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'THE MAN OF SIN' OF 2 THESSALONIANS

When we think of prophecies in the New Testament, we tend to think of the book of Revelation and of Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21. We seldom think of the apostle Paul in the context of prophecies. Yet Paul made some very powerful predictions, i.e. prophecies. One such prophecy is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. There Paul predicted that "a man of sin" would have to be revealed before Christ would return.

Let's examine these verses very carefully.

Here is the context.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him, (2 Thessalonians 2:1)

The Greek expression "huper tes parousias" means "concerning being with". The word "parousia" comes from the two words para + ousia and it means "being with", i.e. in the presence of someone. In this verse Paul is referring to the second coming of Christ. In plain modern language Paul was saying something like:

please understand something about the timing of the return of Jesus Christ, when we will be gathered together to Him.

In verse 2 Paul mentions his reason for explaining this.

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 is at hand. (2 Thessalonians 2:2)

Paul was implying that some people would spread rumours or even forge letters in his name to mislead the Church about the timing of Christ's return. It was to counter this sort of things that Paul felt it necessary to explain the things that follow.

The next verse introduces the prophecy.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

There are several things to notice here:

- 1) Predicting the return of Christ is a popular theme for those who deceive people.
- 2) Paul is implying Christ's return would be LATER than when the deceivers in his time were predicting it to be.

3) Certain things would have to happen BEFORE Christ would return.

4) Specifically, there would have to be a falling away from the true Church and its teachings. Exactly what is it that people can "fall away from"? "Falling away" is not talking about a drop in Church attendance per se. It is a reference to falling away from WHAT THE CHURCH STANDS FOR, its teachings! Such a falling away is totally independent of Church attendance figures.

5) Such a departure from the true teachings would be due to the influence of "that man of sin".

6) What will "reveal" the man of sin is the heresies he will introduce into the Church. They reveal him for what he really is, a teacher of heresies who has "crept in unawares" (Jude 1:4).

7) He is only "revealed" or exposed to those who know and understand the truth. Others will not see him in this correct perspective.

8) Paul calls this man "the son of perdition". "Perdition" is an old English word meaning: "to give to destruction". And that is a fairly accurate translation of the Greek word "apoleia", which is used in this verse. It comes from the verb "apollumi", which means: to perish, to destroy.

9) This expression "the son of perdition" is only used twice in the Bible, the other place being John 17:12, where Jesus Christ used this term in His prayer to the Father to refer to Judas Iscariot. Here in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 it is used for an end-time religious leader who is influential in causing a falling away from the true teachings of the Bible. Will that also be some form of betrayal, even as Judas betrayed Jesus Christ?

10) Exactly what it is that the "man of sin" does is not stated in this verse. That is indicated in subsequent verses. At this point the only hint is a possible parallel to Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ though he knew better, as Judas' later statement "I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4) makes clear.

In the next verse Paul gives more specific details about this particular man. He is not quoting any Old Testament prophecies, though there is a fairly clear parallel to Satan's attitude, as revealed in Isaiah 14:12-14. Thus Paul's statement in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 is very clearly A PROPHECY! And it is a prophecy that was given to the Church.

Notice verse 4.

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. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

The different Greek texts for this verse are identical except that the Alexandrian text leaves out the words "hos theon", meaning "as God". Thus the NIV, which is based on this Alexandrian text, reads as follows:

He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4 NIV)

In spite of this omission in the NIV, the overall message of this verse is the same in these translations. The NIV's rendition "proclaiming himself to be God" conveys the same point as is conveyed by the KJV.

