

## II THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Topic:

### The Man of Sin



“There shall come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.” II Thess. 2:3

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### Chapter Topic: "The Man of Sin"

1. By (or concerning) what two things did Paul beseech the Thessalonians in chapter two? 2:1.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_;
2. Paul lists three things by which they were not to be shaken or be troubled. 2:2. What were they?  
\_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_; "\_\_\_\_\_ as from us."
3. They were troubled, thinking "that the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ was at hand." 2:2.
4. What two things must precede the day of Christ? 2:3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_;
5. The man of sin is called "the son of \_\_\_\_\_." 2:3.
6. The man of sin "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ himself above all that is called \_\_\_\_\_ or that is worshipped." 2:4.
7. The man of sin sitteth in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, showing himself that he is \_\_\_\_\_." 2:4.
8. True or false (circle which)—Paul mentioned the man of sin for the first time in this chapter. 2:5.
9. Concerning the man of sin, Paul says, "Now ye know what \_\_\_\_\_ that he might revealed in his time." 2:6.
10. What was already working in Paul's time? 2:7.  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. The man of sin would have appeared sooner, "only he who now letteth (that is, hinders) will let (hinder) until he \_\_\_\_\_ of the way." 2:7.
12. By what two means will the Lord destroy that Wicked one? 2:8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_;
13. The wicked one's coming is after the working of whom? 2:9.  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. He comes with all \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, 2:9

## CHAPTER TWO

15. He comes with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that \_\_\_\_\_, 2:10
16. These people perish because they \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_, 2:10
17. What does God send these people because of their attitude? 2:11. \_\_\_\_\_,
18. God sends these, "that they should \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_," 2:11.
19. In what did these people who were deceived by the Man of sin take pleasure? 2:12. \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Paul was bound (obligated) to give thanks for the Thessalonians, "because God hath from the beginning \_\_\_\_\_ you to \_\_\_\_\_." 2:13
21. Through what two things had God chosen them to salvation? 2:13. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_
22. By what were the Thessalonians called? 2:14. \_\_\_\_\_.
23. To what had God called them? 2:14. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
24. "Therefore, brethren, \_\_\_\_\_, and hold the \_\_\_\_\_ which ye have been taught." 2:15.
25. By what two means had they been taught? 2:15. \_\_\_\_\_;
26. Unto whom did Paul pray? 2:16. (2 answers) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_.
27. What has God given us through grace? 2:16. (2 answers)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_;
28. Paul prayed that God would "\_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ you in every good \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." 2:17.
29. Memorize ~~H~~ ~~Thess.~~ 2:3, 14.

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### II THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER TWO

#### Chapter Topic, "*The Man of Sin*"

#### Outline

- I. Paul's entreaty about the Lord's coming; 2:1-3a.
  1. Matters involved; 2:1
    - a. The coming of our Lord.
    - b. Our gathering together unto him.
  2. Be not shaken or troubled; 2:2
    - a. Things by which they might have been shaken;
      - (1) Spirit.
      - (2) Word.
      - (3) Letter as from us
    - b. The idea that left them shaken—Belief that the day of Christ had come.
  3. Certain events must precede the coming; 2:3a
    - a. A falling away.
    - b. Revelation of the man of sin.
- II. The Man of sin; 2:3b-12
  1. He is the son of perdition; 2:3b
  2. He opposes and exalts himself; 2:4
  3. He will sit in the temple of God; 2:4
  4. Paul had warned them about him; 2:5
  5. He was being withheld; 2:6-7
    - a. The mystery of iniquity was already working; 2:7
    - b. One now hindered his appearance; 2:7
  6. He shall be revealed; 2:8
  7. The Lord shall destroy him; 2:8
  8. His coming is after the working of Satan; 2:9-12
    - a. With all power, and signs, and wonders; 2:9
    - b. With all deceivableness; 2:10
    - c. He comes "in them that perish;" 2:10-12
      - (1) They received not the love of the truth; 2:10
      - (2) Gods sends them strong delusion; 2:10-11
        - (a) So that they should believe a lie; 2:11
        - (b) That they might be damned; 2:12
      - (3) They had pleasure in unrighteousness; 2:12
- III. Thanksgiving for God's choosing the Thessalonians; 2:13-15
  1. Chosen through sanctification of spirit; 2:13
  2. Chosen through belief of the truth; 2:13
  3. Called by the gospel; 2:14
  4. Therefore, stand fast; 2:15
- IV. Prayer that they be comforted and stablished; 2:16-17

*Text (2:1-2)*

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; 2 to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand;

*Translation and Paraphrase*

1. But (now) we (must) beseech you, brethren, concerning the (second) coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him (in the air).
2. (We beseech you) that you not (allow yourselves to) be quickly (blown about like waves and) shaken from your senses; neither (should you) be alarmed; (Do) not (be misled) by (anyone who says he has a revelation of the) Spirit, nor by (any) word (which you may have heard from us or anyone else), nor by (any) letter (which may be represented) as (coming) from us, (giving out the idea) as (if it were a fact) that the day of the Lord has already come.

*Notes (2:1-2)*

1. No Scriptural teaching has been more frequently abused than the teaching about the Lord's second coming. Men have spent enormous amounts of time trying to determine exactly when the Lord will return, even after the Lord has made it very plain that we have NOT been given that information. But when men have made predictions concerning exactly when the Lord is going to come, they have usually been successful in getting a group of deluded followers, who forsake the work they should be doing, and all of them go out to some isolated spot to meet the Lord, only to be disappointed when nothing happens.
2. The Thessalonians had likewise become greatly agitated about the Lord's coming. In fact some of them thought that the day of the Lord *had already come*. This certainly shows that they had a poor knowledge of what was going to happen at that time.
3. Our English text says that they were not to be shaken—"as that the day of Christ is *at hand*." We might assume from this that they only thought that Christ's coming was very near. Actually the phrase "at hand" means "has already come." This translation (or a similar one) is given in the New English Bible, Moffatt, Goodspeed, Rotherham, Amplified New Testament, Revised Standard, etc.

## 2:1,2 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

(The Gr. verb is *enesteken*, a 3rd pers. sing. perf. ind. of *enistemi*. *Enistemi* occurs only seven times in the N.T. In six of those occurrences it is in some perf. form. A check of those references will show that *enistemi* in the perf. does not mean "near at hand," but it means "already present." See I Cor. 7:26; Heb. 9:9; Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 3:22; Gal. 1:4.)

4. This second chapter of II Thessalonians was written to remove misapprehensions on the subject of the Lord's coming. It reveals that the Lord is not to come until certain events have taken place first. These are:
  - (1) A falling away (or apostasy) from the truth; 2:3
  - (2) The removal of some power which hindered the manifestation of the man of sin; 2:6-7
  - (3) The manifestation of the man of sin; 2:8
5. Note that in the outline chapter two is entitled, "The man of sin." By remembering that topic you will be able to recall what is in the chapter.
6. Notice that Paul entreated us "BY" the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and BY our gathering together unto him. (King James version). The word *by* in this verse is a very poor translation. The Greek word (*huper*) means "concerning" or "in behalf of." Paul besought the Thessalonians *concerning* the coming of the Lord, not *by* it.

The reader who compares "beseech by" in II Thess. 2:1 with that in Rom. 12:1 (where the word is *dia*, not *huper*) will be led astray.

7. Notice carefully the two things about which Paul besought us:
  - (1) The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - (2) Our gathering together unto him.

