

# **The Last Enemy of Christ**

Paul's Chronology of Christ's Return

by CW Steinle

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## **Introduction**

By his own estimation Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees. The Pharisees were experts both in the law and in the spiritual aspects of theology. God had also gifted Paul with the ability to understand the mysteries of the Spirit, and the ability to correctly interpret the Old Testament prophecies. So when the churches were uncertain about end-time events, Paul was able to address their concerns by recounting the precise sequence in which the End would unfold.

These end-time references found in Paul's Epistles appear to have been based on a technical understanding which Paul consistently applied as he rehearsed various end-times events. Furthermore, certain Old Testament verses appear to form a framework from which Paul's technical knowledge of eschatology was derived. The aim of this booklet is to identify these underlying scriptures; and to suggest a hypothetical framework capable of supporting the specific statements which Paul includes in his epistles. The opening chapters of this booklet will review verses containing possible foundations for Paul's understanding of the End. After discussing potentially key components, the Letters to the Thessalonians will be used to test the validity of our findings.

The Twelfth Chapter of Daniel yields most of the facts necessary to build a suitable framework. Many of the other premises are found in 1st Corinthians Fifteen. After a brief discussion on *The Resurrection of the Dead*, the key concepts used to create the framework will be established as Daniel Twelve and the Corinthians excerpt are expounded in a commentary fashion. May the reader be open-minded as various events and their timing are suggested, knowing that there will be a reward for such patience when the proposed framework is put to the test in the latter chapters of this booklet.

## Chapter One - The Resurrection of the Dead

*But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. (Acts 23:6-8)*

On more than one occasion Paul defended himself against the accusations of the Jewish authorities by stating his hope in the resurrection of the dead. Obviously these Jewish leaders were not engaged in a debate concerning the resurrection of Jesus, since both groups denied the claims of Christ. Nevertheless, both parties were passionately divided over a different resurrection - the *resurrection of the dead*.

The *resurrection of the dead* is clearly predicted in the books of the Prophets. The Pharisees embraced the prophetic books; whereas the Sadducees clung to the writings of Moses (which Jesus demonstrated also contain references to eternal life).

This resurrection at the end of the age represents the culmination of all other prophecies concerning the age of man. Thus, Paul often referred to the resurrection of the dead as the object of the Pharisee's hope.

*But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Acts 24:14,15)*

## Chapter Two - The Delineation of Daniel

Paul's eschatological time line appears to be based primarily on Daniel Chapter Twelve. Each verse in the chapter is expounded upon briefly below, even though not every verse is essential to the establishment of Paul's chronology. The reader may be familiar with other valid interpretations, but please be patient to see how these assumptions come together to support the upcoming conclusions.

### *Daniel 12 (NASV)*

*"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."*

*Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river. And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?" I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the*

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*outcome of these events?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."*

***<sup>1</sup> "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise and there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time;***

Looking to scripture as the best interpreter of scripture; these verses from Daniel Chapter Ten and one verse from Revelation give insight into this mystery of the spiritual realm. Daniel is told by Gabriel that the heavenly force which tipped the balance toward victory over Satan was Michael the Archangel.

*Daniel 10:13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."*

*Daniel 10:21b "No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince."*

Revelation 12:7-12 shows how Michael "arising" will bring about the "time of distress":

*And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of*

*old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

***and at that time***

Verse One of Daniel Twelve began with "*Now at that time*". Daniel reiterates, "*and at that time*" - still at this same time of the end - the next three events will occur: The deliverance of those written in the book, The resurrection to judgment, and The reward of the insightful and the pastoral. These events are not necessarily given in their chronological order; rather, they are said to be included in the same future period of time.

***your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.***

Peter gave assurance that "*the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment*". (2nd Peter 2:9)

Many have added words to the Book of Revelation by inserting their opinions where the scriptures are silent. There are, however, two clearly stated passages in Revelation which actually describe the rescue of the godly. The first is Revelation Chapter 9, at the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

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*Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Revelation 9:3,4)*

But the phrase from Revelation with the most similar language to Daniel's prophecy is found in Revelation Chapter 20 in what is known as "The Great White Throne Judgment".

