

The Word of the Lord

An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

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II Thessalonians 2:1–3 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

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.

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

Concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the churches gathering together unto Him, we learn a very significant truth—that this event will not occur, that the day of Christ will not come, until there first commences a great *falling away* from the faith, directly influenced by the revealing of the *man of sin*, the great instigator in leading the world away from the worship of God to become worshipers of himself.

(Ellicott Commentary for English Readers, II Thess. 2:3)

That man of sin.—It is not absolutely certain from the Greek, but the context makes it tolerably clear that the “Man of Sin” is the head and centre of the Apostasy itself, and does not form a separate movement from it. The “Man of Sin,” then, will have at one time formed (or will still profess to form) part of the Christian Church, and the Apostasy will culminate in him. ... The phrase, “the Man of Sin,” might, perhaps, be only a poetical personification of a movement, or of a class of men, or of a succession of men (as, e.g., Psalm 89:22; Revelation 2:20; Revelation 17:3); but the analogy of the parallel passages in Daniel 8, 11 leads rather to the supposition that St. Paul looked for the coming of some actual individual man who should be the impersonation of the movement of Apostasy. The genitive (see Note on 1 Thessalonians 1:3) is like a forcible epithet: “A man so wicked that, bad as other men are, wickedness should be his mark by which he is distinguished from all others; a man who belongs to sin, in whom the ideal of sin has become realised and incarnate.” What kind of sin will be most prominent in him is not expressed in the word itself; but the context points clearly to that which is, in fact, the crowning sin—spiritual pride and rebellious arrogance (Ephesians 6:12).

When sin reaches its peak, led by the *man of sin* influencing men to betray God, Jesus Christ will return to not only destroy the *son of perdition* but also to remove all ungodly rebellion once and for all.

The Word of the Lord

The apostle therefore strongly asserts that the day of Jesus Christ will not be at hand until there is first a great falling away from the faith, coinciding with the man of sin, the son of perdition being revealed in the world.

No doubt there were at the time many foolish thoughts and conjectures concerning the Son of God's return and the beginning of the day of the Lord. Yet when Jesus's disciples asked Him when He would restore the kingdom to Israel, His answer was;

Acts 1:7 It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Certain things, like the times and seasons when biblical prophecy will be fulfilled, are not intended for even saints to know accurately.

These secret things are purposed only for God's knowledge until the appointed time for their fulfillment.

Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Again, God chooses to keep some things secret, and no amount of persistent inquiry by man can make them known.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Thankfully, it is enough for the people of God to concern themselves with things that have been revealed and not foolishly inquire about those divine mysteries not purposed for any human being to know.

Faith *cometh by hearing*, and *hearing by the Word*; consequently, no true faith will ever be gained or advanced by searching for those hidden revelations of God that He, by His divine wisdom, has said no man should become aware of until the day of their fulfillment.

Romans 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

(McKnight qtd. by Benson Commentary, Rom. 11:33)

Men are not capable of penetrating into the depths of the divine wisdom, because revelation hath made known only what God hath willed, and said, and done, without disclosing the reasons either of his general or his particular conduct. The knowledge of whatever is above our present childish conceptions is to be sought for, not here, but in the future state.

(Benson Commentary Continued, Rom. 11:33)

For who hath known the mind of the Lord ... Or who hath been his counsellor? — Who hath given him advice respecting either the planning or managing of the affairs of the universe?

Human curiosity can do more to damage faith than strengthen it. And though the mystery of iniquity is already at work, it has not been seen or experienced in such a manner that sin has completely overthrown the truth.

Yes, sin is rising, and at an alarming rate, but this does not mean that the day of Christ is immediately upon us or that we can pinpoint the exact time of Christ's arrival.

II Thessalonians 2:3 For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.

(Ellicott Commentary for English Readers, II Thess. 2:3)

A falling away ... “That falling away” must undoubtedly imply that the persons so apostatising had formerly held (or, perhaps, still professed to hold) the Christian faith: men cannot fall from ground which they never occupied. This vast and dreadful Apostasy (see Luke 18:8), so clearly and prominently taught of to the ancient Church, and so mysterious to us, is further defined by the following words, as the Apocalypse or Manifestation of the Man of Sin. Of this revelation of Antichrist the same word (apocalypsis) is used which is often used of Christ, as, e.g., 2Thessalonians 1:7; Luke 17:30; and thrice in St. Peter; so that we may expect to recognise him when he comes as clearly as we shall recognise Christ. The conception of the Antichrist is not merely that of an opponent of the Christ, but of a rival Christ: there is a hideous parallelism between the two.