There are several things to notice about this verse:

- 1) This "man of sin" does two things: he opposes something or someone, and he exalts himself.
 - 2) The One he opposes is Almighty God! Since he obviously cannot oppose God face-to-face, it means he must oppose something that represents God, God's mind and God's will. The Bible is an expression of the mind of God, and that is why it is called "THE WORD of God". So this "man of sin" opposes God's mind, as it is revealed in the Bible.
 - 3) When it says that this man "exalts himself", it is telling us that he is not subject to God's will, as revealed in the Bible. We demonstrate to God that we are subject to Him by submitting to His laws. So this man is in opposition to GOD'S LAWS.
 - 4) This fact of rebellion against God's laws is also made clear in 2 Thessalonians 2:7.
 - 5) Exalting himself "above all that is called God or that is worshipped" means that this man attempts to destroy a correct understanding of what God really IS!
 - 6) This man sits "in the temple of God". "Sitting" means that this man is in a position of authority. He is in some way in charge. "Sitting" is used to symbolize this position of rulership. It is NOT referring to literally sitting in some building. Rulers nowadays don't spend their time that way, sitting in a specific locality. Even the Catholic Pope spends very little time actually SITTING in St. Peter's in Rome. Leaders today sit in executive offices with all kinds of electronic media at their fingertips.
 - 7) "The temple of God" is not referring to a literal building in Jerusalem. IF the Jews were to build a literal temple today, they would first have to do something about the Dome of the Rock. And even then whatever they would build would still not be THE TEMPLE OF GOD!
- God has not instructed the Jews today to build Him a temple. If the Jews were to build such a temple, it would be utterly defiled, built by a rebellious and unrepentant people! It is not that anyone can just put up a building in the right location and then somehow coax God into accepting it as "HIS" temple! If such a temple were indeed "GOD'S temple", then it would imply God's presence there. And without God's presence it simply would not be GOD'S temple! So even if the Jews do build some kind of temple structure, that still would not make it "God's temple". God's presence won't be in it!
- 8) The "temple of God" is a reference to the Church of God. Paul wrote this prophecy here. And it was Paul who explained in 1 Corinthians 3:16:

Know ye not that YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)

Paul also referred to the Church of God as "the house of God":

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Peter used the same expression:

For the time [is come] that judgment must begin AT THE HOUSE OF GOD: and if [it] first [begin] at us, what shall the end [be] of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

And Paul also used this terminology in explaining Christ's role:

And [having] an high priest OVER (the Greek 'epi' means 'TO' or 'UNTO') THE HOUSE OF GOD; (Hebrews 10:21)

9) So the expression that this "man of sin" will "sit in the temple of God" tells us that this man is likely to be THE LEADER of an era of the Church of God, the last era preceding the return of Jesus Christ.

10) The expression that he "sits as God in the temple of God" means that he is USURPING power that belongs to God, by changing teachings that God has put into His Church. ONLY GOD CAN CHANGE THE LAW OF GOD! Anyone who attempts to do so is nothing more than a usurper. In attempting to do away with the law of God, this man will exalt himself above God. The law of God is God's life-style, it is what God lives by. But "the man of sin" places himself ABOVE that law.

11) This Scripture does NOT say that this "man of sin" actually requires people to worship him. That is something we can easily read into this verse, but that is not really stated. He is presumptuous and self-willed towards God and incites people to think of themselves as ABOVE the law of God. But it is not a matter of requiring people to actually bow down before him physically.

12) The point is that he places himself above the law of God, thereby exalting himself above God and above all that is worshipped!

13) The expression "showing himself that he is God" is in the context of "the temple" where he "sits". He is not necessarily showing himself TO THE WHOLE WORLD as "God". He is showing himself in this way to those who comprise or make up "the temple". In other words, he is showing himself to the members of God's Church as being in the place of God. He does this by setting himself OVER the law of God, which is an expression of the nature of God.

In the next verse Paul refers to the things he had told the people there in person.

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? (2 Thessalonians 2:5)

Exactly what he had told them is not stated. But in the context it seems to be connected with not expecting the return of Christ until certain things had happened in the Church. It isn't totally clear to me whether Paul expected these events to occur in his own lifetime or not? And I suppose that it doesn't really make a difference.

Now we come to verse 6.