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)*

***<sup>2</sup> Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.***

Daniel 12:2 is a clear declaration of the *resurrection of the dead*. And these people who are raised will be immediately divided into two groups. Both groups will enter an everlasting estate; one to life, and the other to disgrace and contempt. The New Testament passages restating this coming judgment are too numerous to quote in this brief treatise. A representative listing would include: many of Jesus' parables, His Olivet-Discourse-discussion of the goats and sheep,

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numerous examples from the Epistles, the grape harvest of Revelation Fourteen, and the white throne judgment above.

***<sup>3</sup> Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.***

Verse Three appears to be the foundation for Paul's Bema Judgment of the Just. Here is a reward for two virtuous activities. The first, for those who have insight; who understand and know God's truths, who have vision beyond the superficial, who have grasped the mysteries of God as Paul did, for those who have diligently sought after God.

The second righteous behavior that will find special reward is that of evangelism, instructing, discipling, and counseling. This is the others-oriented response to the personal pursuit of God, previously referred to as *insight*. This is putting shoes to the feet of the Gospel message. . . the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

When Paul states in Romans 14 and 2nd Corinthians 5, "We will all" stand at Christ's bema (place of judgment); he is speaking to the audience of the Church, "we" - the justified believer in Christ. This Bema is a separate judgment for those who have passed into life by virtue of their names being found in the Lamb's book of life. "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*" (John 5:24) Jesus is saying that the believer has already passed into life - that first everlasting state; as opposed to the second estate of disgrace and contempt (Daniel 12:2 above).

***<sup>4</sup> But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth,***

Daniel is told that these prophetic words will not be fulfilled until the time of the end. By telling Daniel “*many will go back and forth*”, the messenger is likely conveying the length of time by which the end would be delayed.

Daniel knew from Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Jews would not return to the Holy Land until a 70 year term of captivity had been completed. At that time many would “*go back*” to Israel. But Daniel was being instructed that the end would be postponed beyond that first aliyah (Heb. *return to Israel*). *Going back and forth* may have been a prophecy of further diasporas. A second exile occurred when the Jews were exiled by the Romans at the beginning of the second century. As a result of the Zionist Movement and the sympathies drawn by the Holocaust of World War II, the Jews have once again *gone back* to the Land

***and knowledge will increase.***

Through further prophecy, including the prophecies of Paul, a more precise knowledge of these end-time events would be given in God’s own good time. Even in the last book of the Bible, the phrase, “let the reader understand” is given to accommodate the ever-increasing knowledge of the End which God continues to impart to mankind.

***<sup>5</sup> Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river. <sup>6</sup> And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"***

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Initially, Daniel is not given the knowledge of when these events will begin. Instead he is told when they will end.

***<sup>7</sup> I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time;***

Once again, Daniel is not told when these things will happen, but now he is informed of their duration - how long it "would be". Now the duration of these end-time events is stated as three and one-half times. This span of time continued to be honored by the earliest Church Fathers. Irenaeus, a second generation bishop in the line of St. John, mentions this three-and-one-half times period in his writings.

*"But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that "many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Against Heresies, book V, Chapter 30, section 4)*

***and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.***

Here is given the condition under which all these events will transpire. Jesus asked the haunting question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Sadly, these words from Daniel would indicate that the "falling away" must take place before these end times events can be fulfilled.

***<sup>8</sup> As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?" <sup>9</sup> He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. <sup>10</sup> Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. <sup>11</sup> From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.***

Daniel was left yearning for more information. Because knowledge of these events had not yet increased, he did not have available the body of further information that has been added for us since his death. A recap of the duration of the end-times is given, and one last piece of the puzzle is imparted to honor this man beloved by God. Daniel is told that an abominable object would be set up in the Temple, similar to the abominations of Manasseh; which even though repented of later, brought about the desolation - the very captivity that had swept Daniel from his homeland.