Observe that he associates these two things with the "day of Christ" (or the "day of the Lord," as it is given in the best manuscripts).

Notice further that the Lord's coming and our gathering together unto Him are not to occur until there has been a falling away and the man of sin has been revealed. II Thess. 2:3.

All of this leads us to say that the idea that the man of sin is to appear AFTER the church has been gathered out of the world cannot be true. Strangely this is a rather popular idea. But please observe carefully that our gathering together unto the Lord, etc. is not to happen until the falling away and the revelation of the man of sin have occurred FIRST.

8. Concerning the manner in which we shall be gathered unto the Lord, see notes on I Thess. 4:17. Also Matt. 24:31 and Mark 13:27.
9. It is quite evident from Paul's words in II Thess. 2:2 that the Thessalonians (or at least some of them) were highly wrought up about this matter of the Lord's coming. Paul urges them not to be "shaken" or "troubled." These are strong words. "Shaken" (*saleuo*) sometimes refers to the motion of winds, storms, waves. It is used in Acts 16:26 to tell how the prison was shaken. "Troubled" (*thryoeeo*) is also a strong word, meaning "to frighten, alarm, trouble." (Thayer). It is the same word as the Lord used in Matt. 24:6, warning the disciples not to be troubled about wars and rumors of wars.
10. Paul mentions three possible sources of this wrong teaching that the day of the Lord had already come:
  - (1) Spirit—This probably refers to some person who claimed to have a revelation of the Spirit. There were men with spiritual gifts such as prophecy in the Thessalonian church. I Thess 5:19-20. Compare I John 4:1.
  - (2) Word—This could refer to many things, such as a misinterpretation of something Christ Himself or Paul had said.
  - (3) Letter as from us—Some suppose that this refers to a forged letter represented as coming from Paul. Some think it refers to a misunderstanding of what Paul had said in his earlier letter.

The fact that Paul closes this letter (3:17) with the notation, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write," rather hints that there may have been a false letter pretending to have come from Paul.

However, McGarvey thinks that the "letter as from us" was only a misapplication of what Paul said in his first epistle. He argues that it is unlikely that Paul would have failed to rebuke such a forgery if one existed. Paul even scolded them for forgetting what he had said before. II Thess. 2:5. How much more would he have exposed a forgery.

Probably the truth of the matter is that Paul himself was not sure what was the source of this idea that the

day of the Lord was already come. If he were not certain about the source of this idea, how can we be?

11. Some interpreters try to make a distinction between "the day of Christ" (as some ancient manuscripts word this verse) and the "day of the Lord" (as others give it). Surely this is a distinction without a difference, since Christ himself is the Lord. (For more concerning "the day of the Lord," see notes on I Thess. 5:2, par. 5.)

### *Text (2:3)*

**3 let no man beguile you in any wise; for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

3. Let no one deceive you (about this) by any method, because (that day shall not come) except (or until) the apostasy (a departure from the faith) come first, and the man of lawlessness be revealed, (he who is) the son of perdition (the man devoted to eternal misery).

### *Notes (2:3)*

1. Have these two things—the falling away, and the man of sin—yet happened? If they have not, then the Lord cannot come until they do. If they have already appeared, then we can look for the Lord at any time. We believe that these two things have long ago appeared.
2. Paul's teaching in this verse does NOT indicate that he had changed his mind about the Lord's coming from views he had once held. Some allege that Paul had earlier said that Christ's coming was near, but that he had changed his mind by the time he wrote this to think that the second coming was far off. In II Thess. 2:5 Paul reminds them that even when he was with them he had told them the same things that he here writes about. Paul had not changed his teachings. The Thessalonians had simply forgotten what he said, or perhaps it never penetrated their minds in the first place.
3. This "falling away" (Gr., *apostasia*) refers undoubtedly to a religious falling away. Another word for "falling away" is "apostasy." *Apostasia* is always used in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) in the sense of a religious falling away. See Josh.

22:22. II Chronicles 29:19; 33:19; Jer. 2:19. Thayer defines *apostasia* as a "falling away, defection, apostasy." The word is found elsewhere in the N.T. only in Acts 21:21, where it might be rendered "apostasy from Moses." All of this causes us to think that the "falling away" predicted by Paul is a falling away from the faith as taught by Christ and the apostles.

4. This verse speaks not of *a* falling away, but of *the* falling away. It is a particular apostasy which Paul has in mind.

Matthew 24:10-12 tells of a falling away which was to precede the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. See Matt. 24:15-16. But it is not the same apostasy to which Paul refers in II Thess. 2:3. We mention Matt. 24, because when some people read that chapter, they fail to observe carefully when Jesus spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem and when he talked about the end of the world. Because of this careless interpretation, they often take passages that clearly pertained to the destruction of Jerusalem (such as 24:6-12) and apply them to the conditions at the end of the world.

5. The identification of the man of sin is probably as controversial a matter as anything in the Bible. Paul had given the Thessalonians teaching about the man of sin which we have not heard, and the matter may have been much clearer to them than to us.
6. We prefer to call the man of sin "the man of lawlessness," in accordance with the reading of the Greek text of both Nestle and Westcott and Hort. Both of these have *anomia* (lawlessness) in the text and *hamartia* (sin) in the margin.

The name, "man of lawlessness," matches up with the phrase, "mystery of lawlessness," in II Thess. 2:7. The "man of lawlessness" (Gr., *anomia*) is obviously the crowning height of the "mystery of lawlessness" (or "mystery of iniquity" as the King James text gives it).

7. A "man of lawlessness" would be a man who was not subject to any law. The American Standard version of I John 3:4 says, "Sin is lawlessness." This well describes the mind of the sinner. He refuses to be subject to any law, human or divine. Thus "the man of lawlessness" will be that person who, above all others, is not subject to the law of God, but obeys only his own desires.
8. The expression, "son of perdition," means (according to Thayer) "a man doomed to eternal misery." This same description is ap-

- plied to Judas in John 17:12. "Perdition" (*apoleia*) means "destruction" or "waste" (as in Mark 14:4). Like the word *olethros* used in II Thess. 1:9, it does not imply annihilation.
9. When we speak of the "man of lawlessness," our minds frequently connect him with "antichrist" mentioned in I John 2:18, 22; 4:3; II John 7. However, the Bible does not specifically connect them, and any connection that we might make between the two would have to be regarded as only speculation. We hear lots of preaching about THE antichrist. But John makes it rather clear that antichrist is not one supremely evil person, but that anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ or that He came in the flesh is antichrist. There were antichrists even in John's time. Many modernist preachers and scholars who deny our Lord's deity should rightfully be called antichrist. But we stand on very shaky support when we teach that there will be some one particularly terrible ANTICHRIST in the future.
  10. There are several general schools of interpretation concerning what the "falling away," "the man of sin," and "that which hinders" are.
    - a. Some just frankly disregard the whole business. In the *Interpreter's Bible*, in the exposition of this section, the view is given that as dwellers in the twentieth century, with its deliverance from much theological ignorance and medieval superstition, we feel superior to any such conception of antichrist as possessed Paul and the Thessalonians. Those who believe that Paul was an inspired apostle of Christ can not, of course, have any such opinions as this.
    - b. Some think the man of sin is the papacy
    - c. Some think the man of sin is the Roman emperor and the mystery of lawlessness is the Roman empire. It is a fact that some of the Roman emperors demanded worship and exalted themselves just as the man of sin was to do. II Thess. 2:4. Caligula in 39 or 40 A.D. tried to set up his statue in the temple in Jerusalem as an object of worship. But none of the Roman emperors perfectly fulfilled Paul's description of the man of sin. Hence, this interpretation does not seem to be the right one.
    - d. Some think that the mystery of lawlessness is Judaism,

and that the man of sin is some leader in that faith. By this view that which hinders would be the Roman empire.