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. (2 Thessalonians 2:6)

In the Greek this reads:

kai nun to katechon oidate eis to apokaluphthenai auton en to heautou kairo (2 Thessalonians

2:6)

There are several things to notice about verse 6:

- 1) Paul's audience knew exactly what Paul was referring to. It was something he had explained to them in person when he had been there.
 - 2) The verb "katechon" is the present active participle of "katecho", a verb formed from the two words "kata" + "echo". This verb is used five times in the present active participle form. In the other four verses it is translated as "possess" (in 1 Corinthians 7:30 and in 2 Corinthians 6:10), as "hold (back)" (in Romans 1:18) and as "letteth" (in 2 Thessalonians 2:7). The word means: to hold back, detain, retain.
 - 3) Paul explains that what was being "held back" was the return of Jesus Christ. This is the subject he had addressed in verse 1. Something specific has to occur before Christ will return.
 - 4) The words "eis to" are used with the infinitive "apokaluphthenai" to give a purpose statement. Thus it is best translated something like: "TO THE END THAT he might be revealed". This grammatical construction implies that there is a holding back FOR A PURPOSE!
 - 5) "Heautou" is a reflexive pronoun, meaning "in his OWN time". Christ will be revealed in His own time; and "the man of sin" will also be revealed in his own time. The focus of the revealing mentioned in verse 6 is more on this "man of sin" though.
 - 6) What Paul is showing in this verse is that God has a specific time-frame, according to which He is working things out. God is in control of the timing.
 - 7) So Paul was explaining that the return of Jesus Christ was being held back by the fact that a "man of sin" had not yet precipitated a falling away from the true teachings of the Bible. That falling away would take place amongst members of God's own Church.
 - 8) This "man of sin" himself, in turn, would not be revealed until after he had initiated the falling away.
 - 9) Since the members of God's Church do NOT look to leaders of other religions for instruction regarding the laws of God, it means that a falling away from obedience to God's laws can only be precipitated by "a wicked one" from WITHIN the Church! If any OUTSIDE religious leader attempted to get members of the Church of God to let go of their allegiance to obedience to God's laws, he would be told to "go and jump!". To succeed, Satan knows that a plot to start a falling away from the truth must be initiated by the leadership WITHIN the Church!
- That's precisely what Satan tried to achieve with the S.T.P. in the late 1970'ies. It was initiated by leaders under Mr. Armstrong. It failed because the man at the very top (Mr. Armstrong) was not involved. To succeed, a falling away must have the support of the man at the very top.
- 10) So when we talk about a "man of sin" who will cause or precipitate a falling away from the truth of God, we are speaking about someone IN the Church of God. But when we talk about someone performing "signs and LYING wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9), it seems to be more of a reference to the great false religious leader who is referred to as "the false prophet" in the book of Revelation (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Thus, there is very likely a duality of applications in these verses, once to a condition in the Church of God, and another application to conditions in the world prior to Christ's return. Such duality is also found in other prophetic sections of the Bible, and is by no means unique to these verses.

Here is the next verse.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

In the Greek this reads:

to gar musterion ede energeitai tes anomias monon ho katechon arti heos ek mesou genetai (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

1) The Greek word "musterion" (i.e. mystery) literally means: that which is known to the initiated ones. It comes from "mueo", to initiate into secrets.

2) The word "anomia" (i.e. iniquity) consists of the negative prefix "a" plus the word "nomos", meaning "law". So "anomia" literally refers to: A CONDITION OF BEING WITHOUT LAW. This is somewhat different from acknowledging the existence of laws, but knowingly transgressing them. This word "anomia" really denies that binding laws exist!

3) "Tes anomias" is the genitive case and thus means "OF BEING WITHOUT LAWS". So let's put all this together:

The Greek words that are translated as "the mystery of iniquity" actually mean: there are some "initiated ones" who are trying to create a condition where laws don't exist. So when they encourage people to actively BREAK God's holy laws, they do this by claiming that those laws no longer exist.

4) Again, to affect people in the Church of God who believe in keeping the laws of God, this is something that can only be perpetrated by leaders within the Church itself! For the Pope or any Protestant leader to claim that God's laws are not binding on believers today is really of no importance. God's people don't really care what these false religious leaders believe and teach.