***<sup>12</sup> How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!***

This waiting period of 45 days remains a mystery.

***<sup>13</sup> But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."***

Daniel is assured of his participation in the *resurrection of the dead*. This is the final feature of this prophecy of the End. Could this be one of the reasons why Paul was so insistent that *"the last enemy to be overcome is death"*?

## Chapter Three - The Last Enemy

Chapter Fifteen of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians contains the Bible's lengthiest discussion of Christ's resurrection. But this chapter is not limited to the subject of Christ's resurrection; Paul skillfully transitions into a rare look at his technical understanding of the *resurrection of the dead*. As in the study of Daniel Twelve, the scriptural selection is quoted in full, and then dissected verse-by-verse below.

### **1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (NASV)**

*But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.*

***<sup>20</sup> But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.***

Paul begins his change of focus from Jesus' resurrection to the *resurrection of the dead* by making a distinction between the two. This is necessary from a technical standpoint in order to prove that Christ's resurrection did not fully satisfy what Paul is about to designate - "*the last enemy*" - death. Even

though Christ has been risen, the last enemy (death) has still not been defeated in regards to “those who are asleep”. Thus, the need from Paul’s Pharisaical sense of precision to make the distinction that this last enemy remained undefeated even after Christ’s resurrection. Verses 20 through 23 are devoted to meticulously segregating these two resurrections. The distinction is initially made by calling Christ’s resurrection the “*first fruits*” and classifying it separately from the resurrection of the rest of the dead - “*those who are asleep*”.

***<sup>21</sup> For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.***

Paul points out that Christ has been given the power and honor of being the initiator of the *resurrection of the dead*. Jesus said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” Jesus also declared in John Chapter Five; “*Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*” (John 5:25-29)

***<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.***

The development of Paul’s thought on this subject is found in Romans 5:23-29. *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the*

*transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."*

***<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,***

Paul adds further distinction by placing these two resurrections in sequence; "first" - and then, "after". Notice Paul's use of these term "*first fruit*" rather than referring to the "first resurrection" and "second resurrection". Paul is careful not to call Christ's resurrection the first resurrection because, technically, the first resurrection *is the resurrection of the dead*. The second resurrection is inferred by Revelation 20:5 as a final judgment which will come after Christ's millennial reign.

***<sup>24</sup> then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.***

Jesus' reign at the Father's right hand in heaven has a duration; it is not indefinite. There will come a Day when

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Christ will arise and return to the earth; to physically reign over the kingdoms of the earth (albeit in His glorified body). *“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 2:11b) Twice in Revelation we hear similar declarations:

*“We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”* (Revelation 11:17)

*“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come”* (Revelation 12:10)

***<sup>25</sup> For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.***

Jesus' reign at the Father's right hand has a condition. He must reign from heaven *until...* Something must be accomplished before Jesus' reign in heaven is brought to its completion - Christ's enemies must be subdued.

Paul is referring here to the first verse of Psalm 110. *“The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”* Paul couples the aspects of the duration and condition of Christ's heavenly reign with the following statement about Christ's last enemy.

***<sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be abolished is death.***

This determination - that death will be Christ's last enemy is a kingpin in Paul's chronological framework. There are, however, no scriptural references which directly state the fact of death's subordination to all other enemies. There are several verses that do express the fact that death will be permanently eradicated.

*He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8)*

*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.” (Hosea 13:14)*

The death which Paul is referring to here is that state of death which is holding the dead in their graves. The *resurrection of the dead* will be accomplished when the power of death is defeated. Jesus will have mastered death when, at his command, the dead hear His voice and rise to life. At this time the enemy of death will become the footstool of Christ. After the millennial reign, when every soul is emptied from Hades, Hades will have no more purpose. At that time death will no longer occur. But Christ's technical victory over death will have already been won at the *resurrection of the dead*.