Man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

With all great movements of evil, which this final apostasy from the faith will be, there needs to be a figurehead, someone for people to congregate around and who will validate their sinful desires. This someone is revealed in prophecy as the *man of sin ... the son of perdition*.

He will possess no shame in rejecting the Godhead and divine law and shall assert himself as the new ruler of man. He is termed *antichrist* simply because he is the embodiment of sin and against He who died to remove it from the world. Sin is descriptive of his evil nature, and he shall seek to lead others to join him in embracing its full realization in their lives.

The Anichrist's war will not simply be directed at other governments but against heaven itself.

The casualties of this coming prophetic conflict will dwarf previous human wars, such as World War II, in which an estimated forty to fifty million people died. So great, the Scriptures teach, will be death throughout the earth during this future time that unless the day is cut short, no human life will be saved.

Matthew 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Yet it shall be because of the his appearance and rise in religious and governmental influence that Jesus Christ will be given the heavenly direction to return and assume His rightful position as God's heir of all things.

The appearance of the Antichrist and the calamity and treachery he shall bring to the world shall be met and supernaturally overthrown by the one sent by God to save the world.

Evil will not be allowed to conquer, simply because the God of the heavens, who is only good, will not let it.

Sin will be met with punishment, and unrighteousness will be replaced with justice, and this shall be accomplished by God's Son.

Jesus Christ will assert heavenly power to eternally remove sin from the world and destroy its new human representative.

II Thessalonians 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.

Here we see the hubris of this *man of sin*, as he will assume the position of God. In short, because of his jealousy of the one true God, he will allow no one but himself to be worshiped and followed.

In the Antichrist's eyes, none are worthy of worship except for him, and he shall not tolerate any who reject his newly instituted religious system of government.

Practically there will exist, at least from an authoritative standpoint, only one religion, and the *man of sin* will oversee and enforce it as the new religion of this world.

Therefore, just as the shadows of the types of the Antichrist in the past sought to assert themselves above all that came before them, political and religious, so shall the *man of sin* do the same.

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, II Thess. 2:4)

The previous world kingdoms had each one extraordinary person as its representative head and embodiment (thus Babylon had Nebuchadnezzar, Da 2:38, and; Medo-Persia had Cyrus; Greece had Alexander, and Antiochus Epiphanes, the forerunner of Antichrist); so the fourth and last world kingdom, under which we now live, shall have one final head, the concentrated embodiment of all the sin and lawless iniquity which have been in pagan and papal Rome.

To set the general context of the *man of sin's* place in biblical prophecy and how he shall precede the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important to at least briefly look at the four Gentile kingdoms Daniel prophesied would lead to His appearance.

In Daniel chapter 2 we have the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, symbolizing the great Gentile kingdoms that would arise, beginning with his own and ending with the *man of sin's* universal dominance.

Daniel 2:31–44 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. ³² This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, ³³ His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. ³⁴ Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. ³⁵ Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. ³⁷ Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. ³⁸ And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. ³⁹ And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. ⁴¹ And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. ⁴³ And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not

cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

From the fourth kingdom (Rome), which will have *the strength of iron* (v. 41), shall come a divided kingdom, represented by the feet and toes consisting of iron and clay, partly strong and partly weak.

(Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Dan. 2:44)

This image represented the kingdoms of the earth, that should successively rule the nations, and influence the affairs of the Jewish church. 1. The head of gold signified the Chaldean empire, then in being. 2. The breast and arms of silver signified the empire of the Medes and Persians. 3. The belly and thighs of brass signified the Grecian empire, founded by Alexander. 4. The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman empire. The Roman empire branched into ten kingdoms, as the toes of these feet. Some were weak as clay, others strong as iron. Endeavours have often been used to unite them, for strengthening the empire, but in vain.

Daniel chapter 7 relates his dream, in which the four kingdoms are represented by animals coming from the sea.