5) The use of the word "mystery" also implies that there is A SECRET PURPOSE behind trying to create a condition in which no binding laws exist. Obviously that will be denied! But that is what the word "musterion" conveys. In plain terms in modern English, it means that there is AN ULTERIOR MOTIVE behind wanting to see God's laws abolished. In a "mystery" the real facts are hidden from view.

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament states that "musterion" means:

religious secrets confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals.

6) Going back to verse 7: the "initiated ones" will be working at trying to achieve a condition in which there are no laws to obey. In the second part of this verse Paul is saying that during his time (back in the 50's and 60's A.D.) something or someone was holding back things that prevented this "man of sin" being revealed for what he is. Something or someone is holding back "UNTIL ..."! In the next verse we are taken right up to Christ's second coming. So verse 7 bridges that time.

7) In the Greek this particular construction stands out because of an OMISSION, something we would

never notice in English. A few comments about Greek grammar may be helpful at this point:

There is a word in Greek for which we don't really have an accurate equivalent in English. It is the primary particle "an". In Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon it is described as follows:

"a particle INDICATING THAT SOMETHING CAN OR SHOULD OCCUR ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS, OR BY THE COMBINATION OF CERTAIN FORTUITOUS CAUSES. In Latin it has no equivalent, nor do the English words "HAPLY, PERCHANCE" exactly and everywhere correspond to it."

It is never used when something is definite and unconditional. It is a word that conveys that something is conditional.

In the New Testament this particle is used 191 times in 173 different verses. In the KJV text it is only translated 80 times, and 111 times the translators left it out in English, simply because it would be quite verbose to accurately convey its meaning, without really adding very much.

Now here is the point: it is frequently used in combination with the Greek word "heos", meaning "till, until". These two words appear together in the N.T. over 20 times, when statements are conditional. This finer point usually goes unnoticed in the English text.

So when something that is "UNTIL" a certain time is conditional, then the Greek particle "an" is commonly used in the N.T.. However, here in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 we have a statement that something holds back "until" a certain event takes place, BUT THE PARTICLE "AN" IS NOT USED! To someone reading this verse in the Greek text, the word "an" is here conspicuous by its absence! The reader would expect it to precede the word "heos". But Paul chose not to use it here.

I don't mean to make this into some major issue, it is more an interesting observation. But it does mean that Paul made his statement more emphatic by omitting this particle in this construction. The individual being referred to is going to be removed, and that is certain! No conditions attached!

8) The Greek words "ek mesou" mean "from the midst" or "out of the midst", rather than "out of the way". "Mesos" is an adjective which is here used adverbially. The word for "way" is not used. Now this expression "out of the MIDST" implies that this individual is until then a part of a larger body or organization, out of the midst of which he will be removed. This is somewhat obscured by the words "out of the way".

The Greek adjective "mesos" is used 61 times in the N.T.. Every time the word "midst" appears in the N.T. (KJV), 45 times in all, it is this word or a verbal form "mesoo". It appears in expressions like "in the midst of wolves", "in the midst of the sea", "among wheat", etc., and always implies a larger context.

9) So notice carefully: the individual being referred to here is part of a larger body. That is clear! The question is: what is that "larger body"? Paul doesn't mean the world as a whole; nor is he here talking about the great and influential and powerful false church. The only larger body out of whose midst this individual can be taken is "the Church of God". It is this fact that is obscured by the wrong translation "out of the WAY".

In these first 7 verses of this chapter Paul has only been speaking about the Church of God. It is from the true Church that people are going to fall away; it is in the Church of God that someone will occupy a position of authority and attempt to do away with God's laws; it is into the Church of God that certain "initiated ones" will attempt to introduce a state of an absence of the laws of God (i.e. the mystery of

iniquity).

And it is out of the midst of the Church that this individual is going to be removed! That is something we need to clearly understand. Verse 7 concludes the discussion of this individual, this "man of sin". He is taken out of the midst of the Church. From verse 8 on Paul explains what happens after this man is removed.