- e. Some think that the man of sin is Antichrist, a future world dictator who will rule during a brief period between the taking of the saints out of the world and the thousand years of Rev. 20:3-4. We shall discuss this view more fully in the notes that follow.
  - f. Some say he is (or was) Hitler, Stalin, Khrushchey, or some other person.
11. The two interpretations held by most Bible-believers are the futurist (or pre-millennial) view and the historical view. We want to discuss these interpretations more fully.

### I. THE FUTURIST (or pre-millennial) view.

(This view is held by many devout Christians in our times.)

#### A. View summarized.

1. The *falling away* refers to the ungodly conditions to exist in the world shortly before the Lord returns. Many people consider that present world conditions are the fulfillment of this prophecy of the "falling away."
2. The *man of sin* is the Antichrist, one individual, who is to be a world dictator and rule AFTER Christ has taken the church out of the world at the "rapture." He will be almost an incarnation of Satan. Some think he will be a Jew (basing this idea on Daniel 11:37, although the meaning of that verse is far from certain). He will supposedly rule the world during the great tribulation to last seven years after Christ had taken the church to himself.
3. *That which hinders* the appearance of the man of sin is the Holy Spirit. It is argued that the Holy Spirit is he who restrains evil in this world, and that when Christ takes the church out of the world at the rapture that the Holy Spirit will no longer be in the world in the degree in which He is during the church age, and that evil will run almost unrestrained, and incredible suffering will result to mankind.

## B. Arguments for this view

1. "The fathers of the early church, for at least three centuries after the apostolic age, while differing on some minor details, seemed unanimous in understanding that the *man of sin* was not a system of deceit and wickedness, or a succession of individuals at the head of such a system, but some one man, the living personal Antichrist, the incarnation of Satan craft and energy, who should put forth his power to weaken and destroy the church." (Preacher's Homiletic Com.)
2. We certainly are living in perilous times, a time when men have fallen away from the old-fashioned faith and virtues, a time like those described by Paul in II Tim. 3:-5 where he describes the "last days." In our times atheistic communism is laboring to the utmost to rule the world, by force if possible, and by subversion, infiltration, and propaganda if force cannot be used. As this book is written Communist governments rule nearly half of the world's population, and no country on earth has escaped the poison of Communist influence.

Religiously the world is also in a desperate state. Men have religions of every kind, but deny the power of true faith. Churchmen seem more interested in federating denominations than in the faith. They are more interested in this present life than in men's eternal salvation. The World Council of churches seems to be working toward forming a powerful super-church to include everyone who is religious, regardless of what he believes. Some think that this religious monster will join forces with Antichrist. Old-fashioned Bible believers are mocked in many churches and theological seminaries. But I am still proud to be one.

Christians must keep themselves informed about these things that are going on. Only if Christians *know* what is going on and *stand up* for Christ and his kingdom will our country, or even civilization, endure. Christians, God shall bruise Satan *under your feet* shortly. But if you don't know anything about

Satan's activities, and don't stand for anything, God won't be able to use you to bruise Satan. Romans 16:20.

C. This view is not absolutely the only possible one.

1. What we have said about world conditions is only a speck of the mountain of dirt that we could sweep up about our times. But it is still hotly debatable that conditions in our times are worse than they were in the early centuries of Christianity. Moral conditions were as bad then, or worse, than now. (See our notes on I Thess. 4:1-3, and Introductory Section VI, par. 11.). Christianity was persecuted as much or more in the early centuries as it is now.
2. Also the ungodly conditions which Paul said would exist in the "last days" (II Tim. 3:1-5) have existed ever since Paul wrote those words. For we have been living in the "last days," or last dispensation, ever since the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:17.)
3. Also it is not necessary to interpret the "man of sin" and the "falling away" as being events which are limited to a short period immediately before (and after) Christ returns. Certain Scriptures and facts almost compel me to think that the "falling away" and the "man of sin" have both been with us for a long time already.

## II. THE HISTORICAL view.

(This view is the one favored by the author of this book.)

### A. View summarized.

1. The *falling away* refers to that corruption of the apostles' teaching by heathenism which occurred during the early centuries of the church and resulted in the development of the Roman Catholic religion. This apostasy is still in progress, as Rome is still adding new doctrines to its creed. And the false doctrines developed during the falling away have been adopted by many Protestants, as well as by the Roman church.
2. The *man of sin* probably refers to the papacy, the visible, personal head of the "falling away."
3. "*That which hinders*" the appearance of the man of sin (II Thess. 2:6-7) probably was the Roman gov-

ernment. For several centuries the Roman government held in check the attempts of power-hungry Roman bishops to take control of both the spiritual affairs of men and the political authority as well.

We do not expect you to accept our opinions about these matters just because we have stated them bluntly. But we do ask you to study seriously the reasons for holding these views.

#### B. Arguments for this view.

1. The "mystery of lawlessness" (2:7) which resulted in the falling away and the appearance of the man of sin, was *already at work* in Paul's time.

That being so, surely then Paul could not have been referring to things that would not happen until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when he spoke of the "falling away."

There are numerous references in the New Testament which show that false doctrines, unauthorized power grabs, etc. were already developing. See Jude 4, III John 9, Acts 20:29-30, II Pet. 2:1, Col. 2:8. These seem to be a part of the developing "mystery of lawlessness."

2. In I Tim. 4:1-3 Paul told how some would depart from the faith. They would forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats, etc. This is a clear prophecy of such things as the Roman church practices when it forbids its priests and nuns to marry and forbids its members to eat meat at certain times.

In describing this departure from the faith, Paul used the verb form *apostesontai*. This is a form very similar to the word *apostasia*, the word translated "falling away" in II Thess. 2:3. This similarity of language causes us to associate the "falling away" with Romanism and not with twentieth century Communism or other evils of our times.

3. In Daniel chapter two, Daniel prophesied about four great world empires—the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman. After those empires the God of heaven would set up a kingdom (which we understand

to be the church. See Special Study V.) Gods kingdom would never be destroyed, nor should the sovereignty of it be left to another people. (Dan. 2:44 R.V.)

It appears to us that if some Antichrist is going to rule the world, that Daniel's prophecy would have to be wrong in indicating that there would only be four empires before God's kingdom should prevail and fill the earth. (Dan. 2:35)

4. Note that the "falling away" and the "man of sin" are associated with the "*mystery* of iniquity" in 2:7. The use of this term *mystery* suggests that there may be a connection with Rev. 17:5, where the great harlot is given the name "MYSTERY." This mystery woman in Revelation is ROME. For she is identified as that city that sits on seven mountains (or hills) and rules over the kings of the earth. Rev. 17:9, 18). Rome is the only city on earth that fulfills those descriptions.
5. The "falling away" which occurred over the years and produced the Roman Catholic religion is the greatest "falling away" of all ages. We list here a *few* of the many departures from the New Testament faith, which, when all taken together, surely must be THE falling away:
  - (1) Bishops take authority over elders (Presbyters) Second century.
  - (2) Infant "baptism" first mentioned—About 150 A.D.
  - (3) Many heathen rituals—candles, incense, robes, etc.—added to Christian worship—third century.
  - (4) First human creed (Nicene)—325 A.D.
  - (5) Christianity made the sole state religion—394 A.D.
  - (6) Mary entitled "Mother of God"—431 A.D.
  - (7) Confession of sins to a human priest—About 457 A.D. Made compulsory in 1215 A.D.
  - (8) Lord's supper became a mass (sacrifice) and masses for the dead became frequent—Sixth century.
  - (9) The pope gains universal authority—About 606 A.D.

