

The Unveiling of the Man of Sin



by Dale Rumble . 2008

PREFACE

After I became a Christian, I was established in the faith by an excellent Bible teacher. One part of his foundation teaching involved study of last day events. His approach to this subject was centered around the concept of a pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

When the Lord called my wife and I into His service, I was impressed by the Holy Spirit to develop thorough, clear presentations of major doctrines in order to lay good foundations in those I would be teaching. In the course of doing this, I eventually found myself addressing the theology of God's purpose for His church in the last days. As I studied, and restudied the scriptures, including a number of authors on this subject, I became convinced that the dispensational teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture was not true.

Once I had taken this position, I prayed for understanding on how to formulate an eschatology that clearly expressed what the Holy Spirit reveals in scripture concerning the Lord's plan for the church in the last days. It was in the course of this pursuit that I found myself wrestling for a clear understanding of the following scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, and in particular, verses 6 and 7.

This tract has been written to describe the revelation which opened up my heart to the meaning of these verses, which also brought me clarity on Satan's final strategy of evil for the last days.

SATAN AND THE MAN OF SIN

In order to avoid an interpretation that would be out of context with the subject being addressed, the text under consideration, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, will be examined verse by verse. As we do so, it is important to remember that, although Satan was totally defeated by Christ, he still exerts a restraining influence on the church from his place in the atmospheric heaven through spirits of accusation, condemnation, etc.

❖ *Vs. 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him . . .*

Paul begins his discourse by addressing the second coming of Christ, when believers, alive or dead, are caught up to meet the Lord Jesus at His return. The following two verses provide additional detail of this event.

*Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the **last** (i.e. seventh) **trumpet**; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain (i.e. **survive**) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

Paul is emphasizing that the return of Christ is his *primary* concern. He wants the church to be well informed on all aspects of this truth.

❖ *Vs. 2 . . . that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

The believers are told emphatically by Paul that this event, referred to in this verse as “the day of the Lord,” has not taken place. It is yet future. They are to disregard any teaching, written communication, or any prophetic utterance that says otherwise. He then goes on to point out that *two* necessary and unmistakable events *must* precede the return of Christ.

❖ *V3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the **apostasy** comes first, and the **man of lawlessness is revealed**, the son of destruction . . .*

The second coming of Christ will *not* take place until first a great apostasy takes place. The word apostasy is translated from the Greek word “APOSTASIA” meaning defection or revolt. Thus, a falling away by many from Christendom must come to pass before the second coming of Christ. This falling away began approximately one hundred years after the death of Paul. The office of Bishop was invented and defined to be the primary spiritual authority over local churches. Other hierarchical offices followed in time, and the headship of Christ was thwarted. Over several hundred years the church slowly sank into the apostasy of the Dark Ages. Reformation began with Martin Luther and continues until today. Return to the glory of the early church is yet to come (Acts 3:20-21).

A second event, which also must precede the Lord’s return, becomes the primary emphasis of Paul’s words in the remainder of the verses that we are considering. This event is the revealing or unveiling of the man of sin (or lawlessness) one who is also called the antichrist, and the son of destruction (or perdition). “Son of perdition” is used only twice in scripture, once in reference to Judas Iscariot (John 17:12), and here concerning the man of sin. This unveiling of the man of lawlessness is the context in the verses that follow.

❖ *Vs. 4 Who opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.*

Paul's words reveal that the future antichrist will be physically visible, and subject to no one, even proclaiming and projecting himself by his actions as literally being God. It is not clear whether the phrase "temple of God" points to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, or whether it has reference to the New Age heresy that "everyone is a (temple) of god." One thing is certain, Satan indwells this particular person being worshipped; for he would allow no lesser evil personage to lay claim to being God. Scripture is quite clear that *all* who are not children of God at this time will indeed worship him.

*And **all** who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. (Revelation 13:8)*

❖ *Vs. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*

Because of his previous instruction to the believers at Thessalonica, they were probably more clear on what he is saying in these verses than many of us who have since attempted to interpret Paul's words, especially verses 6 and 7.

❖ *Vs. 6 And you know what restrains **him** now, so that in his time he may be revealed!*

The word "him" as an object of "restrains" does not occur in the Greek Text. Apparently this word was added by translators to establish what they thought was being communicated; namely, there was someone or something hindering revelation of the man of sin. However, in a literal translation there is nothing in grammar or syntax that requires someone to restrain the one to be revealed. They could be the same person, which in fact is the case.

The following are two other translations.

*(1) **And now you are aware what is detaining, for him to be unveiled in his own era.** (C.L.N.T.: THE CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT, which is based on the CONCORDANT GREEK TEXT compiled by A.E. Knoch.)*

*(2) **And now you know the thing holding back, for him to be unveiled in his time.** (I.B.: THE INTERLINEAR BIBLE, which is based on the RECEIVED GREEK TEXT.)*

At this point, we do not know who is being restrained. We *do know* that the subject being addressed is an unveiling of one who is doing the restraining.

❖ *Vs. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until **he is taken out of the way.***

This was the verse of scripture which created in me no small amount of uncertainty and confusion, but which ultimately became the place of revelation. As this verse is translated in the N.A.S., it would appear to support pre-tribulation rapture teaching (i.e. the Holy Spirit will restrain lawlessness until He is taken out of the world in the rapture of the church).

However, research of the Greek text suggests that two words have been poorly translated. The word “taken” is translated from the Greek word GINOMAI which actually means, “to come into being, to come to be, to happen or to become.” It is so translated by these or similar words over two hundred and thirty times in the N.A.S. It is translated “taken”, in conjunction with the word “out”, *only* in this particular verse. The word “way” is translated from the Greek word MESOS, which means “middle or in the midst.” It is so translated over forty six times in the N.A.S. It is only translated as “way”, implying reference to space or location, in this *one* verse. (It is also translated as “way” in COL. 2:14 where the meaning is “to nullify”).