10) So let's try to put the whole verse together:

- the word "mystery" tells us there are "initiated ones"
- the word "iniquity" means "an absence of God's laws"
- Paul saw this trend already being implemented
- someone is holding back something
- it is speaking about the Church of God
- there is a secret purpose involved
- the person who is holding back something is going to be taken out of the midst of the Church
- UNTIL he is taken out of the midst, he is going to hold back something
- in verse 3 Paul had identified this individual as "a man of sin" and "the son of perdition".

I don't know that I have it all totally correctly figured out, but here is the way I understand these verses:

In verse 6 Paul tells the Thessalonians that they knew WHAT was being "held back". It was the event that they were looking forward to, the second coming of Jesus Christ. But this event (Christ's second coming) was not being held back by any man. It was being held back because certain circumstances and conditions had not yet come about, the falling away from the truth of God had not yet taken place. But those CONDITIONS that are holding back the return of Christ are under the full and total control of God; they are not being controlled or held back by any man!

In verse 7 Paul refers to an individual, a specific man. This is the same man who, as Paul had said in verse 3, had to be "revealed". This man is also holding back something. But what he is holding back is NOT the second coming of Christ! No man CAN hold back the return of Jesus Christ. Think this through carefully; there is nothing any human being can do that will force God to delay His time-schedule, as to when God wants Christ to return!

But there are other things that this "man of sin" really CAN hold back. And they are tied to the condition of an absence of God's laws that this man wants to establish. So does Paul give us any clues about what he had in mind with this "man of sin"?

Yes, he does. Notice Romans 1:18, where Paul used this same verb "katecho" (to hold back):

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of MEN, WHO HOLD [BACK!] THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS; (Romans 1:18)

This is PRECISELY what the "man of sin" is doing in 2 Thessalonians 2:7! He is HOLDING BACK THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS! That is the only way he can promote his desire to see the law of God abolished, by holding back the truth of God! And he is going to continue to do that UNTIL he is taken out of the midst of the Church!

THE PROBLEM we have had in understanding this section of Scripture is due to the false assumptions we have made about the context. We have often assumed that it is talking about a physical temple in Jerusalem; and we have assumed that it is speaking about a false religious leader like the Pope.

However, in the first 7 verses of this chapter Paul has not been talking about the world at large at all. He has been talking strictly about the Church of God and things that affect THE CHURCH! He is talking TO Church members ABOUT the Church and things that affect the Church. As far as living by the laws of God is concerned (and also the attempt to remove the laws of God), the world has only very rarely featured in any way. The ideas of the great false churches have never been the determining factors in what members of the true Church of God believe. It is only whenever some leader WITHIN the true Church has been influenced by the ideas of outsiders, that, through his influence, those wrong ideas might have a detrimental impact on the beliefs of Church members.

So, in verses 6 and 7 Paul twice refers to "holding back" something. In verse 6 he says that the return of Christ is being held back because certain events or circumstances have not yet come about. Specifically, a "man of sin" (sin IS the transgression of the law of God) has to be revealed first. Then, in verse 7, Paul says that this man himself is also holding back something. He is holding back the truth of God in order to promote lawlessness. His holding back of the truth of God will only come to an end when he is removed out of the midst of the Church. That, in turn, will bring to an end the holding back of the return of Christ. So THEN the other events surrounding the return of Christ can proceed.

It is "the man of sin" who holds back the truth of God. It is God who holds back the return of Christ. It is God who decides exactly when to take this "man of sin" out of the midst of the Church. God is in full control of the whole process!

So the question is: WHEN is this "man of sin" taken out of the midst of the Church? It is not just at the second coming of Christ, but before then! The "man of sin" is the leader of the Laodicean era, and his aim is to abolish the laws of God. He is removed "out of the midst" when the people who have God's Spirit are taken to the place of safety. Many Laodiceans will die in the persecutions that will follow the flight of the Philadelphians. There will be no further role for that "man of sin" to fulfill once the Philadelphians have fled. In the eyes of this world's large religions this man will not be particularly important. They don't need him.