- (10) Transubstantiation—1215 A.D.
  - (11) Indulgences—About 1164 A.D.
  - (12) Adoration of images legalized—About 800 A.D.
  - (13) Tradition made equal to the Scriptures—About 1545 A.D.
  - (14) Apocryphal books added to Bible—1546 A.D.
  - (15) Purgatory—Originated in the tenth century. Made official 1438.
  - (16) People deprived of the cup in communion—About 1414.
  - (17) Celibacy promoted (405 A.D.) and enforced (1123 A.D.)
  - (18) Sprinkling authorized—1311.
  - (19) Immaculate conception of Mary—1854.
  - (20) Infallibility of the pope—1870.
  - (21) Assumption of Mary into heaven—1950.
6. The papacy fulfills the descriptions of the man of sin. He sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. The papacy consists of one official man. He came into power as a result of the falling away from the New Testament faith. (For more about how the papacy fulfills the description of the man of sin, see notes on the verses that follow, II Thess. 2:4-7.)

### *Text (2:4)*

**4 he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

4. (The man of lawlessness will be a man) who (both) opposes and exalts himself above all that is called divine or that is religiously honored, so that he (shall) sit in the temple of God, exhibiting himself (as if it were true) that he is God.

### *Notes (2:4)*

(For the general discussion of the falling away and the man of sin, see notes on 2:3.)

1. Here is a summary of the descriptions of the man of sin:
  - (1) He opposes all that is called God.
  - (2) He exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped.

- (3) He is to sit in the temple of God.
  - (4) He exhibits himself as if he were God.
  - (5) His appearance was hindered by some force that already existed in Paul's time. 2:6-7.
  - (6) The mystery of iniquity, which led to his appearance, was already working in Paul's time. 2:7.
  - (7) He will continue in existence till the Lord Jesus comes. 2:8.
  - (8) The Lord shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming. 2:8.
  - (9) He shows power, signs, and lying wonders (false miracles). 2:9.
  - (10) He comes with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. 2:10.
2. Both of the verbs—"opposeth" and "exalteth"—have as their object "all that is called God, or that is worshipped." The man of sin opposes the true God and His Christ, and exalts himself above them.
  3. "All that is called God" refers to anything, or anyone, who is divine and is of God—to heaven, to God Himself, to the Lord Jesus, to the word of God, the Holy Spirit, etc.
  4. The expression, "that is worshipped," comes from the Greek *sebasma*. From this word came Sebastus, or Augustus (the Worshipful), which was the title of the Roman emperors. "A man of that age could hardly see this word in such a connection without thinking that Paul meant to convey the idea that the antichrist would arrogate to himself all the reverence then claimed by the great civil lords of the earth such as emperors, kings, etc." (McGarvey). Today men bow down before the pope in the same manner that men used to bow down before kings.
  5. What is the *temple* of God in which the man of sin is to sit? Some say that this refers to the temple of God which was in Jerusalem. However, no such great pretender as the "man of sin" ever sat in the temple in Jerusalem before it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

It seems to us that the temple of God to which Paul refers must be the church. The term *temple* is a favorite name of Paul's for the church. Notice I Cor. 3:17; II Cor. 6:16; Ephesians 2:12.

If the temple of God is the church, then the Roman popes very fully fulfill the description of the man of sin. For they sit in the church and are religious lords.

It is hard to see how the man of sin could be an atheistic communist, and still sit in the temple of God and represent himself as God.

6. Numerous men in the history of the world have taken to themselves the honor of being as great as God.

The heart of the prince of Tyre was lifted up, and he said, "I am a God; I sit in the seat of God." Ezekiel 28:2.

King Herod (Agrippa) set himself forth and accepted acclamation of being God. Acts 12:22.

The popes have called themselves by titles as great (or greater) than those of God. Note this title which has been used: "Our Lord God the Pope, another God on earth—doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God."

*Text (2:5)*

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

*Translation and Paraphrase*

5. Don't you remember (how) that when I was still with you, I kept telling you these (very) things?

*Notes (2:5)*

1. This little verse has surely been included in the sacred Scriptures to blast forever out of existence any idea that Paul at one time said that the Lord was going to come very quickly, and then that he later decided that the Lord was not going to come for a long time.
2. It is a serious thing to charge that Paul changed his mind and wrote one teaching in one place in his letters and another teaching in another place. If Paul changed his mind, he could not have been writing a message that God revealed to him. For God does not change. Malachi 3:6. If Paul did not write the message that Christ revealed to him, then much of our Christian faith rests on nothing but the quicksand of human wisdom. For much of our Christian doctrine rests on the writings of Paul.
3. While Paul had been with the Thessalonians, he "kept telling" them these very things about the coming of the man of sin and the falling away. (The imperfect tense here indicates repeated action in the past.)

*Text (2:6-7)*

**6 And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way.**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

6. And now you (Thessalonians) know what it is that is hindering (the appearance of the man of lawlessness, and is causing things to work out) so that he may be revealed in his own (divinely appointed) time.
7. (It should be obvious to you that such a man of lawlessness is coming) for the hidden scheme (and program) of lawlessness is already at work. Only, he who alone is now hindering (the appearance of the man of lawlessness will continue to hinder) until he be (gone) out of the midst (of us).

*Notes (2:6-7)*

1. There was some force in existence in Paul's time which was hindering the appearance of the man of sin. Phillips translation puts it this way: "You will probably also remember how I used to talk about a 'restraining power' which would operate until the time should come for emergence of this man."
2. The word "withholdeth" in 2:6 is the same Greek word which is translated "let" in 2:7. This is a bad rendering for modern readers. The words in both instances mean "to hinder, hold back, restrain." (Note our translation and paraphrase for this meaning.)
3. The Thessalonians probably knew a lot more clearly that we do what was "withholding" the appearance of the man of sin. Paul had told them more clearly than it has been told to us. But while we do not have the information they had, we do have much history behind us, by which we can often see the manner of God's dealings.
4. If something in Paul's time was withholding the coming of the man of sin, surely the man of sin could not be some twentieth century individual.
5. It is noteworthy that in verse six the restraining power is described as *neuter*. But in verse seven, it is *masculine*, "he who alone is now hindering."

This probably indicates that the restraining power is *both* an abstract force and a personal figure. The restraining authority would be neuter, but the personal force masculine, indicating two aspects of the same power and authority.

6. Note that God had a specific time designated on His divine calendar of events in which He would permit the appearance of the man of sin. Nothing happens by accident in this world. God may let some men run pretty wild, but He still holds the reins, and no one can get so far out of hand as to defeat His program.

