

Who is the Man of Sin in II Thessalonians 2:3?

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We wish to address a difficult passage which many good Christian people throughout the years have been confused about, but which contains an important message for the body of the Church when properly understood.

We'll gain some context by starting at the beginning of II Thessalonians 2:

II Thess 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

II Thess 2:2 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.

Why did St. Paul write this second letter so soon after he wrote the first one? What is the compelling reason behind it, or is there one? We cannot say for sure that there was only one reason. Even so, there is a specific motivation for this letter that we can talk about. You will remember that in chapter four of his first letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle laid out clearly for them that Christ was going to return to get His Church and take them out of this world. In chapter five he told them that they had an appointment to be resurrected to eternal life with Christ when He returned. This would not depend on how they were living at the time. They had come to Christ and the Cross, they had been born again into the family of God, and they were already included in those that He would take with Him.

In the early days of the Church there was a legion of false teachers who were trying to *get in* and *cash in* on the Christian movement. Clever men were using any tactics that they could to draw attention to themselves by being sensational. In this instance, verse two tells us that somebody had been

writing letters to the churches, claiming to be the Apostle Paul, and telling them that the Day of Christ had come and gone, and they had been left behind. Why any supposed Christian leader would want to do that (other than to attract attention to himself) is beyond us, but that is what they were doing. St. Paul felt the urgent need to get this letter out to the Thessalonians and inform them that this had not happened and could not happen while they were still in this world. In order to calm their jittery nerves and establish a doctrine for the Church of all ages the Apostle makes some very specific points here which have been greatly misunderstood and mistaught by churchmen through the years.

The initial point is set out in the first part of verse three. The Day of Christ's coming to judge the world will not take place until He has first removed His Church. In short, the Apostle was telling the Thessalonians the reason they know that this doctrine (set forth in some specious letter) is false, is because they are still here, which they would not be if Christ had returned for His Church. There are many Bible teachers who do not believe that this is what this passage is saying. I want to go through it carefully with you to point out that this is exactly what he is telling the Thessalonians.

II Thess 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first...

The Greek word for *falling away* is *apostasia* (*ap-os-tas-ee'-ah*). Most literally it means something separative, like a divorce or a writing of divorcement. The emphasis in the text and context is upon separation. *Apostasia* can mean (and in this instance does mean) the catching away, or the removal. In other words, this is about the physical separation of the Church from this world.

The definite article is clearly there in the original Greek text from which the King James was taken. The definite article is *omikron* and it appears in the scriptures in the masculine *ó* (*ho*), feminine *ή* (*hē*), or neuter *τό* (*tó*) forms. In

this case it is the feminine *hē*. The importance of that is to tell us that this is not talking about just any falling away, catching away, removal or separation, but one specific catching away; the *apostasia*, i.e. the removal of the Church. In plain, straightforward and frank language, the Apostle is telling them that the final exposing of sin and the judgment of it will not begin in this world until the Church has been removed. He has already told them that faithfulness is not the criterion if they are born again. They are going with Him when He comes; that has already been determined. St. Paul called upon the Thessalonians to comfort one another with those words. The bottom line of his message here is that Christ has not returned at the end of the world because those in Thessalonica are still here, and the day of final judgment against evil will not begin until they have been caught away.

The Man of Sin

Now, in a sadly misunderstood and mistreated passage of Scripture, the Apostle goes on to talk about some of the things that are going to take place after the Church is removed and why those events cannot occur until then. In the last part of verse three he begins this discussion:

II Thess 2:3 ...and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Endless, and I may say bizarre, have been the efforts to identify “the man of sin” in this passage. It is admittedly difficult and obscure; if it were not there would not be such confusion. I cannot, nor would I want to change the wording of the text, but I can give you a very simple and understandable explanation of what this is talking about if you are willing to think outside the box and take into consideration the whole counsel of the Scriptures.

First of all, I want to discuss for a moment the designation, “the man of sin.” Who or what is this talking about? To get into the subject I want to cite from II Timothy:

II Tim 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

II Tim 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

In this passage the Apostle talks about “the man of God.” We may ask the same question here: who is this “man of God” that St. Paul is talking to Timothy about? To most sensible Bible students (whose minds are not blinded by the science-fiction gobbledygook of the very *‘Left Behind’* heresy that St. Paul was warning the Thessalonians against) the answer is simple. This is not talking about a particular person. It might be any man of God. It is using the term *the man of God* in the generic sense. It is telling us that in this world, in this Christian life, in this quest for sanctification and the desire to attain to the high calling of God in Christ, the Scriptures are given to protect us in our knowledge and to forge in our character that image so that the man of God may fully emerge and be fully seen.