***<sup>27</sup> For He has put all things in subjection under His feet.***

Jesus declared after His own resurrection, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18)

***But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.***

The Son will leave heaven to spend a second season as Christ upon the earth while the Father continues to reign in heaven. To interpret these last verses in a manner that would

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deem the Son of God to be less than God-the-Son would be contrary to the entire body of doctrine contained in the rest of scripture; and would expressly contradict the truth that "*Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever*".

## Chapter Four - Comforting the Thessalonians

### ***1st Thessalonians 4:13-18***

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

***<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.***

Paul desires to share more information with the Thessalonians about those believers who had already died. Paul's goal is to restore to them the proper hope - the hope that is reserved for the believer in Christ. Jesus assured His followers: *"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:39-40)

The Gentiles of Macedonia were not likely to be familiar with the Old Testament scriptures, yet concerning the resurrection of the dead their ignorance placed them in danger of despair over their departed loved ones. Paul is not so concerned here with listing the biblical references underlying the facts he is

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about to restate. Instead, he presents a summary based on his own extensive knowledge, trusting that his counsel would be received as truth.

***<sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.***

Jesus said, “because I live, you will live also”. Just as God brought Jesus up from the grave, even so God will bring up those believers who have died before Christ’s return.

***<sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.***

Paul is certain that the resurrection of the dead will occur prior to the gathering of the living to be with the Lord. Paul is drawing on his technical understanding to insist that Christ’s victory over death, recognized by the *resurrection of the dead*, must precede Christ’s departure from the right hand of the Father.

The presentation of this sequence would have planted a glorious impression in the minds of those who had been preoccupied with remorse. Now they might anticipate seeing their predecessors bursting forth from their graves before all would rise together to meet the Lord. Now they could be certain that a premature death would not prevent the deceased from being eye witnesses of the Lord’s glorious return. Now those who had gone before would be on par in every respect with those who were still alive at Christ’s second coming.

***17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.***

*Then* - when Christ's enemies have been made His footstool, the Lord will begin His descent from the Father's side , and the living will rise along with those just released from their tombs.

***18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.***

What a joyous prospect! To know that those who have died prior to Christ's return will not be deprived of any good thing. And, not only that; but they will actually be given priority in the day of our Lord's return.

## Chapter Five - Cautioning the Thessalonians

### **2nd Thessalonians 2:1-12**

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

Before beginning this commentary, it is needful to note that the author's focus continues to be on Paul's eschatological framework and not on the various views concerning the rapture, in vogue or out. The commentary will examine the text itself, relying on a literal interpretation.

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***<sup>1</sup> Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,***

The text does read, "*the coming*"; not another coming, nor a later second coming. Verse One also addresses "*our gathering*, not *theirs*. Furthermore the letter is written to the Church: and this particular Church is located in a Roman (Gentile) city of Northern Greece. These observations should reasonably beckon the assumption that Paul is once again discussing the same coming of Christ, and the same gathering in the clouds, which were the subject of the previous chapter. If the reader is otherwise inclined - please at least be willing to test the framework one last time.

***<sup>2</sup> that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.***

The commencement of *the day of the Lord* is in question. Could Paul have been mistaken in his previous communications? Had the Lord returned without the anticipated *resurrection of the dead* and the gathering together?

***<sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first,***

Paul lists the first of two prerequisites to the time of the Lord's return (which is also the time of *the resurrection of the dead*). Recall the last phrase of Daniel 12:7; "*and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.*" Daniel will participate in the *resurrection of the dead* and Daniel was told expressly that the holy people would be rendered powerless before he would awaken to receive his reward.

***and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.***

The second stipulation is also supported by Daniel Twelve. The abominable object appears to be the *man of lawlessness* himself.

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

It is quite likely that Paul had imparted some of his insights from the book of Daniel while he was still with them. It is possible that Paul also communicated some of the observations he had shared with the Corinthians, which were mentioned in the third chapter of this booklet.

