

A CHRONOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION OF THE REJECTERS IN
2 THESSALONIANS 2:6-12

by
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The chronology and identity of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 is the concern of this thesis. Two primary interpretations by students of the Word of God are prevalent. The first interpretation sets forth that these rejecters are the unsaved from the pre-rapture era. A second interpretation sees these rejecters as the obstinate sinners from the first half of the tribulation period. It will be the purpose and intent of the author of this study to examine the biblical data concerning this interpretive decision.

For the reader's better understanding, the writer's presuppositions surrounding the text will be presented. It is important that one know that the author believes in a pre-tribulational rapture of the Church; that the Holy Spirit is the Restrainer; and that the Wicked One is the Antichrist.

The study will contain an examination of the two major interpretations. The view that presents these rejecters as coming from the pre-rapture era states that the rejecters will not be able to be saved in the tribulation. However, the view that presents them as coming from the first half of the tribulation states that they will have another opportunity to be saved.

A detailed exegetical investigation of the text with a diagram and outline will show the reader the writer's study. Key observations yield valuable clues as to its meaning. Of special importance are the aorist tenses of ἡσέβησαν, πιστεύσαντες, and εὐσκόνησαντες. They reveal the possibility of these rejecters being from the first half of the tribulation. The other parts of speech in the passage are congruent with the conclusions and presuppositions of this endeavor.

It will be demonstrated that the two witnesses and 144,000 Israelite witnesses can be integrated into 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12. These witnesses will evangelize the Gospel message to these rejecters in the first half of the tribulation.

God has always dealt graciously toward the world of sinners before He commences judgment. The examples of Noah's flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh, and Judah will illustrate the gracious nature of God before judgment. It will be shown that God provides grace to the rejecters of the text before judgment as well.

It is the conclusion of this writer that the chronological identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 is the first half of the tribulation. The conclusion is feasible, but not dogmatic.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

Lee L. Kantner

Advisor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of Investigation	1
Proposal of Investigation	1
Importance of Investigation	2
Procedure of Investiation	3
Conclusion of Investigation	3
I. BIBLICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS	4
Chronology Of The Rapture	4
Importance Of Chronology	4
Reasons For A Pre-Tribulational Rapture	5
Identity Of The Restrainer	7
Reasons For Holy Spirit As Restrainer	7
Presuppositions Connected To The Restrainer	9
Chronology And Identity Of The Wicked One	9
Chronology Of The Wicked One	10
Identity Of The Wicked One	10
Summary	11
II. EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSALS	12
Pre-Rapture Rejecters	12
Explanation Of The Proposal	12
Representations Of The Proposal	13
First-Half Tribulation Rejecters	14
Explanation Of The Proposal	14
Representations Of The Proposal	15
Summary	16

III. EXEGESIS OF 2 THESSALONIANS 2:6-12	18
Diagrammatical Analysis	18
Diagrammatical Outline	24
Diagrammatical Observations	32
Adverbs Of Time	32
Participles	34
Infinitives	36
Verbs	38
Nouns	42
What The Passage Does Not Say	45
Summary	45
IV. THE TRIBULATION WITNESSES	47
The Two Witnesses	47
Second Half Of The Tribulation Ministry	48
First Half Of The Tribulation Ministry	49
The 144,000 Witnesses	51
Relationship To 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12	52
Summary	53
V. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MEN PRIOR TO JUDGMENT	54
Lessons From The Past	54
Noah's Flood	54
Sodom And Gomorrah	55
Nineveh	55
Judah	56
Ethics For Preaching Judgment Today	56
Tribulation Grace	58
Summary	59
CONCLUSION	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY	63

INTRODUCTION

Purpose Of Investigation

The eschatological ramifications of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 are extremely important to one's theological presentation of the end time events of the Scriptures. Of course, with these ramifications come crucial interpretive decisions. Some of these decisions, which lead to further problems, will not be dealt with in this investigation. But there are two interpretive decisions which will be treated in this thesis. The chronology and identification of the rejecters will be examined in this endeavor. Perhaps the following questions will demonstrate the reality of the above decisions. Are the rejecters in this passage from the pre-rapture era or from a time slot of the seven year tribulation judgment? Who are the recipients of this damnation and what have they done to deserve punishment? The intention of this thesis is to answer the problem of the chronology and identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 with a conclusive proposal.