Daniel 7:1&2 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. ² Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

(Ellicott Commentary for English Readers, Dan. 7:2)

The great sea.—In general (e.g., Joshua 15:47), these words imply the Mediterranean. Such cannot be the meaning here, so that according to Daniel 7:17 we are justified in explaining the “sea” to mean the nations of the world, which are compared to the sea (Isaiah 27:1; Psalm 46:3). The raging of the winds from the four quarters of the sky points to the various political and social agitations which disturb the world's history, and lead to the changes and revolutions which mark its progress as it tends towards the end.

Daniel 7:3&4 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. ⁴ The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

For simplification's sake, we will include from Benson's Commentary the primary characteristics of these beasts, or kingdoms, that shall arise from the sea.

(Benson Commentary, Dan. 7:4)

The first was like a lion — The Chaldean or Babylonian empire: compared to the head of gold, the chief of metals, in the image represented to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, Daniel 2:32; Daniel 2:37–38, is here represented as a lion, the king of beasts. ... It is represented as having eagles' wings, to denote the extent and rapidity of its conquests, that empire being advanced to its height within a few years, by the conduct and arms of one single person, namely, Nebuchadnezzar. *I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked* — Or, torn out, as מריחו may be rendered: that is, it was checked in its progress by frequent defeats, and rendered unable to make further conquests. Its wings were beginning to be plucked at the time of the delivery of this prophecy; for at this time the Medes and Persians were encroaching upon it. Belshazzar, the king now reigning, was the last of his race; and in the seventeenth year of his reign Babylon was taken, and the kingdom transferred to the

Medes and Persians.

Daniel 7:5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

(Benson Commentary, Dan. 7:5)

And behold another beast like a bear — This is the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, who, for their cruelty and greediness after blood, are compared to a bear, which is a most voracious and cruel animal. Bochart recounts several particulars wherein the Persians resembled bears; but the chief likeness consisted in what has been just mentioned, and this likeness was principally intended by the prophet, as may be inferred from the words of the text, *Arise, devour much flesh*. A bear, saith Aristotle, is an all-devouring animal; and so the Medo-Persians were great robbers and spoilers, according to Jeremiah 51:48; Jeremiah 51:56: see Bishop Newton and the note on Isaiah 13:18. *And it raised up itself on one side* — Some think the allusion is to the eastern quarter of the world, from whence the Persians came; others, to the elevation of the Persians above the Medes and Babylonians, which three powers are conceived to be meant by the *three ribs* in the mouth of the bear: but Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Chandler, with great propriety, explain them as signifying the kingdoms of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, which were conquered by it, but were not properly parts and members of its body. They might be called *ribs*, as the conquest of them much strengthened the Persian empire; and they might be said to be *between the teeth of the bear*, as they were much grinded and oppressed by the Persians.

Daniel 7:6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

(Benson Commentary, Dan. 7:6)

After this I beheld, and lo, another like a leopard — “This third kingdom is that of the Macedonians, or Grecians, who, under the command of Alexander the Great, overcame the Persians, and reigned next after them: and it is fitly compared to a *leopard* upon several accounts. The leopard is remarkable for swiftness, and Alexander and the Macedonians were amazingly swift and rapid in their conquests. The leopard is a spotted animal, and so was a proper emblem, according to Bochart, of the different manners of the nations which Alexander commanded; or, according to Grotius, of the various manners of Alexander himself, who was sometimes merciful, and sometimes cruel; sometimes temperate, and sometimes drunken; sometimes abstemious, and sometimes incontinent. The leopard, as Bochart observes, is of small stature, but of great courage, so as not to be afraid to engage with the lion and the larger beasts; and so Alexander, a little king, in comparison, of small stature too, and with a small army, dared to attack the king of kings, that is, Darius, whose kingdom was extended from the Ægean sea to the Indies. *Which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl* — The Babylonian empire was represented with *two wings*, but this is described with *four*. For, as Jerome says, nothing was swifter than the victories of Alexander, who ran through all the countries from Illyricum and the Adriatic sea to the Indian ocean and the river Ganges, not so much fighting as conquering; and in *six years* (he should have said in *twelve*) subjugated part of Europe and all Asia to himself. *The beast had also four heads* — To denote the four kingdoms into which this same third kingdom should be divided, as it was after the death of Alexander, among his four captains; Cassander reigning over Macedon and Greece, Lysimachus over Thrace and Bithynia, Ptolemy over Egypt, and Seleucus over Syria. *And dominion was given to it* — Which shows, as Jerome observes, that it was not owing to the fortitude of Alexander, but proceeded from the will of the Lord. And, indeed, unless he had been directed, preserved, and assisted by the mighty power of God, how could Alexander, with thirty thousand men, have overcome Darius with six hundred thousand, and in so short a time have brought all the countries, from Greece as far as to India, into subjection.” — Bishop

Newton.