That is exactly the sense in which the Apostles talks about “the man of sin” in our text. It is telling us that once the church has been removed from the scene and Christ has come to make the final confrontation with Satan and his evil army, the identity of the real force and power behind the counter-Christian operation in this world will be disclosed.

Now, before you jump to conclusions about this you may want to read the rest of this comment.

II Thess 2:4 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.

While we will not digress to study it, I will tell you what most of you already know, that one of the ambitions of Satan from before the world was laid

was to imitate God, to compete with God and to take his seat. Those of you who have read our book on Revelation (or any sensible commentary on Revelation, of which there are unfortunately precious few) will know that the unholy trinity, symbolized by the number 666, is comprised of the Dragon who is Satan, the Beast that is secular humanism, and the False Prophet that is religious humanism. We are informed in that great writing that the Beast and the False Prophet have received their instructions from the Dragon. Those instructions are many and varied but are summed up in the Scriptures as the mission to *go forth and blaspheme God and His truth*. In all secular and religious humanism, the effort is clearly meant to destroy the Biblical declaration of the Sovereignty of God, His great creative power, the literality of Creation, the historicity of Adam, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Eternal, New Creation. Secular and religious humanism have one overriding and fanatical desire, and that is to present themselves as God, to sit in God's seat as God, to dethrone God, and to disgrace His truth. That is in fact what has been going on in this world since the Garden of Eden when the Dragon, in the form of the serpent, pulled the human race away from God and to his own corrupt and distractive version of truth.

II Thess 2:5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

The Apostle reminds the Thessalonians, and by proxy all of the Church, that he has warned them about these subtleties of the enemy and his effort to work behind-the-scenes to accomplish his purposes under the banner of goodness and nobility and to disguise who and what he really is. But the *behind-the-scenes* aspect of Satan's operation is not all by design. In many instances (and particularly now in the last great dispensation of time in this world) Satan, who is foolish enough to think that he is winning, would like to bring his operation out in the open and take over the control of men's minds and activities. But he cannot do that because there is something that is

preventing him from forming and presenting his image to his people and his evil counter-kingdom the way you would like to.

II Thess 2:6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

II Thess 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

The Apostle tells the Thessalonians that they know who and what it is that is keeping Satan from taking complete charge of this whole creation. Certainly, the spirit of evil is at work in this world, but someone is hindering him, slowing him down, and keeping him from taking over completely — as evil had in the first generation before the flood — until the purposes of God are complete. That someone is the Holy Ghost working through the Church. He will continue to interfere with and hinder the works of the devil and his crowd until the time is right. The “taking out-of-the-way of the force that is hindering Satan” will be accomplished when the Holy Ghost, and the Church in whom He resides in this world, is removed. When that happens, Satan will have no opposition and will be able to run wild in this world for a very brief period of time. It will then be obvious to everyone the trick that they have fallen for, and the lie they had bought into. They will now understand that they have sold their souls and their futures to the Devil. But it will be a short-lived victory indeed:

II Thess 2:8 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.

In the great final conflict at the end of the world Satan will be destroyed by two forces. One will be the power of the Word of God that has been spoken by the Holy Ghost through the Church in this world and will culminate when

Christ Himself arrives on the scene to make the final pronouncements. The other will be the brightness of His coming. The brilliance of truth will dispel the lie, the Light of the World will banish the darkness, and The Life will pronounce final death upon the prince of death.

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

The Apostle is not talking only about Satan himself, but Satan's men as well; those in whom the devil has been trying to manifest his image since the dawn of creation. Remember that there are only two forces and two sides in this world. There is Christ and the forces of truth, light, and life; and then there is Satan and the forces of darkness the lie, and death. The Apostle wants the Thessalonians to understand fully what he is saying here. Those who blaspheme God — deny His Creation, deny the total depravity of man through the family of Adam, deny that Jesus Christ was God incarnate, deny the Resurrection, and the Second Coming — have done so with great power, passion, pseudo-supernatural powers and lies that are given credence by elaborate support systems. The best example being the hideous blasphemy of evolution in our times.

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

Those who have refused to believe and receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ have been taken in by this master liar and his nefarious Army. He is dragging them down into destruction with him, and unless you pity them, this is exactly what they deserve. They are in condemnation as we all were. Christ came and died to remove that condemnation and to give them righteousness as a gift and

a place in the great eternal utopia of the future, and they did not want it. They have chosen to disobey rather than to be saved by the glorious Gospel.