Proposal Of Investigation

There are two principal proposals to the purpose of this investigation. The first proposal suggests that the rejecters are pre-rapture rejecters of the Gospel. According to the second proposal, upon entrance into the tribulational judgments, these rejecters are presented as hearing the Gospel in the first half of the tribulation through the two witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven. After rejecting their message

God gives these rejecters over that they should believe the lie of the Antichrist. Attention will be given in this thesis to establishing that this second proposal is the correct interpretation.

Importance Of Investigation

The importance of the matter cannot be overlooked. The selection of the chronology and identity of the rejecters will effect the style of presenting the Gospel to the unbeliever. If the first view is held, the logical conclusion from it is that all who have rejected the Gospel at the time of the rapture will have no hope of salvation in the tribulation period. This conclusion has consequently caused messengers of the Gospel to utilize pressure and scare tactics to motivate a quick and ignorant decision in these rejecters. However, with the second proposal, the messenger of the Gospel presently invites men to receive Christ as he clearly warns them of the perils and difficulties of waiting until the tribulation period to be saved. The clear presentation of the Gospel today, then includes an elaboration and explanation of the terrible seal, bowl, and trumpet judgments awaiting Israel and the world during the time of tribulation. Also, one must tell the unsaved today of the sacrifice involved in true salvation in Christ. Upon acceptance of Christ, one must reject the Antichrist's exaltation as God ($\tau\omega\ \psi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota$) and also reject the mark of the beast which includes the freedom of purchasing and selling. Therefore, the selection of the proposal concerning the chronology and identity of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 will ultimately effect the ethics of inviting sinners to Christ today.

Procedure Of Investigation

To arrive at a fair conclusion the writer will first present his theological presuppositions concerning the text. An expanded treatment of the two major proposals will follow to assure the reader's clear understanding. With the preliminary matters surrounding the passage completed, a thorough exegesis of the text will produce what the passage does and does not say to the interpreter. The Diagrammatical analysis and outline will lead to key observations that will enable the reader to later decide his conclusion. By correlating the two witnesses' time of ministry with the observations of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12, further substantiation will be gathered by examining carefully the way in which God has dealt with men prior to judgment. In conjunction with this, the grace that God shows in the tribulation to the unsaved will be integrated with the evidence from 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12.

Conclusion Of Investigation

This theological, grammatical, and Biblical endeavor will conclude with weighty evidence that 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 teaches a mid-tribulation judgment on rejecters of the Gospel. Unbelievers at the time of the rapture will again hear the truth of the Gospel through the two witnesses with subsequent choice to believe before judgment is delivered. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that the unsaved man will not be shown mercy and grace to believe in the tribulation period.

CHAPTER I

BIBLICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

There are several fundamental presuppositions that underlie the writer's interpretation of the text. This chapter will inform the reader of these presuppositions and will also assist the writer from their needless repetition. If the reader did not know the writer's eschatological background concerning this passage, he would be unable to logically follow the thesis of this paper. The chronology of the rapture, identity of the Restrainer, and chronology and identity of the Wicked One will be examined in this chapter. These issues and the writer's subsequent interpretation are the sine qua non to the understanding of this thesis. An attempt will not be made to fully exhaust the details and ramifications of each of these important presuppositions. Only the major points for the presuppositions will be presented in order to preserve the purpose of this chapter. Therefore, a brief examination of the above areas will be both helpful and necessary for the reader.

Chronology Of The Rapture

There are many views surrounding the chronology of the rapture. This section will present the author's interpretation of a pre-tribulational rapture.