However, from the time that the Philadelphians flee, there WILL be a need IN THE WORLD, not in the Church, for another major "mystery of iniquity"! That need will exist because of the very fact that a group of people have gone to this "place of safety", and that there will be "two witnesses" preaching God's message to the world. This "mystery of iniquity" will be Satan's attempt to suppress the truth to the whole world. So there will be the need for another man who will also be a religious leader. But he will have to represent the world's large church. In the book of Revelation he is called "the false prophet". "Prophets" make predictions, and he will make false predictions, backed up by lying wonders and signs done by Satan's power.

So the story-flow continues in verse 8.

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: (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

kai tote apokaluphthesetai ho anomos hon ho kurios analosei to pneumati tou stomatos autou kai katargesei te epiphaneia tes parousias autou (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

The words "kai tote" mean: "and at that time" or "and then". It is showing a progression, something that happens AFTER "the man of sin" has been taken out of the midst of the Church. Paul is now referring to the next major event.

Verses 6-7 talk about the "man of sin" IN THE CHURCH being revealed and taken out of the midst. Verse 8 then speaks about ANOTHER LAWLESS ONE being revealed. This is the "big one", as far as the world's religious scene is concerned. This is "the false prophet" of the end-time. This "lawless one" is only revealed (NOT yet taken out of the midst of HIS church environment) when the Philadelphians go to the place of safety and the Laodiceans stay behind. THEN this man is revealed as being the instrument of Satan.

The words "ho anomos" mean "the lawless one", as we already know from verse 7. So this leader in the large false church will also stand in opposition to God's laws! The Catholic Church is on record as acknowledging that the Bible teaches the observance of Saturday and not Sunday. They claim that they had THE RIGHT to change it to Sunday because of the authority Christ delegated to Peter, and which from there was passed on to the Popes. Therefore the Catholic Church is already on record as attempting to do away with the law of God. So their leaders already qualify for the term "ho anomos"!

The rest of verse 8 and on to verse 9 clearly identifies who is being talked about. Notice carefully the differences between the TWO MEN being talked about in this chapter:

Both of them are in opposition to the law of God. The "man of sin" of verses 3-7 is in the top position of authority IN THE CHURCH ("in the temple of God"), but he performs no signs or lying wonders, nor does he utilize the power of Satan to do any "miracles". And in verse 7 he is removed!

Then the next "lawless one" is revealed, the really "big fish". That "lawless one" in verses 8-10 is not sitting "in the temple of God".

Just think for a moment: even if the Jews DID build a temple in Jerusalem, why on earth would a Pope want to sit down there in Jerusalem? There is no way the Jews would, in a few years, build anything near as impressive as St. Peter's basilica in Rome. The dimensions of St. Peter's and its whole environment (including the Sistine Chapel, etc.) are absolutely STAGGERING! There's no way the Jews could build something to compete with the splendour of St. Peter's. And even if the Jews did build some magnificent edifice, that still would not make it "GOD'S Temple", would it?

How would the Pope sitting in a temple in Jerusalem impress the 800 million plus Catholics around the world? Why should they be impressed by their leader sitting in Jerusalem? He would want to be where his people are, where there is a large Catholic population, not surrounded by Arabs and Jews. It simply does not make sense to expect the Pope to have any desire to want to move his headquarters to Jerusalem. That whole idea is based on a misunderstanding of verse 4. It is "the Beast" who, for a period of time and for strategic reasons, makes his headquarters in Jerusalem (Daniel 11:45), not "the false Prophet".

Next, in verse 8, this is the individual who will be alive at the second coming of Christ (at "the brightness of His coming"). The words "hon ho kurios analosei" mean "whom the Lord shall consume". He is the one who has challenged Christ. This identifies him as "the false Prophet" of Revelation 19:20. Notice this verse:

And the beast was taken, and with him THE FALSE PROPHET THAT WROUGHT MIRACLES before him, WITH WHICH HE DECEIVED THEM THAT HAD RECEIVED THE MARK OF THE BEAST, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (Revelation 19:20)

This "false Prophet" is identified as having deceived those in the world, those that had accepted the mark of the beast. He is not pictured as "in the temple of God". The fact that he "deceived" people means that his miracles were false. And that is also confirmed in the verse we are examining.