7. The "mystery of iniquity" (or "mystery of lawlessness") refers to the hidden programs and scheme of the devil and lawless men. This mystery of iniquity was already at work in Paul's time. Many New Testament references indicate that a falling away from the truth was already developing in apostolic times. See I John 4:1,3; Jude 3; I John 2:18-19; II John 7, etc.
8. The "mystery of lawlessness" in 2:7 is evidently a part of the same ungodly system that produced the "man of lawlessness," mentioned in 2:3. The mystery of lawlessness seems to be the antithesis of God's saving mystery in Christ. Eph. 3:3,9.
9. The King James version says, "Until he be *taken* out of the way." The word *taken* is not actually in the Greek text. It is probably better to render it as in our paraphrase, "Until he be (gone) out of the midst (of us)." The Scripture does not say that God himself was going to *take* out the restraining power, but that eventually it would be out by some means or other.
10. What is this force that restrained the appearance of the man of sin. For some ideas about this, see notes on 2:3, par. 10.

Some interpreters feel that the Holy Spirit is He who hinders the appearance of the man of sin. Isa. 59:19 is quoted to support this view. However, it is pure speculation to say that the influence of the Holy Spirit is to be withdrawn out of the earth as long as it shall stand. No Scripture actually says this. Also we wonder why the Holy Spirit should restrain this particular evil, that is, the appearance of the man of sin. Evil in many forms is rampant now, and certainly needs to be hindered.

11. We prefer the view (as stated in our notes on 2:3) that the restraining power was the *Roman empire*.

During the first three hundred years of the history of Christianity it was a persecuted illegal religion. This fact hindered any power-hungry "Christian" bishop from assuming a lot of authority.

In the years that followed the adoption of Christianity as the state religion (325 A.D.), emperors like Constantine and Theodosius considered themselves not only to be head of the state, but head of the church as well. For example, Constantine called the council of Nicea to settle the dispute about the nature of Christ.

In the fourth century as the barbarians began to invade the Roman empire, it became weaker and weaker, and its emperors became less and less strong.

In those times many of the bishops of Rome were strong-willed, capable men. Gradually the Roman bishops came to have more power and the emperors less. The Roman bishops were further strengthened when the capital of the Roman empire was transferred to Constantinople in the East.

Leo the Great, bishop of Rome 440-461 A.D., greatly strengthened the authority of his office. On two occasions he saved Rome from being sacked, first by Atilla the Hun, and secondly by Genseric the Vandal. In return for such services the Roman emperor gave Leo authority over the bishops and churches in every province.

The Western Roman Empire fell in 486 A.D., and this gave the Roman bishops almost a free hand in Europe.

Bishop Gelasius (492-496) contended that although the king rules over men in the world, yet he is duty bound in spiritual things to submit to his religious prelates.

Later Roman bishops, such as Gregory the Great (590-604) formed alliances with civil rulers in the West, as well as emperors in the East.

While some strong emperors occasionally resisted the popes for many centuries, the popes became so strong that kings (such as Charlemagne) received their crowns from the hands of popes, and the popes sometimes commanded people in various countries to disobey their kings when the kings would not submit to the authority of the Roman church.

12. Maybe we are wrong, but all of this history which we have mentioned, and a lot more like it, sounds to us like a description of what Paul was talking about when he prophesied about the appearance of the man of sin after the power that hindered him had gone.
13. McGarvey lists nine ways in which the papacy fulfills the prophecy about the falling away and the appearance of the man of sin:
  - (1) It has one official man at its head, and the arrogance of its claims are centered in him.
  - (2) That man came with, and out of, an apostasy, the very kind of an apostasy such as Paul describes elsewhere. II Tim. 3:1-9; I Tim. 4:1-3.
  - (3) The spiritual pride, lawlessness, and desire for power which worked in Paul's day was curbed by the Roman civil government which dominated and persecuted.

2:7,8 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

- (4) When the bishop of Rome began to assert power, he was in conflict with the civil government.
- (5) When the Roman empire collapsed, the Roman church became all-powerful.
- (6) The same apostasy has been preserved carefully. The line of popes has been preserved, and will apparently be continued until Christ returns.
- (7) The papacy exalts itself against God and Christ, taking unto itself titles which God alone has the right to wear.
- (8) The popes sit in the temple of God.
- (9) The papacy proves its claims by fraudulent miracles, signs, and wonders, cures effected by relics and shrines. See notes on II Thess. 2:9, par. 3.

*Text (2:8)*

**8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming;**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

8. And then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall take away by the spirit (or blast) of his mouth, and do away with by the (shining) appearance of his coming.

*Notes (2:8)*

1. The man of sin will suffer a complete ruin at the coming of the Lord. With all the evil and false religion that there is in this world, Christians would be very disheartened if it were not for their confidence in the Lord's return.
2. The Wicked one (or man of sin) was to be revealed when the one that had been hindering his appearance was taken out of the way. See the notes on II Thess. 2:6-7.
3. The Lord Jesus will destroy the Wicked one with the spirit of his mouth. The expression, "spirit (or breath, or blast) of his mouth," refers to the power of the presence of Jesus. It does not mean that Jesus shall destroy the man of sin by converting his followers. The word "breath" does not signify God's truth or instruction, but the execution of his judgment. (See Special Study VI, question 3.)

Numerous references in the Bible contain the expression, "breath of his mouth," or similar phrases. Isa. 11:4: "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." See also Job 4:9; II Sam. 22:16; Isa. 30:27-28, 33. They all describe the execution of God's judgment.

4. The word "Jesus" in our translation of 2:8 is included on quite

strong evidence in the ancient manuscripts. Nestle's Greek and numerous English versions include it.

5. Apparently the Wicked one will continue to exist until the Lord comes, for the Lord shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming. Chapter eighteen of Revelation tells how the great city Babylon (or Rome) will be destroyed. While we do not long to see men perish, nor do we long for vengeance on anyone, we do long to see God's truth be victorious.
6. This verse speaks of the "brightness of his (the Lord's) coming." Rotherham translates this phrase, "the forthshining of his Presence."

Certainly, since the Lord is going to be revealed from heaven in flaming fire (II Thess. 1:7-8), and in great glory (Matt. 24:30), His coming will be bright and overpowering.

The same word which is translated "brightness" here (*epiphaneia*), is translated "glorious appearing" in Titus 2:13: "looking for . . . the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." See also I Tim. 6:14.

7. Again in this verse we have the word *parousia*. (See notes on I Thess. 2:19, par. 7 for its meaning.) Here the Lord's *parousia* (presence or coming) is connected with the destruction of the man of sin. In I Thess. 4:15 the *parousia* is connected with the resurrection and taking up of the saints.

All of this leads us to repeat once more that the Thessalonian epistles rule out the idea that Christ is coming one time to take his church out of the world, and then will come again (a third time) with his church to punish sinners, and set up His kingdom. There is only one *parousia* of the Lord, and at the *parousia* the saints will be resurrected and caught up and the man of sin will be destroyed.

### *Text (2:9)*

**9 even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

9. (This one whom the Lord Jesus shall do away with is he) whose coming corresponds to the activity of Satan (who does his work) with every (kind of) power, and signs, and false miracles (wonders of deceit).

### *Notes (2:9)*

1. There is nothing more plainly taught in all the Bible than that Satan does miracles. Miracles in themselves do not prove that the miracle-worker is doing God's will.

