

ANTICHRIST CANNOT APPEAR UNTIL...

Part II

That Presently Preventing this Man's Appearance

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

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 [‘the Day of the Lord’] is at hand.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [‘the apostasy’] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition:

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.

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

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let [‘he who now hindereth will hinder’], until he be taken out of the way.

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:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (II Thess. 2:1-9).

Central, Overall Message to the Thessalonians

Paul’s first epistle to Christians forming the Church in Thessalonica had to do with *the central message which he had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world*. Paul referred to this message as “my gospel,” “our gospel,” connecting it with “the mystery” which had been revealed to him at the outset of his ministry. One was part and parcel with the other (I Thess. 1:5; cf. Rom. 2:16; 16:25; Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6; Col. 1:23-28).

In the first three and one-half chapters of I Thessalonians (1:1-4:12), Paul dealt extensively with *things pertaining to this central message which he had been called to proclaim*, which is “Christ proclaimed among you, the hope of glory” (correct textual reading of Col. 1:27b [note an inseparable connection with “the mystery” in vv. 26, 27a]).

Then, beginning toward the end of chapter four and continuing into chapter five (4:13-5:10), Paul dealt with *the rapture and succeeding events* (clearly seen in other related Scriptures to occur *before* the Tribulation) — *showing TWO types of Christians* removed from the earth at the end of the dispensation (faithful and unfaithful [*those who HAD* heeded his exhortations and warnings, and *those who HADN’T* heeded these exhortations and warnings, seen in 5:1-9]), with events surrounding the judgment seat in view.

And the remainder of the book simply forms Paul’s closing remarks for his first epistle.

Then, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul began at a time following the Tribulation, continuing from his first epistle.

And the Tribulation is *NOT* seen in these events concerning Christians both preceding and following the Tribulation, *for Christians have NOTHING to do with the Tribulation*. Rather, the Tribulation is “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” with Israel and the nations in view, *NOT the Church*.

The thrust of Paul’s opening remarks in his second epistle, covering all twelve verses of the first chapter, has to do with the place which Christians

will occupy in the future kingdom of Christ, following Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation.

Some, *the FAITHFUL*, will occupy positions of glory and honor in Christ’s kingdom, seated on the throne with Christ as He exercises power over the nations, realizing the “salvation” spoken of in I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:5, 10-2:1; cf. Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21).

Others, *the UNFAITHFUL*, will occupy places of shame and disgrace and have *NO part* in Christ’s kingdom. They *will NOT* be privileged to ascend the throne with Him as He exercises power over the nations, realizing instead the “wrath” spoken of in I Thess. 5:9 (II Thess. 1:6-9; cf. Rev. 3:15-17).

Then chapter two begins with a continuing statement from the closing verses of chapter one, remaining within the same subject matter — faithful Christians “gathering together unto him” at the time of His return at the end of the Tribulation.

This was Paul’s way of introducing a dissertation to correct erroneous teaching which had found its way into the Church in Thessalonica, purporting to have come from him (vv. 2ff).

(It is commonly taught that the “gathering together unto him” in II Thess. 2:1 has to do with the rapture. And a lesser number of Christians try to see the rapture taught in the third verse of this chapter through a rather strained usage of the Greek word *apostasia*, using the thought of “departure” for the meaning of the word and then trying to apply it to the Church being removed at the end of the dispensation.

Though “departure” is the idea behind the meaning of the word *apostasia* [literal meaning, “to stand away from”], attempting to see the rapture in either of these opening verses of the second chapter [vv. 1, 3] is clearly both textually and contextually wrong. And this can easily be seen by simply reading both in the light of their contexts.

Again, Scripture *MUST* be interpreted in the light of Scripture. A failure to do this, attempting to see the rapture in either of these two verses, has done away with any correct understanding of these verses. And, as a result, interpretation is negatively affected elsewhere in the chapter.

In the preceding respect, along with not understanding the overall picture beginning with chapter one in I Thessalonians, it is little wonder that Bible students have trouble understanding and identifying that which presently exists in II Thess. 2:6,7, preventing the appearance of the man of sin.)

That Preventing the Appearance of Antichrist

Aside from the “falling away” (‘the apostasy’), which, contextually, could ONLY be a concluding work of “the mystery of iniquity” (vv. 3, 7), the passage centers on something unnamed that is preventing the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. And that being referenced (which, contextually, could ONLY be associated with the apostasy) MUST be removed, taken out of the way, BEFORE this man can be revealed.