This "false Prophet" has challenged Christ, not by sitting in some temple in Jerusalem (if the Jews do build some temple today, it is not one that Christ will ever sit in), but by claiming to have miraculous powers!

This is made clear in verse 9.

[Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

The "miracles" referred to in Revelation 19:20 are here identified as "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders". The Greek expression "kata energeian tou satana" literally means "according to the energy of Satan". This is when Satan knows that he only has "a short time" left (Revelation 12:12) and so he is, through this individual, working at a furious pace. But what is done amounts to a grand worldwide deception; they are only "lying wonders", but they are impressive enough to deceive the whole world, as is shown in the next verse (and also in Revelation 12:9).

But "signs and lying wonders" are not a part of the repertoire of the "man of sin" in the Church of God in verses 3-7. That individual didn't have any supernatural powers. He is "taken away out of the midst of the Church"; but this "lawless one" in verses 8-10 is "consumed" and "destroyed" at the second coming of Christ. He is shown as having been possessed by Satan, receiving power from Satan.

The deception this individual is instrumental in producing is referred to in the next verse.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

The Greek for "in them that perish" is "tois apollumenois", which is the present participle of the verb. Participles are sometimes referred to as verbal nouns and are usually rendered in English with an "-ing" or an "-ed" ending. The most accurate translation here would probably be "in them that are perishing"; i.e. those who are currently in that condition by virtue of living contrary to God's laws (i.e. "anomia").

The fact which this verse illustrates is that most people today (because they ARE receptive to Satan's ways of thinking) don't really want the truth of God. It is BECAUSE they don't really want God's truth (in spite of outward appearances) that God allows the condition in the next verse to come upon them.

And FOR THIS CAUSE God shall send them STRONG DELUSION, that they should believe a lie: (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

kai dia touto pempsei autois ho theos energeian planes eis to pisteusai autous to pseudei (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

The words translated as "strong delusion" are "energeian planes", two nouns. "Energeian" is the accusative case (i.e. the object of the sentence) and it means "working". "Planes" is the genitive case and thus means "OF deception".

Thus in this verse Paul tells us:

"Because people don't really want the truth, THEREFORE God will send them the strong working of deception, so that they should actually believe a lie."

This is something important for us to understand: people who don't really love the truth of God, are INEVITABLY going to believe some lies! Since they don't love the truth, they have a vested interest in the lies. The lies tell them what they want to hear, or prefer to hear.

The next verse explains the ultimate result of this deception.

THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE DAMNED who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

The Greek verb here translated as "damned" is "krino". This verb is used 114 times in the N.T. and only here is it (mis)translated as "damned". It really means "to judge" and is translated 88 times as "judge". The word in the N.T. that really means "damnation" is "apoleia", which we already saw in verse 3, where it is translated as "perdition".

So in verse 12 Paul is saying:

"Those who are going to believe a lie, because that is what they really WANT to do, are going to be JUDGED (but not necessarily 'damned'). They are going to be judged because they had pleasure in someone telling them that God's laws are done away (i.e. pleasure in unrighteousness). It allowed them to do what they really wanted to do."

This is in agreement with the Church's understanding that those who are deceived in this age, are going to come up in a "judgment". But they are not necessarily "condemned" or "damned". Their eyes will then be opened to God's truth, and, upon real repentance, they will have access to God's Holy Spirit.

This basically concludes the section that talks about "the man of sin". Let's summarize what we have seen:

- 1) The theme Paul is dealing with in this section is a discussion of events leading up to the second coming of Christ.
- 2) Paul gave a run-down of some events that would precede Christ's return. In verses 3-7 he is speaking about one individual in a position of authority in the Church of God. This man is called a "man of sin".
- 3) It is the influence of this man that produces a falling away within the Church of God.
- 4) He opposes God and exalts himself above God by placing himself above the law of God. He tries to do away with God's laws.
- 5) He is pictured as in control (i.e. sitting) in the Church of God (i.e. the temple of God). It is only to the

Church that he shows himself as being in place of God, by proclaiming that God's laws are done away! He does NOT appear to the world at large as "God". The world at large is not even aware of the fact that there is such a thing as "the temple of God".