***<sup>6</sup> And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.***

What restrains - What situation or predicament? In the original Greek text, the word for *restrains* is *Kataxon*, from the Greek word "echo" - *to hold*. Not surprisingly, this word also appears in the book of Daniel. "*No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.*" (Daniel 10:21b) The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) of Paul's day read, "*There is no one holding with me. . .*" The root of the Greek word used here is "echo" - *to hold*.

***<sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;***

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Here we must entertain the possibility that Michael the Archangel is involved somehow in this restraining. As we studied Daniel Twelve and Revelation we saw how Michael wrestled Satan out of heaven. (*Hold* is still an important wrestling term today). If it were necessary, in Paul's theology, for Jesus' victory over His enemies to be accomplished prior to His return; and if Paul, like St. John, understood that Satan's fall would result in the earthly manifestation of the son of perdition; then it would be logical to expect the appearance of this man of sin before Christ's return. And this is exactly what Paul has stipulated.

It would appear that the son of perdition could not fully be revealed (although the mystery of lawlessness had already commenced) until Satan, Michael's angelic nemesis, was thrown down from heaven. This evil one will not be fully manifested on earth until he is fully ejected from heaven.

In Paul's chronology, the last of Jesus' enemies (death) would be overcome as the dead were raised at His coming. Since death is the last enemy to be overcome before Christ returns, the next-to-the-last enemy (that is Satan) would need to be overcome prior to this last enemy. This places Satan's ejection from heaven (and the simultaneous revelation of the lawless one) just before the dead are raised. And so Paul states, "*for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.*"

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

The Protestant Reformers died torturous deaths because of their conviction that the pope was the man of perdition. They had their reasons to believe they were right. Today; the earthshaking signs of the *beginning of sorrows*, the rise of Satanism, and the humanist's rejection of truth, altogether point to the time of the end. Surely the Lord will come for us soon.

## Chapter Six - Honoring Christ's Heavenly Reign

### Stephen's vision

As Stephen was being stoned by the Christ rejecting Jews, he was given a vision of Jesus. *"But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56)* This vision was not an hallucination, but a precious glimpse of Christ's true position in glory.

As Christians seek the face of God, may they look beyond Calvary's offering and consider the risen Lord at the right hand of power. *"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)*

Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they "did not know where Jesus was from or where He was going". But Jesus told His disciples, *"I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."* (John 16:28) This understanding, that Jesus is at the right hand of power, is an empowering concept. The flowing river of the Spirit Who anoints us with power proceeds from above. Comprehending where we are to direct our prayers gives clarity and focus to our spiritual vision.

Our key verse from Psalm 110 is presented below - followed by our marching orders while Christ remains at the Father's right hand.

***(Psalm 110:1)***

<sup>1</sup> The LORD says to my Lord:

*"Sit at My right hand*

*Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."*

<sup>2</sup> *The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying,*

*"Rule in the midst of Your enemies."*

<sup>3</sup> *Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;*

*In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,*

*Your youth are to You as the dew.*

In verse one we see that it is God Who is making Christ's enemies His footstool. Verse two states that God's power would proceed from Zion. This is precisely why the disciples were instructed to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. In fact, the disciples were in an upper room located on David's hill - known as Mount Zion - when the power of God was poured out in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is ruling in the midst of God's people today, while we wait for Jesus to take up his throne upon the earth.

Verse three tells us that we are in the Lord's Army. But what kind of volunteers should we be?

We are supposed be actively involved in Christ's victory over His enemies. There are too many Christians who are bunkered down crying, "Get me out of here". Their itching ears long for teachers who will encourage them in their inactivity. Listen to Jesus warning in Luke 12:42-48:

*And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two*

*and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

Jesus said it was to our advantage that He went away and sent the Holy Spirit to be the power of God in our midst. Brothers and Sisters, let us take a more active and serious role in our service to Christ during His stay in heaven. He will not be there indefinitely. May God use you and me, as we are filled with the Holy Spirit, to help make His enemies His footstool. May God make us witnesses to the fact that Jesus is indeed at the right hand of power.

He is coming soon!