Daniel 7:7&8 *After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

(Benson Commentary, Dan. 7:7)

Behold a fourth beast — This *fourth kingdom* can be no other than the Roman empire, which answers this emphatical description better than any of the former kingdoms. *Dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly* — And therefore compared to iron, Daniel 2:40. *It devoured and brake in pieces* — It spread its arms and its terrors to a much greater extent than any of the preceding powers, and entirely subdued all the remains of the former kingdoms, and all the nations that had been subject to them. It reduced Macedon into a Roman province about one hundred and sixty-eight years, the kingdom of Pergamus about one hundred and thirty-three years, Syria about sixty-five years, and Egypt about thirty years, before Christ. And besides the remains of the Macedonian empire, it subdued many other provinces and kingdoms; so that it might, by a very usual figure, be said *to devour the whole earth, to tread it down and break it in pieces*; and become, in a manner, what the Roman writers delighted to call it, “The empire of the whole world.” The words of Dionysius Halicarnassus are very apposite to this subject. “The city of Rome,” says he, “ruleth over all the earth as far as it is inhabited, and commands all the sea, not only that within the Pillars of Hercules, but also the ocean, as far as it is navigable; having first and alone, of all the celebrated kingdoms, made the east and west the bounds of its empire, and its dominion hath continued longer than that of any other city or kingdom.” *And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it* — This is intimated by its having no name, being more cruel and horrid than any sort of beast whatever; and the Roman power was so multiform, that it could not be pointed out by any one species of resemblance. And it was different from all kingdoms in its republican form of government, its greatness, length of duration, and extent of dominion. But its chief distinction consisted in its having ten horns, which we find at Daniel 7:24 are ten kings or kingdoms: see also Revelation 17:12. And these answer to the ten toes of the image, Daniel 2:42. The empire continued in its greatness till the reign of Theodosius the Great, and soon afterward the partition happened, and the broken form remained, for the ten kingdoms were to be no more united, till the Ancient of days should come.

We live in the time described in Daniel in which ten kings or kingdoms, corresponding to the ten toes of the image, are not united until God’s will deems they should be.

We know from Thessalonians that this time cannot come until the little horn, which has a *mouth speaking great things*, arises to preeminence in the church and the world to unite the earth against the Lord and against His Christ.

Daniel 7:9&10 *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.*

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Dan. 7:9)

I beheld - “I continued looking on these strange sights, and contemplating these transformations.” This implies that some time elapsed before all these things had occurred. He

looked on until he saw a solemn judgment passed on this fourth beast particularly, as if God had come forth in his majesty and glory to pronounce that judgment, and to bring the power and arrogance of the beast to an end. ... *And the Ancient of days did sit* - Was seated for the purposes of judgment.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *Dan. 7:10*)

A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him - Streams of fire seemed to burst forth from his throne. Representations of this kind abound in the Scriptures to illustrate the majesty and glory of God. Compare Revelation 4:5, "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices." Exodus 19:16; Habakkuk 3:4; Psalm 18:8.

(Ellicott Commentary for English Readers, *Dan. 7:10*)

The books—i.e., the unerring record of man's thoughts, words, and deeds, which is written in the unfailing memory of God. (Comp. Exodus 32:32; Psalm 56:8; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3; Malachi 3:16.)

Daniel 7:11–14 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. ¹²As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. ¹³I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The majority of Daniel's prophecy has already been fulfilled. What he prophesied about Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, and part of his prophecy of Rome's dominance, is now recorded history. All that is left is for the *little horn with a mouth speaking great things*, issuing forth from the *fourth beast* and the remnants of Rome's influence, to exercise authority in the world. Again, this is represented by *His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay* (Daniel 2:33).

Daniel then goes on to wonder about the truth of the *fourth beast*, diverse and unique from the others, who made *war with the saints and prevailed against them* (v. 21).