- a. The magicians in Egypt did miracles and changed their rods into serpents. Exodus 7:11-12; II Tim. 3:8. Undoubtedly these were miracles of Satan.
  - b. Deut. 13:1,3: "If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign of a wonder . . . thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet."
  - c. Matt. 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
  - d. Matt. 7:22: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not . . . in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  - e. See also Rev. 18:23; 13:13; 19:20.
2. Think of all the religions that try to prove they are of God by the miracles they claim to do—Roman Catholic, Christian Science, Pentecostal, etc. They teach doctrines that contradict one another, but all try to prove they are of God by working (or claiming to work) miracles. But the miracles in themselves just do NOT prove that they are of the truth.
  3. Since we have set forth the view that the falling away and the man of sin (mentioned in 2:3) are connected with the Roman Catholic religion, it is interesting to note how the Roman church is almost built on claims of miracles. Every time a dead man is proclaimed a "saint," there must be evidence (?) brought forth that he (or she) did at least two miracles. The shrines of Romanism (such as the one at Lourdes, France) attract thousands of pilgrims, many of whom go away saying they are healed. We read about Catholics who have spontaneously bleeding wounds (stigmata) in the places where Christ was wounded on the cross. We are told that the bread and wine miraculously change into the very flesh and blood of Christ during the mass. But why say more? Remember the apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul, warned us about "power and signs and lying wonders."
  4. Of course the miracles of Christ and his apostles were genuine, even if Satan works false miracles. Acts 2:22; II Cor. 12:12.
  5. There is little difference in meaning between the words, "signs" and "wonders." The term "wonders" (Gr., *teras*) is always in the plural in the N.T. and always joined with the word "sign."

6. Both the American Standard Version and the King James correctly assume that the "coming" referred to in 2:9 is the coming of the Wicked one, and not the same as the "coming" mentioned in 2:8, which is Christ's coming.

7. It is Satan's delight to counterfeit the things of God. Thus the man of sin is a counterfeit of Christ. They have several points of resemblance and contrast.

## JESUS

1. Has a "coming." I Thess. 2:19
2. Did miracles. Acts 2:22
3. Is God. Heb. 1:8
4. Is over the house (or temple) of God. Heb. 3:6
5. Shall be glorified. II Thess. 1:10

## THE MAN OF SIN

1. Has a "coming." II Thess. 2:9
2. Does miracles. II Thess. 2:9
3. Sets himself forth as God. II Thess. 2:4
4. Sits in the temple of God (as a usurper). II Thess. 2:4
5. Shall be destroyed. II Thess. 2:8

*Text (2:10)*

**10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

10. And (his manner of coming is just what you might expect. It is in keeping) with every (form of) deceit (that is within the ability) of unrighteousness. (He comes particularly) to the lost, because they have not (welcomed nor) received the love of the truth so that they might be saved (and therefore they are easily deceived by the doctrines of the man of sin).

*Notes (2:10)*

1. Two things are stated about the "coming" of the Wicked one, the man of sin:
  - (1) He comes with all power, and signs, and lying wonders. 2:9.
  - (2) He comes with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. 2:10.
2. We have talked to numerous people who have gone off into some cult or strange doctrine. Many of these people have told us, "I had been a member of several churches, and I tried to understand the Bible, but I just never was satisfied until I went into my present belief."
3. Perhaps the reason that they were not satisfied was that they

## 2:9,10 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

had been fed on denominational teaching, rather than actually on what the Bible says. Such doctrines as (1) that we are saved by faith *alone*, or (2) that "one church is just as good as another," or (3) that "everybody is going to heaven; we are just going there by different routes," are enough to make anybody dissatisfied if he has studied the Scriptures with understanding.

A person will surely be more than satisfied with his faith, if he will do these things:

- (1) Believe in Jesus as God's son and your only Lord and savior.
  - (2) Take the Bible as your only authority.
  - (3) Repent and be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins, as the Holy Spirit commanded. Acts 2:38.
  - (4) Call yourself a Christian, or a disciple of Christ, but don't wear any denominational names invented by men.
  - (5) Consider yourself a member of ONLY that divine church to which the Lord adds all saved people. Acts 2:47. If Paul and the early Christians could be members of the Lord's church without belonging to any denomination, we also can do it and should.
  - (6) Be faithful in worship, telling others about your faith, giving your money, prayer, and the study of God's word.
4. Still there are people who have known the truth, but are restless and desire to know things that God has not revealed. They are always looking for something novel and spectacular, something that will make them feel that they are superior to their brethren. They long to be the "enlightened ones," the gnostics. This is a dangerous attitude of mind, and often causes them to accept some outlandish doctrine.

We should have an attitude such as David had when he said, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." Psalm 131:1.

5. The "deceivableness of unrighteousness" means "the deceit which unrighteousness uses." Unrighteousness will use any trick to win followers. Unrighteousness uses half-truths, the pressure of business and friends, appeals to pride, brainwashing, and any other method that will obtain our support.

Because Christians are harmless as doves, they sometimes mistakenly assume that others have the same straight-forward, good-intentioned spirit that they themselves have. Unfortunately that is not the case. Hence we must not only be as harmless as doves, but as wise as serpents. Matt. 10:16.

6. This verse mentions "them that perish." These people are also called "them that are lost." (The word here translated "perish" (*apollumi*) in the middle voice means "to be lost.")

Thus we read in II Cor. 4:3-4 that, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are *lost*: in whom the God of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds. . ."

*Text (2:11-12)*

**11 And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

11. And on account of this (attitude) God sends to them (through the working of Satan some) activity of error to cause them to believe the lie (that what the man of sin says is true, and many other lies also).
12. (And thus being led to believe the lie that they actually wanted to believe, things are worked out) so that they all may be condemned, (those dissatisfied souls) who did not believe the truth, but (on the contrary) were well pleased with unrighteousness.

*Notes (2:11-12)*

1. This thought may astound some people, but the Scriptures actually teach that when men refuse to accept what God plainly says, that God sends delusion to them, that they may believe a lie and be condemned.
2. There are numerous examples of this in the Bible.
  - (1) God hardened Pharaoh's heart and caused him to suffer many plagues, because Pharaoh first hardened his own heart. Exodus 3:19; 5:1-2; 7:3, 13.
  - (2) God hardened the hearts of the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, so that they would fight Joshua and be destroyed. Joshua 11:20.
  - (3) God sent a lying spirit to the prophets of Ahab, so that Ahab would go into battle and be killed. I Kings 22:19-23. (Of course, Ahab had long before rejected Jehovah.)
  - (4) God turned the Gentiles who refused to honor Him as God, over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which were horribly evil and self-destructive. Romans 1:28.
  - (5) Likewise now the lie of the man of sin comes to those who will not receive the love of the truth. Beware.
3. These verses bring out the point that when people believe a lie, they will be damned. How then can anyone dare to say, "It makes no difference what you believe as long as you are sincere"?

## 2:12,13 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

4. Those who reject the gospel of Christ, His miracles, and His coming, often end by adopting superstition and believing some strange and unproven system of doctrine. He who refuses to receive the truth will at last believe lies. This is an unalterable reality. Almost any minister can tell of cases in his own experience where people rejected the gospel, and then later were taken in by some cult or sect.
5. The exceeding wickedness of sin is often not appreciated by the sincere child of God. He judges the feelings of others by his own nature which has been sanctified by the Spirit of God. But we must not permit ourselves to live in a dream world. Sin is very ugly, and very strong, and very deeply rooted. What it can do to the nature of a man is astounding.

The practice of sin even causes men to take pleasure in unrighteousness. They are proud to be wicked. Their glory is in their shame. Such people deserve to be damned.

They refuse to have God in their knowledge and try to suppress God's truth by unrighteousness. They know the judgment of God, that people who do such things are worthy of death. But they not only do those things, but take pleasure in associating with others who do them, and in encouraging others to practice them. Romans 1:18, 28, 32.