Importance Of Chronology

The author subscribes to a pre-tribulational return of the Lord. This appearing is called the rapture and the main passage supporting its

actuality is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The time sequence of the rapture is prior to the tribulation period. This approach is absolutely a prerequisite to the understanding of the 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 passage and the purpose of this thesis. Any of the other chronologies of the rapture such as mid-tribulationism or post-tribulationism would eradicate this paper's conclusion. Therefore, a pre-tribulation rapture is an interpretive conviction of the writer.

Reasons For A Pre-Tribulation Rapture

There are many reasons why a pre-tribulation rapture position is held by the author. Many of the less important reasons will be waived in favor of the more significant reasons.

Literal Interpretation.--The most important reason for holding to a pre-tribulation rapture is that a consistent use of the literal method of interpretation produces this conclusion. It incorporates grammar, history, and the normal use of words as a basis for interpreting. The literal method of interpretation can lead to no other conclusion than that the church will be raptured before Daniel's seventieth week. Pentecost says that other views about the chronology of the rapture:

must either interpret the book of Revelation historically, which is basically a spiritualizing method, or else treat it as yet future, but spiritualize away the literalness of the events in an attempt to harmonize these events with other Scriptures in the light of his interpretation.¹

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 194.

Purpose Of Tribulation.--Second, there is the purpose of the tribulation to consider. Walvoord aptly states that the tribulation is "a time of preparation for Israel's restoration (Dt. 4:29-30; Jer. 30:4-11)."¹ Also, there is the Revelation 3:10 passage that says "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The context of the second and third chapters of Revelation shows that it is the church that will be spared this time of tribulation. Concerning this matter Pentecost notes:

the use of the infinitive peirasai (to try) to express purpose. Thayer defines this word, when God is its subject, "to inflict evils upon one in order to prove his character and the steadfastness of his faith." Since the Father never sees the church except in Christ, perfected in Him, this period can have no reference to the church, for the true church does not need to be tested to see if her faith is genuine.²

Church Not Named In Tribulation.--Third, none of the Old or New Testament passages dealing with the tribulation period mention the church. Especially significant is Revelation chapters 4-19 where the church is never mentioned.

Church Not Appointed To Wrath.--Fourth, the church is not appointed to wrath (1 Th. 1:9-10). The church, therefore, cannot enter "the great day of their wrath" (Rev. 6:7).³ Since this is true, the church cannot enter into a period described as "judgment" (Rev. 14:7),

¹ John F. Walvoord, The Rapture Question, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 193.

² Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 197.

³ Walvoord, The Rapture Question, p. 194.

"indignation" (Isa. 26:20-21), "hour of trouble" (Jer. 30:7), or "destruction" (Joel 1:15).

Doctrine Of Imminency.--Fifth, the doctrine of imminency is lost if a post or mid-tribulation view is held. Such passages as 1 John 3:2-3 or Titus 2:13 would lose their impact if there was no element of imminency.

Restrainer Removed.--Last, the Holy Spirit is taken out of the world as Restrainer of sin simultaneously with the rapture of the saints, that is, before the tribulation begins (2 Th. 2:6-12). Therefore, the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit today necessitates that His restraining ministry end at the same time.

Identity Of The Restrainer

Of the many interpretations of the identity of the Restrainer, the one that sets forth the Holy Spirit as the Restrainer is taken to be the best one. The phrase τὸ κατέχον is best taken as the Holy Spirit for several reasons. Other representative interpretations are that the Restrainer is the Roman Empire, human government, Satan, or the Church. While these views may have certain merits they will not be dealt with in this section. Therefore, a presentation will commence of the writer's view.

Reasons For Holy Spirit As Restrainer

There are two reasons for identifying the Restrainer as the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit is the only interpretive choice that has the supernatural power needed to withhold sin. Secondly, the grammatical

construction in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 permits this identification. A presentation of these two reasons will aid the reader.