Daniel 7:19–21 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; ²⁰And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. ²¹I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *Dan. 7:19*)

Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast - I desired to know particularly what was symbolized by that. He appears to have been satisfied with the most general intimations in regard to the first three beasts, for the kingdoms represented by them seemed to have nothing very remarkable. But it was different in regard to the fourth. The beast itself was so remarkable - so fierce and terrific; the number of the horns was so great; the springing up of the little horn was so surprising; the character of that horn was so unusual; the judgment passed on it was so solemn; and the vision of one like the Son of man coming to take possession of the kingdom - all these things were of so fearful and so uncommon a character, that the mind of Daniel was peculiarly affected in view of them, and he sought earnestly for a further explanation. In the description that Daniel here gives of the beast and the horns, he refers in the main to the same circumstances which he had be-

fore described; but he adds a few which he had before omitted, all tending to impress the mind more deeply with the fearful character and the momentous import of the vision; as, for instance, the fact that it had nails of brass, and made war with the saints.

When the fourth beast wars with the saints, God shall give the kingdom to the Son of man and His saints.

Daniel 7:22–27 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. ²³ Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. ²⁴ And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. ²⁵ And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. ²⁶ But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. ²⁷ And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

This last dominion, or last power, that shall exert itself over the world's inhabitants *shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces* (v. 23). The *ten horns* out of *this kingdom* are ten kings who will *arise*, and one will be more predominant than the others. The *little horn*, the *man of sin*, will make war with the saints and prevail against them, ushering in the return of Christ: the *Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days* (v. 13). The *Son of man* will be given *dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed* (v. 14).

With respect to this fourth kingdom sprouting from Rome, Albert Barnes's Commentary states,

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *Daniel 7:24*)

It would be proud, and ambitious, and particularly arrogant against God: "and he shall speak great words against the Most High," Daniel 7:25. The Chaldee here rendered against - 737 *letsad* - means, literally, at, or against the part of it, and then against. Vulgate contra; Greek πρὸς *pros*. This would be fulfilled in one who would blaspheme God directly; or who would be rebellious against his government and authority; or who would complain of his administration and laws; or who would give utterance to harsh and reproachful words against his real claims. It would find a fulfillment obviously in an open opposer of the claims and the authority of the true God; or in one the whole spirit and bearing of whose pretensions might be fairly construed as in fact an utterance of great words against him.

The rebellion orchestrated by the *little horn* spoken of in Daniel will be a universal condemnation of God's laws lead by him, the apostasy that began in Genesis with Adam and Eve departing from God's Word shall be allowed to grow until it has engulfed the entire world.

Because a great majority of this world's inhabitants shall freely and willingly join themselves to the *man of sin* and his rebellion against God, heaven, in the person of Jesus Christ, shall intervene one last time to deal with sin.

The book of Revelation reveals other cataclysmic events that will transpire at this time. There will be a great tribulation, one the world has never seen before and will never see again. Yet after a short period of three and a half years, Jesus will return to destroy the Antichrist and establish peace on earth. The Lord shall overcome evil, and evil will no longer exist. Hence, with the removal of sin and all its ungodly proponents, harmony, peace, and unity, not only between God and man but between man and man, shall return, and all this shall be accomplished by the power given to the Son, enabling Him to rule all things according to God's will.

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

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *II Thess.* 2:5)

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? - The whole subject of the second coming of the Saviour seems to have constituted an important part of the instructions of Paul when at Thessalonica. He now refers them to what he had told them respecting the great apostasy, to show that his views had not changed, and that he did not mean to have them understand that the world would soon come to an end. He had stated these things to them implying that a considerable interval must elapse before the Saviour would appear.

False prophets, unknown to most, have as their primary objective to bring doubt upon the true Word of God. Thus, whenever those not led by the Holy Spirit make claims concerning the future of the world, or anything else for that matter, which do not come to pass, people are left to wonder if any revelation said to come from God can be trusted. For this reason God's Word reveals that we should *try the spirits*, or those who claim to be speaking by the Spirit, lest false prophecies and prophets are mistakenly thought to be true.

I John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

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

Much has been written about this verse, and much has been speculated about what power withholds the Antichrist's arrival on the earth. The simple answer is that it is God. Like with many things, the simplest explanation is often the right one. So if the Thessalonian believers were troubled about the many false and misleading prophecies of the day, they needed only to be reminded that the God of the heavens remains in control of coming world events.