6) The falling away can only occur once this man has revealed his true intentions, which are to do away with God's laws.

7) TWO different things are being held back:

- God is holding back the return of Christ
- this man is holding back the truth of God.

8) TWO different men are shown as "lawless ones":

- "the man of sin" within the Church
- "the false Prophet" in the world's false church.

9) Consider this: the term "MAN OF SIN" is only meaningful if it is applied to someone IN the Church of God! It would be correct, but meaningless to apply this descriptive term to specific people outside of the Church of God, since ALL the people outside are "men of sin". The people outside of the Church have never accepted God's laws as binding. This descriptive term "man of sin" only has significance if it is applied to someone who should be IN the Church of God. It refers to someone who ENCOURAGES God's people to sin!

10) The only other time the designation "son of perdition (or damnation)" is used, is for Judas Iscariot. Judas also should have been IN the Church. Judas REJECTED the calling he had been given. Outsiders, by their actions and conduct, can also be heading for the lake of fire (which is what this term conveys), but this term "SON OF ..." is not used anywhere for them. The use of this term is a further clue that we are talking about someone who SHOULD be a converted member of the Church.

11) The two men are "revealed" in two different ways:

- what reveals the "man of sin" is when he OPENLY shows his intention to do away with the law of God in the Church of God
- what reveals "the lawless one" in the world is when he performs signs and lying wonders through the power of Satan.

12) In verses 8-10 Paul speaks about this "lawless one" in the world.

13) The term "mystery of iniquity" also is only meaningful within the Church of God. The term has no significance when applied to those outside of the Church. How can you possibly speak about a secret plot to do away with God's laws IN THE WORLD? They don't have God's laws, and that is no secret!

14) This term "mystery of iniquity" reveals precisely what would happen:

- it is a plot by "initiated ones"
- the plot is to do away with God's laws, something the world already did a long, long time ago.

15) The "man of sin" is removed OUT OF THE MIDST of the Church. The "lawless one" in the world is shown as being "consumed" at Christ's second coming. Revelation 19:20 also shows "the false Prophet" being "consumed" at Christ's coming.

16) The "man of sin" is revealed when he makes known his intention to do away with the law of God; and he is removed out of the midst of the Church when the Philadelphians are taken to the place of safety. He then has no further role to fulfill. ONLY THEN is "the lawless one" in the world revealed by the signs and lying wonders he performs through Satan's power; and he is removed at the second coming of Christ.

17) The term "son of perdition" establishes a connection between Judas Iscariot and this "man of sin" in the Church. When Judas had fulfilled his role, he faded out of the picture before the end of the story. Similarly, when this "man of sin" has fulfilled his role in removing the law of God from within the Church of God, then he too fades from the picture before the end of the story. When he bows out, the "false Prophet" makes his entrance into the picture.

18) Let's understand exactly what is meant by "sin".

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4)

pas ho poion ten hamartian kai ten anomian poiei kai he hamartia estin he anomia (1 John 3:4)

The expression "he hamartia estin he anomia" is the definition of sin that the Church of God has always used. But notice that the word used here is "anomia"! This expression literally means:

"sin is the condition of being without law!"

In the KJV, the two Greek words "he anomia" are translated by the five English words "THE TRANSGRESSION of the law". And that meaning is certainly correct. But THE REASON they are transgressed is because someone denies that they exist! Remember, "a" (prefix of negation) + "nomos" (the law) means: a condition where laws are not recognized as existing. In plain terms: sin is doing away with the law!

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines "anomia" as: THE CONDITION OF ONE WITHOUT LAW. That is precisely what I have said. And that is precisely what the "man of sin" tries to achieve ... a condition where there are no laws.

Time will show just how this prophecy is going to be fulfilled.

Frank W. Nelte