Supernatural Power.--Since what is restrained is sin or iniquity, then the Restrainer would need to have supernatural power to do so. By process of elimination, the Holy Spirit must be the Restrainer. Passages such as Genesis 6:3, Isaiah 59:19, and John 16:7-11 identify restraining power with the Holy Spirit. With this supernatural power, the Holy Spirit is the only one who has power over iniquity, the Man of Sin, and Satan. While human government and the Church have consistently restrained sin in the dispensation of grace, their power to restrain is given by the Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures. Therefore, it would take a member of the Godhead to restrain sin.

Grammatical Observations.--The neuter τὸ κατέχον (2 Th. 2:6) and masculine gender ὁ κατέχων (2 Th. 2:7) have caused some to oppose the identification of the Restrainer as the Holy Spirit. They say that Paul did not know himself because of this change. Plummer, who holds to the Roman Empire view makes a wise observation. He states:

The change from the neuter to the masculine, from τὸ κατέχον to ὁ κατέχων, suggest the direction in which to look for an explanation. It suggests a power or principle of wide influence, which can either be readily personified, or be represented by some individual who possesses or symbolizes some of the leading characteristics.¹

One must note that Pauline use of the neuter gender for the Holy Spirit is not uncommon. In Romans 8:16 and 26 are two clear references to the

¹Alfred Plummer, A Commentary on St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, (London: Robert Scott Roxburghe House Paternoster Row, E. C., 1918), p. 60.

Holy Spirit found in the neuter gender. This is the very fact that strengthens more than weakens this conclusion. Since the Holy Spirit is spoken of in the neuter gender in the passages from Romans it causes the writer to name Him as the Restrainer.

Presuppositions Connected To The Restrainer

With the view of the Holy Spirit as Restrainer, there are important considerations and ramifications that must be stated here. The writer does not believe that the Holy Spirit is no longer omnipresent or operative in the tribulation. Many of the ministries performed by the Holy Spirit in this dispensation will terminate with the tribulation period but He will still work in and through men in regards to regeneration. The salvation of all the saved from all times, including those saved in the tribulation, depends on the work of Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is the only efficacious applier of it to any soul. Consequently, the Holy Spirit still operates in the tribulation though He refrains from His restraining of sin.

Chronology And Identity Of The Wicked One

It is of great importance to let the reader know how the author stands concerning the chronology and identity of the Wicked One. This section will present information to the effect that the Wicked One will come to a rise in power in the middle of the tribulation and that he is the Antichrist energized by Satan.

Chronology Of The Wicked One

The Wicked One will be presented and active in the first half of the tribulation but not until the middle of the tribulation will he be revealed completely. He will come "with all powers and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish," (2 Th. 2:9-10). The Restrainer must be removed in order for the Wicked One to come upon the world scene. The **τότε** of 2 Thessalonians 2:8 proves this as true. When will the Wicked One display his powers, signs, wonders and deceivableness? It will be at the midst of the tribulation when the unholy trinity of the beast, dragon, and false prophet rise to rule the world (Rev. 13). After the two witnesses' are killed (Rev. 11) the Wicked One will rise to power for three and one-half years (Rev. 13:5).

Identity Of The Wicked One

In 2 Thessalonians chapter two, the Wicked One is called the man of sin, the son of perdition, and lawless one. "Though these are not proper names in context, they have virtually become such in the development of Christian thinking after Paul wrote these words."¹ This same personage can be linked with "the beast" (Rev. 13:1) and his false miracle of resurrection and subsequent worship by men (Rev. 13:3, 4). The general designation given this man is Antichrist.

¹Walter K. Price, The Coming Antichrist, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 141.

Summary

This chapter has served to unfold to the reader the presuppositions of the writer. There will be a pre-tribulational rapture of the Church to be with Christ forever. The Restrainer has been proven to be the Holy Spirit who will step aside and let sin run rampant in the tribulation period. It has also been presented that the Wicked One will appear after the Restrainer is removed and will rise to power over the world at the middle of the tribulation. This ruler is to be identified as the Antichrist. These viewpoints will underlie all that is presented in this thesis. Now a discussion of the two major proposals of the chronology and identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 will be given.