6. One group of men who refused to believe the truth was the Jews. They could never refute Paul's preaching, but they refused to obey it, and even forbade Paul to preach to the Gentiles so that they might be saved. I Thess. 2:16.

Paul told Timothy that men would turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables. II Tim. 4:4. Such people often end up following some strange doctrine.

7. While sinners may have pleasure in unrighteousness, love rejoices not in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth. I Cor. 13:6. Christians are ruled by love.

### STUDY SUGGESTION

Turn ahead now to the "Did You Learn?" questions following the notes on this chapter, and see if you can answer questions 1 to 45.

#### *Text (2:13)*

**13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

13. But we are obligated to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because (you have received the love of the truth and escaped the strong delusions, and) God has chosen you (from the beginning to be) firstfruits unto salvation, by means of the sanctification of (our) spirit (which is done by the Holy Spirit), and (by) belief of the truth.

*Notes (2:13)*

1. This verse is much consolation to us. In the preceding paragraph we considered the terrors of the man of sin, and the strong delusions that are sent to those who will not believe the truth. Now Paul reassures the Thessalonians, and all other true Christians, that they are beloved of the Lord, and that God has chosen them unto salvation. They are not deceived by delusions. They are beloved by the Lord.
2. In our outline we have called this brief paragraph "Thanksgiving for God's choosing the Thessalonians." (2:13-15).
3. From the beginning God has chosen and foreordained that some of the Gentiles should be saved. God chose the Gentiles who accepted Christ as his people. See Ephesians 1:4; 3:5-6; Romans 9:24-26. See also the notes on I Thess. 1:4.
4. This verse begins much like II Thess. 1:3: "We are bound (that is, obligated or indebted) to give thanks always to God for you." See notes on II Thess. 1:3 for further comment.
5. Note that we are chosen unto *salvation*. Oh, the joy of that word. It means safety, deliverance, and security.
6. Two means are set forth as being the cause of our being chosen:
  - (1) Sanctification of spirit.
  - (2) Belief of the truth.
7. There is a bit of uncertainty about the Greek text of this verse. The phrase, "from the beginning" (Gr., *ap' arches*), is given as "firstfruits" (Gr., *aparchen*) in Nestle's Gr. text. Westcott and Hort's Gr. text has "from the beginning" in the text and "firstfruits" in the margin. As you can tell, there is only one letter of difference in the two renderings. The division between the words proves nothing, as in the old Greek manuscripts there were no breaks between any of the words.

I find no English version (except Moffatt) inserting the word "firstfruits" into the text, although several have it in the margin. On the whole I think we are justified in saying that the

## 2:13,14 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

King James version is as accurate as any in rendering it "from the beginning."

### 8. What is "sanctification of the Spirit"?

This phrase is also used in I Peter 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through *sanctification of the Spirit*, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

The word "sanctification" itself means "a making holy, consecration, purification." See notes on I Thess. 4:3.

Let us note first of all that the Greek text does not say, "Sanctification of *the* Spirit." The word "the" is not included. However, by common consent of scholars the omission of the *the* does not rule out the possibility that the spirit referred to is the Holy Spirit. But the absence of the article does make it possible that the spirit may *not* be the Holy Spirit.

Thus there are two possible interpretations of the phrase "sanctification of the Spirit:"

- (1) A sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit. (Subjective genitive). This is the view of Thayer and A. T. Robertson.
- (2) A sanctification of our human spirit. (Objective genitive). This view is favored by Moffatt and Lenski. Moffatt translates the phrase, "By the consecration of your spirit."

Lenski objects to the idea of the subjective genitive ("sanctification by the Holy Spirit") and says that the fact that God, i.e. his Spirit, does the sanctifying work need not be stated, for this lies in the word "sanctification," which is in itself a term that expresses action. It is our "spirit" that God sanctifies, just as it is "truth" that our faith trusts.

According to either interpretation, it is the Holy Spirit that does the sanctifying. But we personally favor the view that it is our spirit that is sanctified (the objective genitive). II Cor. 7:1 lends support to this view. "Let us cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of flesh and *spirit*." Obviously the human spirit is meant there. So also I Thess. 5:23, where Paul prayed that our whole *spirit* and soul and body would be sanctified.

### *Text (2:14)*

**14 whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

14. Unto which (salvation) he (has) called you by our gospel (which we preach), to (bring you unto that glorious day when we shall rejoice in) the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (as our bodies are resurrected and transformed to become like his glorious body).

*Notes (2:14)*

1. What is it "whereunto" God has called us? He has called us unto the whole program of being saved through sanctification of spirit and belief of the truth. (The genders of the Greek words indicate that no specific antecedent is in mind.)
2. Often people speak about being *called* by God through various means. The Scriptural method of being called is to be called *by the gospel*. Compare Romans 8:29-30.
3. The goal to which God has called us is that we may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

a. We become like Christ as we live the Christian life. II Cor. 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

As a man and woman who are married for many years come to resemble one another, so we come to resemble Christ as we live with Him.

b. When the dead are resurrected, we shall be transformed to be like God and Christ, and our worthless bodies shall be made anew like Christ's glorious body.

Phil. 3:21: Christ "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

I John 3:2: "We know that he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is."

Romans 8:21 tells how the whole creation longs for the manifestation of the sons of God (the Christians), for the creation itself shall be then delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Romans 8:17: "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him."

3. If you have ever admired and marvelled at Christ (as I'm sure you have), rejoice that you may share His glory.'

*Text (2:15)*

**15** So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours.

*Translation and Paraphrase*

15. Therefore then, brethren, stand (solidly) and hold fast the teachings which ye were taught, whether by (our spoken) word or by our letter.

*Notes (2:15)*

1. If the Thessalonians did not stand fast in the traditions that they had been taught, they would soon be in the condition of those who loved not the truth, and were deceived by delusion. See 2:10-12.

We likewise must stand fast in what we have been taught. We cannot be revamping the gospel message in each generation to suit ourselves.

2. We must mention again the use of that beautiful term, "brethren." Christians ought to address one another as "brother" or "sister."
3. The command, "Stand fast," is very emphatic. It enjoins us stand firm, persist and persevere. Compare I Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1.
4. The reference to "traditions" in this verse might give some people the idea that the church today should have spoken traditions as a guide as well as the written word. This is the Roman Catholic position.

A Catholic booklet entitled "A Catechism For Inquirers" says, "Where is God's revelation to man contained?" The answer given is that "God's Revelation to man is contained in the Bible and in Tradition." It asks another question: "Where else, then, is God's Revelation contained?" Answer: "It is contained in Tradition, i.e. in the living word of Christ and His apostles, which was not written down by them." (The booklet here refers to II John 1:12 and II Thess. 2:14 as proof of their statement.) Another question from the same book asks, "Where is this Tradition to be found?" Answer: "This Tradition is to be found chiefly in the writings of the Fathers of the Church of the first centuries of Christianity, in the decrees of the Church Councils, in the decisions of the Popes, and in the ceremonial of the Church."

5. It is a fact that the early church depended partly on oral teaching. But it is a mistake to allege that the gift of inspired oral teaching has been preserved by the "Church." By the close of Paul's life he wrote to Timothy and said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be *perfect*,

thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works." II Tim. 3:16-17. If the Scriptures alone can make us perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto ALL good works, we do not need any other traditions.

