph of God and X over Satan and His works is made abundantly clear.
 5. The Thessalonians are people of truth, not of error, and have the sanctification that comes from God.
 6. Paul, again, as he has done so often in these two letters, gives thanks for the brethren.
 7. Paul prays that God will bless, comfort, and establish them in all they say and do.

Information and quotes from

Kelcy, R. A. (1968). The Letters of Paul to The Thessalonians. THE LIVING WORD COMMENTARY. Everett Ferguson, Ed. Sweet; Austin, TX.