CHAPTER II

EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSALS

A detailed account of the two proposals will assist the writer in better representing his thesis.¹ The chronological identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 is dependent upon the proper understanding of the two major options. The first option is to place these rejecters strictly before the rapture. The second option, the proposition of this thesis, states that the Jews and Gentiles rejecting the Gospel before the rapture will enter the tribulation period. Within the first half of the tribulation, they will again be presented with the Gospel. If they reject then, they will be sent a "strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (2 Th. 2:11) of the Antichrist. These two proposals will now be examined.

Pre-Rapture Rejecters

In order that the reader properly understand the view that 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 refers to pre-rapture rejecters, an explanation will ensue. It is prerequisite that one comprehend this view for him to understand the writer's thesis.

Explanation Of The Proposal

It is the contention of this view that when men reject the message of Christ in the present dispensation of grace that it eliminates

¹Supra, pp. 1-2.

their hope of ever being saved once the tribulation period begins. This is based upon the premise that they hardened their hearts to the extent that God will no longer deal with them. Scholars of this view usually support the idea that God sends a causitive rather than a permissive delusion upon the 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 rejecters. Ones holding to this proposal have built heavily upon the depravity of man. They use this to relate to God giving people over to sin in a judicial manner. Some, for instance, use the Romans chapter one judgments on the heathen rejecters as a prooftext. Clark states that:

Judicially God punished the heathen for rejection by giving them uncleanness, vile affections, and a reprobate mind for their lot. How similar this action is to that of 2 Th. 2:11. In the first chapter of Romans God judicially punishes the sin of paganism by giving them up to their vile affections. In the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians, God judicially punishes rejection of the truth, by causing the effectual working error through blindness to the truth.¹

Therefore, this proposal states that the unbeliever from the time of the rapture onward has no hope of salvation but must face judgment.

Representations Of The Proposal

Roy J. Clark.--A representative of this view is Roy J. Clark.

He concludes that 2 Thessalonians 2:11:

Implies that the stereotyped excuse of the rejecters is null and void. You will find a multitude of skeptics today who promise Christians that when they see the rapture take place they will know Christianity is real and turn from their sin and accept Christ. God's Word teaches in II Th. 2:11 that God's judgment will come upon consistent rejecters of the truth, during the tribulation period, blinding them to the truth and causing the effectual working of error in their lives. So then even though now they plan

¹Roy J. Clark, A Critical Investigation of II Thessalonians 2:11." (Unpublished Master of Divinity Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1954), p. 45.

repentance, judicially they shall be bound to their sin and error and will infatuously embrace the lie of the Antichrist.¹

William Hendriksen.--Concerning 2 Thessalonians 2:11 he says that:

the men of the end-time, who will harden themselves against the earnest exhortation to repent and to receive the love for the truth, will suffer the penalty of being hardened. God sends (i.e., will certainly send) them an "energy of (i.e. unto) delusion." . . . God is love . . . he earnestly warns, proclaims the gospel, and states what will happen if they do not believe. He even urges them to accept the love for the truth. But when people, of their own accord and after repeated threats and promises, reject him and spurn his messages, then - and not until then - he hardens them in order that those who were not willing to repent may not be able to repent but may believe the falsehood that "the man of lawlessness" is God, the only God, and that everyone should obey him.²

In all fairness to the purpose of this paragraph, it must be pointed out that Hendriksen is amillennial concerning his eschatology.

First-Half Tribulation Rejecters

Crucial to the understanding of the thesis is a clear presentation of the view that the rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 are from the first half of the tribulation. The thrust of this section will be to demonstrate the view to the reader.

Explanation Of The Proposal

By integrating the details of eschatology from the book of Revelation, new light is shed upon the chronological identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12. If the ministry of the two

¹Ibid., p. 53.