6. Furthermore, there is a grave danger that we may fall into the same condemnation that the Jews received because they added human traditions to the laws of God. Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matt. 15:9. Also note Mark 7:9: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."
7. The only apostolic traditions we now have are those in the Scriptures. This was not true of the Thessalonians. They had oral information, and at the time Paul wrote to them very few of the New Testament books had been written.
8. Paul declared that if anyone preached a gospel different from what he preached, he was to be accursed. Gal. 1:8-9. Paul told us that when we *read*, we may understand his knowledge of the mystery of Christ. Eph. 3:4. Let no one be misled or intimidated by people who claim to know more of God's will than the apostles have left for us in the New Testament. Often we see things practiced by people who follow their traditions that are contrary to what we read in the Bible. Surely any tradition that contradicts what the New Testament says cannot be a tradition approved by God.
9. Let us stand fast, and hold the apostolic traditions as we have been taught. The Thessalonians had been taught by word of mouth. We haven't. Both we and the Thessalonians have been taught by Paul's letters. Let us hold fast to these teachings.

### *Text (2:16-17)*

**16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

16. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our father, who has loved us and given (us) everlasting consolation and good hope by (his) favor,
17. May he comfort your hearts and strengthen (you) in every good work and word.

### *Notes (2:16-17)*

1. There is quite a contrast between the eternal destruction awaiting the sinner (II Thess. 1:9), and the everlasting consolation

## 2:17 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

- which the Christian has. God's consolations are eternal in their effects.
2. These verses form the second of the prayers that close every chapter in II Thessalonians. In our outline, we call this a prayer that they be comforted and established.
  3. There is no thought in the gospel message more precious than the thought that God loves us. Rev. 1:5: "Unto him that *loved* us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." I John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."
  4. Notice the close relation of God and Jesus. Both of them give us everlasting consolation. Both of them are asked to comfort and establish the Thessalonians. Paul addresses his prayer to both. We do not honor God by placing Jesus second. They rank together. See John 5:23.
  5. We so often need spiritual consolation. Paul prayed, "The Lord . . . comfort your hearts."
  6. We have good hope from God, and our hope comes through His *grace*, that is, His favor. Our hope does not rest on our own works or our own merit. Because our hope rests on His favor, and because His favor is as high as the heavens, our hope is very sure.
  7. In this prayer we sense Paul's anxiety for the Thessalonians. He was burdened greatly, desiring that they would become established firmly in the faith. "Establish" means to make stable, set firmly, set fast, strengthen, make firm. (Thayer).
  8. An anxious spirit, such as Paul's finds relief and comfort in prayer. Every minister must emphatically be a man of prayer.
  9. We notice that both our words and our works must be established. What we say and what we do must both be right in the sight of God. "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matthew 12:3.

### STUDY SUGGESTION

Turn now to the "Did You Learn?" questions that follow, and see if you can answer questions 46 to 63.

### DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over II Thessalonians, chapter 2)

1. What is the topic of II Thessalonians, chapter 2?
2. What idea had greatly excited the Thessalonians? (2:2)
3. Concerning what two things did Paul beseech the Thessalonians? (2:1)

## CHAPTER TWO

4. Did the Thessalonians think that the day of the Lord was near or already here? (2:2)
5. What three events were to precede the day of the Lord? (2:1-2)
6. What three sources of misinformation does Paul list as possibly causing the excitement? (2:1-2)
7. Explain what each of these three sources of misinformation may refer to.
8. What is another word for "falling away"? (2:3)
9. From what would people fall away? (2:3)
10. Did Paul predict "the" falling away or "a" falling away? (2:3)
11. The man of sin is also called the man of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. (2:3)
12. What does the phrase "son of perdition" mean? (2:3)
13. Who is called the "son of perdition" in the gospels? (2:3)
14. Does the Bible specifically connect the man of sin and anti-christ? (2:3)
15. According to the futurist (or pre-millennial) view, what is (1) the falling away, (2) the man of sin, and (3) that which hinders the appearance of the man of sin? (2:3)
16. Did the early church fathers regard the man of sin as being one man, or a succession of men at the head of a system? (2:3)
17. Are moral conditions in the world worse now than they were in Paul's time? (2:3)
18. How long have we been living in the "last days"? (2:3)
19. According to the historical view (favored in this book), what is (1) the falling away, (2) the man of sin, and (3) that which hindered the appearance of the "man of sin"? (2:3)
20. True or false (circle which)—The mystery of lawlessness was already working in Paul's time. (2:3,7)
21. Mention several departures from the New Testament faith which might be part of the "falling away." (2:3)
22. What two things does the man of sin do toward all that is called God? (2:4)
23. Where shall the man of sin sit? (2:4)
24. What does he exhibit himself to be? (2:4)
25. What is the "temple of God" where the man of sin sits? (2:4)
26. Name some people who have exhibited themselves as if they were God. (2:4)

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

27. How do you know that Paul did not once tell the Thessalonians that Christ's coming was very near, and then later say that certain things had to happen first? (2:5)
28. What kept the man of sin from appearing long before he did appear? (2:6)
29. What is the relationship between the word "withholdeth" in 2:6 and "let" in 2:7? What do these words mean?
30. Is the force that restrained the man of sin an abstract force or a personal figure? (2:6-7)
31. Explain the phrase "mystery of iniquity." (2:7)
32. What is the restraining power, according to the view favored in this book? (2:7)
33. Explain how this restraining power hindered the appearance of the man of sin. (2:7)
34. List four ways in which the papacy fulfills the descriptions of the man of sin. (2:7)
35. How will the wicked one be destroyed? (2:8)
36. Is there one parousia of the Lord when He takes his church out of the world, and then another parousia when He will destroy the wicked one? (2:8)
37. Does miracle-working power prove that a man is pleasing to God? (2:9)
38. The coming of the Wicked one is after the working of whom? (2:9)
39. Was the man of sin to work miracles? (2:9)
40. What does the phrase "deceivableness of unrighteousness" mean? (2:10)
41. Unto (or "in") what people does the Wicked one come? (2:10)
42. What do these people refuse to receive? (2:10)
43. What does God send to people who will not receive the love of the truth? (2:11)
44. Give two examples where God sent delusions to people so that they might believe a lie and be damned. (2:11-12)
45. In what did the people who did not believe the truth take pleasure? (2:12)
46. Had the Thessalonians received the strong delusions and believed a lie? (2:13)
47. What is the brief paragraph, 2:13-15, called in the outline? (2:13)

## CHAPTER TWO

48. Unto what had God chosen the Thessalonians and the other Gentile Christians? (2:13)
49. What are the two possible interpretations of the phrase "sanctification of the Spirit"? (2:13)
50. Through what other means (besides sanctification of spirit) had God chosen the Thessalonians? (2:13)
51. By what means had God called the Thessalonians? (2:14)
52. What is the goal to which God has called us? (2:14)
53. Which were the Thessalonians to do: (1) Stand fast; or (2) Search out the will of God for their own generation? (2:15)
54. What were the Thessalonians to hold fast? (2:15)
55. By what two means had they been taught? (2:15)
56. Why do we believe that the church now has no oral traditions that should be added to the writings of the apostles? (2:15)
57. In the outline what is the prayer in 2:16-17 called?
58. To what two people is this prayer addressed? (2:16)
59. God has given us everlasting \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2:16)
60. Through what have we been given good hope? (2:16)
61. Did Paul feel that the Thessalonians were established firmly in the faith? (2:17)
62. In what two things did Paul pray that they would be established? (2:17)
63. Quote or write out from memory II Thess. 2:3, 14. 2:3 begins, "Let no man——." 2:14 begins, "Whereunto he——."