Whatever the rationale was for translating these words as they appear in the N.A.S. and several other translations, the question arises, “why not assign more accurate English equivalents to these words, and leave interpretation to the Holy Spirit?” The following two translations are more accurate.

(1) *“For the secret of lawlessness is already operating. Only when the present detainer may be **coming to be out of the midst,**” (C.L.N.T.)*

(2) *“For the mystery of lawlessness already is working. Only he holding back now, until it **comes out of the midst,**” (I.B.)*

In addition, the theologian, George Eldon Ladd, states in his book, *The Blessed Hope* (page 95), that the phrase in verse 7 “until he is taken out of the way” translates literally as “until he comes to be out of the midst!

The phrase “out of the midst,” implies that the one restraining will suddenly appear in the midst of people on earth, suggesting that his restraining influence in the heaven will cease at that point in time.

❖ *Vs. 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.*

The following is a review of Paul's message from verse six through verse eight: there exists a present evil, restraining influence of the church that will continue until, at some time in the future, there will occur a world wide appearance of the man of sin. His manifestation on earth is spoken of as an unveiling which apparently will involve his physical, visible presence. We know from other scriptures that this man is the antichrist whose number is 666.

The following is a *possible* paraphrase of the teaching that Paul may have previously given to the believers at Thessalonica: "Do not let any one deceive you into believing that the day of the Lord has already come. It will not take place until *first*, there will be an apostasy. *Second*, before the Lord Jesus returns, there will be a physical appearance of this man of lawlessness in the earth. He will be unveiled before all mankind. Today Satan is, and will continue to be, "accuser of the brethren." He restrains believers through evil oppressions of condemnation, accusation, depression and manipulation. He is at war against the church and the angels of God. He restrains mankind through the influence of evil angelic authorities in the heavens who direct demons upon the earth. At the present time, he is prince of the authority of the air, being over those forces who are against the Lord and His church. He will continue to accuse, condemn and oppress the saints, until such time as he is displaced from heaven and is unveiled on earth, making his appearance as the dominant authority figure of all evil. He will continue to persecute the church, but no longer from heaven.

It was at this point of discovery that the Lord revealed to me the relationship between Revelation 12 and the verses in Thessalonians that we are studying.

*And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was **no longer a place found for them in heaven**. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; **he was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him**. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "**Now the salvation, and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him** because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you having **great wrath, know-***

ing that he has only a short time.” (Revelaton 12:7-12) (See also Daniel 12:1)

It becomes clear that unveiling of the man of sin takes place after a period of spiritual warfare which sees Satan thrown out of heaven along with his angels. This is in accordance with the Lord’s purpose for the last days (Ephesians 3:8-11; 6:12). There will be a militant overcoming spirit of power and authority resting upon the church as she prepares for her Lord’s return. This will be accentuated when Satan is cast out of heaven for there will no longer be any evil influence in the heavens between the church and her Lord. It will be a time of great salvation, power and authority in the church. The heavens will be open. The glory of God will rest upon her, and there will be a final great harvest of souls into the kingdom (Isaiah 60:1-5; Luke 14:16-23).

At this time, Satan having lost his place of authority in the heavens, will take up the place of ultimate authority and power over all religion in the earth. He will do this by possessing a man, one who will be recognized by Christians as the antichrist. There will arise great persecution of righteousness in the earth for the antichrist will require all peoples to worship him. More than anything else, Satan seeks to be worshipped. Knowing that man will not generally worship what he cannot see, Satan will become visible through incarnation. It is this unveiling of Satan as the man of lawlessness that will point to the imminent return of the Lord in glory. The day of the Lord will *not* come until this unveiling takes place.

At the time of his appearance, Satan’s long range strategy, which is centered in the New Age Movement, will culminate in the deception of many thousands of individuals through false supernatural signs and wonders. The persecution of Christians will see many lay down their lives in martyrdom. However, whether in death or life, they *will overcome him because great power and grace will rest upon the church!*

The remaining four verses of the passage of scripture being studied provide further insight into this future period of time.

❖ *Vs. 9, 10, 11, 12 . . . that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason **God will send upon them a deluding influence** so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

It is important to understand that even the evil of this end time period will serve the purpose of God. The deception of Satan is how the Lord will gather the tares out of His field of good grain (Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43). It is how

He separates the false from the true who He will then come to claim as His bride.

CONCLUSION

The early church was troubled by a false teaching that the day of the Lord had already taken place and so there was no reason to look forward to His personal return. Today, many in the church have been taught that the Lord will return to rapture the church before the great tribulation takes place. However, the bride He is coming for will be an overcoming people who have been tested, purified and found faithful in tribulation; and they will participate with Him in His judgment (Jude 14-15).

*But immediately **after the tribulation of these days** . . . then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds (Matthew 24:29-31)*

The Lord will return when His bride has made herself ready, and the anti-christ has been unveiled in the earth. The time ahead is not one to fear for it will be days of harvest, victory and great glory!

And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. (Revelation 2:26)

APPENDIX



1. For further insight into how the pre-tribulation rapture teaching came into being readers are referred to the following book: **THE INCREDIBLE COVER-UP**; Dave McPherson, 1975, Omega Publications, P.O. Box 4130, Medford, Oregon 97501.

2. The following book provides further detail on the translation of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7; **BEHOLD THE HARVEST**; Dale Rumble, 1998, Destiny Image, Shippensburg, PA 17257

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