²William Hendriksen, "Exposition of I and II Thessalonians," in New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 185-6.

witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven is during the first half of the tribulation, then it is probable that the pre-rapture rejecters will hear the message of grace once again. The 144,000 Jewish witnesses can also be placed in the first-half of the tribulation as well. This strengthens the idea that pre-rapture rejecters will hear the Gospel again. The aorist tense of ἐσέβαντο, πιστεύσαντες, and ἐνδύσαντες can be integrated into the first half of the tribulation prior to τῷ ψεύσει of the Antichrist. The adverbs of time νῦν, ἤδη, ἄρτι, and τότε are in agreement with a mid-tribulational event as the Antichrist rises to full power. Another fact to interject is that there will be a multitude of Gentiles saved in the tribulation (Rev. 7:9-17). If this proposal is not correct then how will these people get saved? Therefore, this thesis proposes to see God sending this judgment on rejecters only after a period of grace in the first-half of the tribulation.

Representations Of The Proposal

Robert Gromacki.--In this scholar's treatment of this difficult problem, he is very fair and open about the possibilities of either of the two proposals of this chapter. Gromacki neither supports nor denies the validity of this thesis' proposal. He asks and replies that:

Will men who have rejected Christ in this church age have a second chance to accept Him? This question, raised quite often in prophetic conferences, is difficult to answer. If there is any passage that seems to give the answer, it is found in this book: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2:10-12). The answer revolves around the three underscored verbs. When did they not receive and believe? When did they have pleasure in unrighteousness? It does not say whether the action took place during the

church age or after the rapture. Either position could suit the context; for that reason, no one should be dogmatic in his answer.¹

John F. Walvoord,--Another scholar who believes in the severity of the judgment in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 yet allowing for the possibility of salvation for pre-rapture rejecters is John F. Walvoord. He states that,

some understand from verse 11 that if a person in this present age of grace hears the gospel and does not receive Christ as Savior, then when Christ comes and takes His church home to glory these will find it impossible to be saved after the church is translated. It is unlikely that a person who rejects Christ in this day of grace will turn to Him in that awful period of tribulation. But the usual principle of Scripture is that while there is life there is hope. It is possible, though very improbable, that a person who has heard the gospel in this present age of grace will come to Christ after the rapture. The Scriptures definitely teach that God will send strong delusion to those who do not believe after the church is gone. God will judge their hearts and if they deliberately turn away from the truth He will permit them to believe a lie. They will honor the man of sin as their god and as their king, instead of acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ.²

Summary

Concerning the problem of the chronological identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12, there were two major proposals presented in this chapter. First, is the viewpoint that the rejecters in this passage are from the pre-rapture era. Second, is the proposal of this thesis, which sets forth that these rejecters heard the Gospel in the first half of the tribulation. They then rejected again and God gave them over to believe the lie of the Antichrist. Both of these

¹Robert G. Gromacki, New Testament Survey, Des Plaines, IL., Regular Baptist Press, 1977), p. 287.

²John F. Walvoord, The Thessalonian Epistles, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 129.

proposals were examined and represented. Now a fuller treatment of the second proposal will unfold in coming chapters. An exegetical treatment of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 will lend itself towards reaching that particular goal.