Daniel 2:21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *Dan.* 2:21)

And he changeth the times and the seasons - The object of this is to assert the general control of God in reference to all changes which occur. The assertion is made, undoubtedly, in view of the revolutions in empire which Daniel now saw, from the signification of the dream, were to take place under the Divine hand. Foreseeing now these vast changes denoted by different parts of the image Daniel 2:36-45, stretching into far-distant times, Daniel was led to ascribe to God the control over "all" the revolutions which occur on earth.

II Thessalonians 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 *mystery of iniquity* is a concealed force that seeks to promote sin and rebellion against God.

And though this force is not as widespread as it one day will be, the *mystery of iniquity* is at work today, leading people away from God and encouraging them to live their lives according to their own sinful and carnal desires and pattern themselves after he who introduced sin in the world.

(Benson Commentary, *II Thess. 2:7*)

For the mystery of iniquity — There is a mystery of iniquity as well as of godliness, the one in direct opposition to the other. The expression, *a mystery*, in the Scripture sense of it, is something secret or undiscovered. See note on Ephesians 1:9. *The mystery of iniquity*, therefore, is a scheme of error, not openly discovered, whose influence is to encourage iniquity. *Doth already work* — Ἐνεργεῖται, *worketh inwardly*, in men's minds, or in the church, and perhaps also secretly. The seeds of corruption were sown, but they were not yet grown up to any maturity: the leaven was fermenting in some parts, but it was far from having yet infected the whole mass. To speak without a figure, the apostle means that the false doctrines and bad practices, which he foresaw in after times would be carried to a great height by the power which he denominates the *man of sin*, were already operating in the false teachers, who then infested the church.

II Thessalonians 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:

Regardless of whatever glory, power, and might the *man of sin* accumulates during his brief time of rulership, it shall be quickly dissolved when *the Lord* comes in the power and glory of the Father. Whatever delusions the Antichrist has tricked the world into believing concerning his authority to rule as God will also be exposed as a lie when the Son of man, Jesus Christ, returns to the earth.

The Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. In the end, the Word of God on the lips of the Son of God, accompanied by the brightness of His glory, shall consume and destroy the *man of sin*.

Christ, therefore, shall destroy with the brightness of His coming the one who deceived a great part of this world.

(Benson Commentary, *II Thess. 2:8*)

and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming ... literally, the bright shining of his coming, and means that, as darkness is dispelled by the rising of the sun, so the mystery of iniquity shall be destroyed by the lustre with which Christ will cause the true doctrine of the gospel to shine.

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, *II Thess. 2:8*)

with the brightness of his coming—Greek, “the manifestation, (or appearance) of His presence”: the first outburst of His advent—the first gleam of His presence—is enough to abolish utterly all traces of Antichrist, as darkness disappears before the dawning day.

It is worthy of note that Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as appearing in light, possessing a brilliant countenance likened to the sun.

This is the true image of the Son of God now, though sadly, most still only view the Lord Jesus as He was in His human form on the earth.

Revelation 1:13-16 *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁴ His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵ And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *Rev. 1:16*)

Was as the sun shineth in his strength - In his full splendor when unobscured by clouds; where his rays are in no way intercepted. Compare Judges 5:31; "But let them that love him (the Lord) be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might"; 2 Samuel 23:4, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds"; Psalm 19:5, "Which (the sun) is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." There could be no more striking description of the majesty and glory of the countenance than to compare it with the overpowering splendor of the sun.

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

The apostle informs the Thessalonians that the man of sin's coming is directly linked to Satan, and therefore he will have the same illusion of power.

See, the devil has no inherent divine spiritual authority; thus, he must resort to deception and lies to maintain influence over man.

The *man of sin's*—Satan's—progeny will do the same. This *son of perdition* will possess only the illusion of power, signs, and wonders, yet the Spirit of Christ which lives in His people will prevent God's elect from falling prey to his deceptions.

Matthew 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.*

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, *Matt. 24:24*)

If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect - So nearly would their pretended miracles resemble true miracles as to render it difficult to detect the imposture; so much so, that if it were possible they would persuade even true Christians that they were the Messiah. But that was not possible. His real friends would be too firmly established in the belief that he was the Christ to be wholly led away by others. Christians may be sometimes led far astray; they may be in doubt about some great doctrines of religion; they may be perplexed by the cavils and cunning craftiness of those who do not love the truth, but they cannot be entirely deceived and seduced from the Saviour. Our Saviour says that if this "were possible," it would be done then; but it was not possible. Compare the notes at John 10:28-29.

The Word of the Lord