An interesting feature of the matter is that Paul didn’t need to identify that being referenced, for those in Thessalonica could ONLY have already known what he was writing about (v. 6), needing NO explanation.

But the same thing cannot be said of Bible students today. Most of them have trouble with this, and many of them simply leave it alone, not knowing what to do with it.

(Most Bible students today, seeking to explain what Paul was referencing, which the Thessalonians could only have understood, attempt to see the Holy Spirit as the restrainer.

They do this, to a large extent, on the basis of the Greek text’s usage of both neuter and masculine words to reference the restrainer [neuter in v. 6, masculine in v. 7]. And “Spirit” is a neuter word in the Greek text, though the Spirit, at times, is spoken of in a masculine respect [e.g., John 16:7-11].)

BUT, is this the way that those in Thessalonica would have understood the matter? If so, WHY?

Instead of surmising about the matter though, there is a much better way to answer these questions, which will, as well, leave us with the same mind-set as those in Thessalonica almost 2,000 years ago.

In this respect, answers are, in reality, quite easy to come by. Those in Thessalonica understood

what Paul was teaching; but few Bible teachers today do so, which is where the problem lies.

Those in Thessalonica understood the content of Paul’s gospel, seeing the message throughout as a message to the saved relative to the coming kingdom of Christ.

Bible students today, almost without exception, see Paul’s gospel as simply another way to reference the gospel of grace, seeing the message throughout I, II Thessalonians as dealing largely with saved-unsaved issues, intermixed with a message to Christians, though not a message in keeping with the content of Paul’s gospel at all.

Paul’s gospel had to do with a message to those who had already heard and responded to the message of the gospel of the grace of God. It had to do with a message concerning Christian faithfulness, with a view to the coming kingdom of Christ. It had to do with the purpose for the present dispensation — the Spirit sent into the world to call out a bride for God’s Son, with a view to the bride ascending the throne with Christ during the coming age.

In the preceding respect, Paul’s gospel, as seen dealt with throughout I Thessalonians, had to do with the antitype of Genesis chapter twenty-four (with I Thessalonians forming a commentary on this chapter), set between the death of Abraham’s wife (ch. 23) and Abraham again taking a wife (ch. 25).

Paul’s gospel had to do with God sending His Spirit to the earth to find and procure a bride for His Son, Jesus (as Abraham, in the type, sent his eldest servant into the far country to find and procure a bride for his son, Isaac).

And the whole of the matter in the antitype occurs EXACTLY as in the type. The Spirit’s search for and procurement of a bride for God’s Son occurs following Israel being set aside (looked upon as dead [John 11:1ff]) but before God restores and remarries the adulterous wife that He divorced.

In the type, following Abraham’s servant procuring the bride, the servant removed the bride from the far country (accompanied by maidens, riding on evidently the same ten camels in the servant’s

possession when he had come into the far country to search for and procure the bride [“ten” showing completeness; ALL went forth to meet Isaac, as ALL Christians will go forth to meet Christ].

And in the antitype, following the Spirit’s procurement of the bride, the Spirit will remove the bride from the earth (remove ALL Christians, with the bride revealed at the judgment seat).

In the type, Isaac came forth to meet his bride; and, in the antitype, Jesus will come forth to meet His bride.

The preceding is seen in I Thess. 4:13ff and can ONLY be an inseparable part of Paul’s gospel.

And when God’s purpose for the present dispensation has been completed and the Spirit removes the bride, there will then be NOTHING to prevent the man of sin from being revealed.

UNTIL this occurs, he CAN’T be revealed; AFTER this occurs, NOTHING will stand in the way of his being revealed. And since the whole of the matter is seen in Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians, there was NO need for any type explanation to those in Thessalonica concerning what Paul meant by something holding back the revelation of this man in II Thess. 2:6, 7. He had already told them in his first epistle.

Thus, that which is holding back the revelation of the man of sin is more than just the removal of the Spirit. It has to do with the Spirit completing His dispensational work and removing the bride (which, as well, clearly shows a pretribulation removal of Christians).

God works with set times, set ways, particular individuals, nations (Israel, and the nations through Israel) through which His plans and purposes are worked out and brought to pass.

Things referenced in II Thess. 2:1ff have to do with TWO different set times in this respect — a removal relative to one, and a revealing relative to the other.

And, UNTIL these set times arrive, NEITHER can occur! BUT, when these set times arrive, BOTH MUST occur!

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