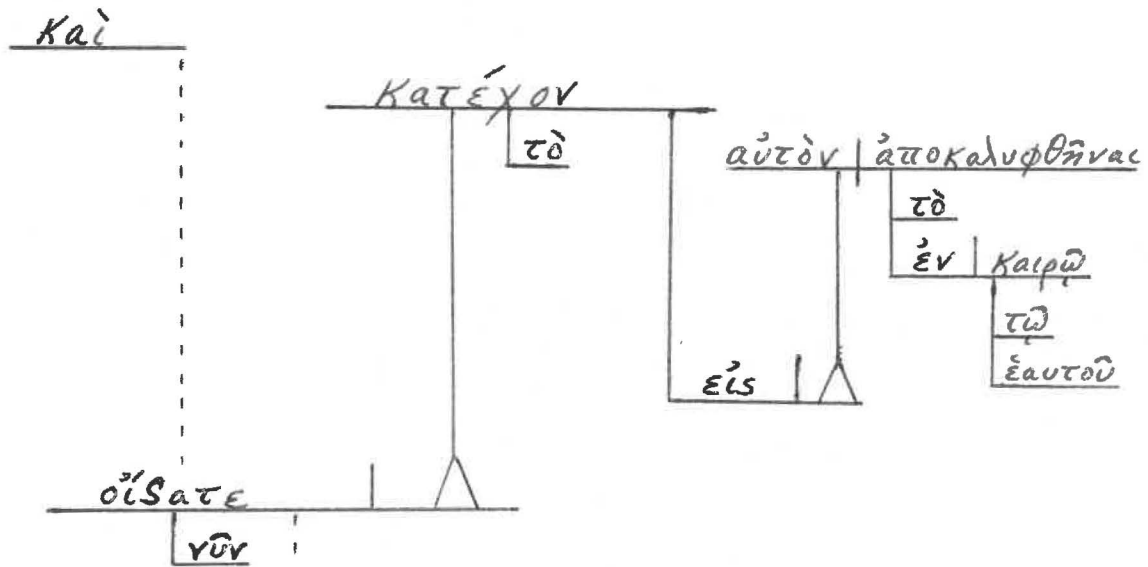
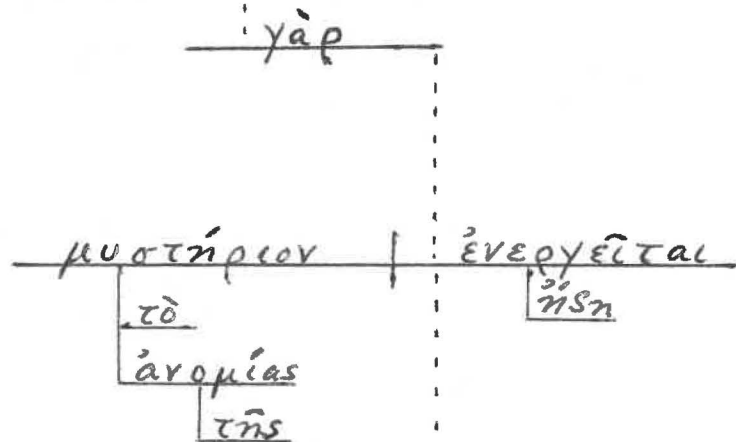
CHAPTER III

EXEGESIS OF 2 THESSALONIANS 2:6-12

The preliminary issues surrounding this thesis have been dealt with in the first two chapters. With a knowledge of the author's presuppositions and the two major proposals concerning the text the reader can now see the writer's exegetical endeavors from a critical standpoint. A proper understanding of the meaning and relationships of the original Greek language will foster a fair interpretation of this passage.

Diagrammatical Analysis

Comprehending what words mean can be very difficult unless one is able to picture word relationships either mentally or visually. For this reason, a diagrammatical analysis of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 is presented. This will help in grasping the syntax of the Greek language and the writer's interpretive conclusions.

VERSE SIXVERSE SEVEN

ἕως

"And you know what restrains him now so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work;"

VERSE SEVEN

ἕως

κατέχων
 ὃ
 ἄρτι
 μόνον
 γένηται
 ἐκ μέσου

καὶ

VERSE EIGHT

ἄνομος | ἀποκαλυφθήσεται
 ὁ τότε

κύριος ↔ [Ἰησοῦς] |
 ὁ

ἀνελεῖ

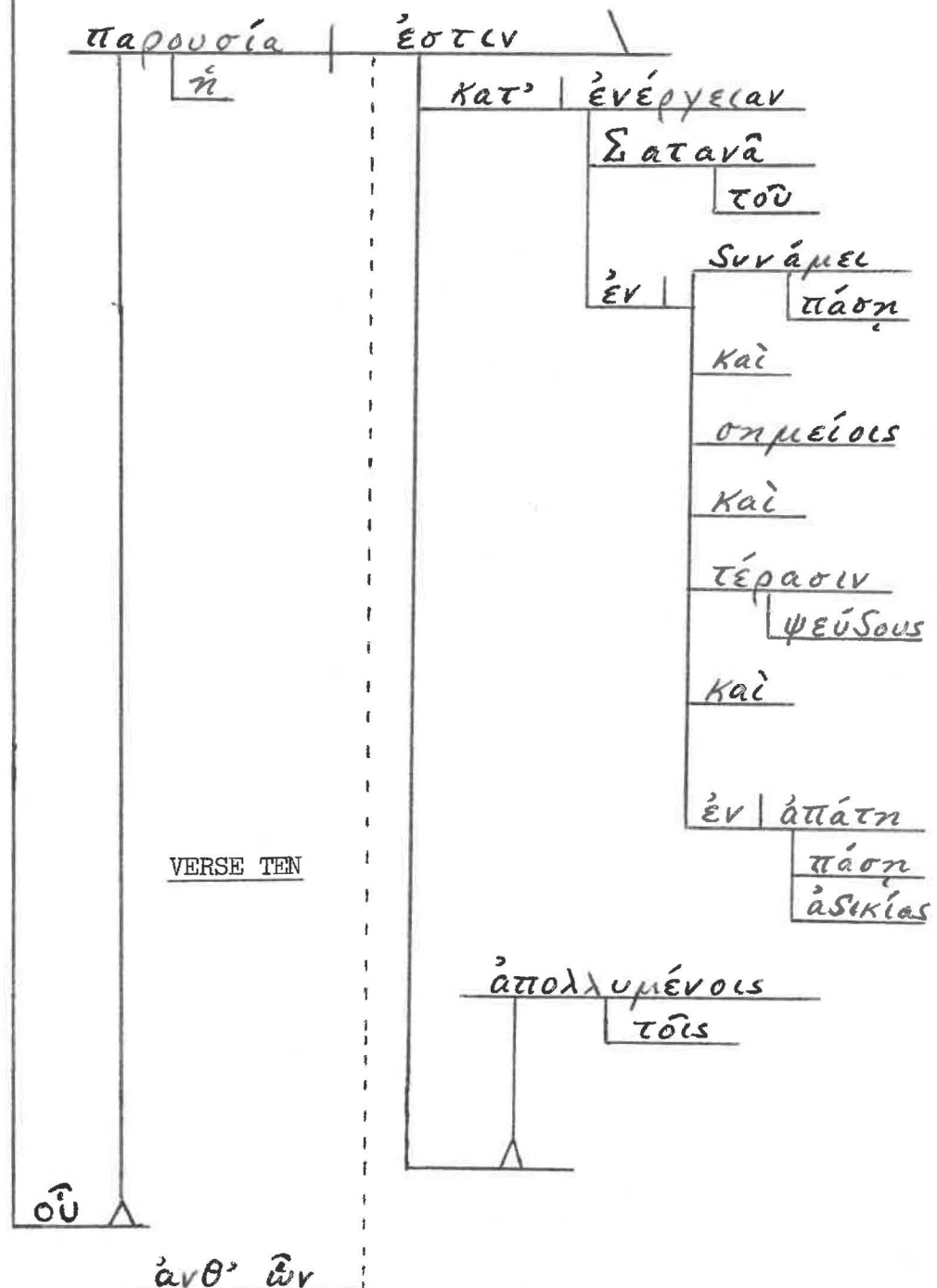
πνεύματι
 τῷ
 στόματος
 τοῦ
 αὐτοῦ
 ὄν

καὶ

καταργήσῃ
 ἐμφανείᾳ
 τῇ
 παρουσίας
 τῆς
 αὐτοῦ

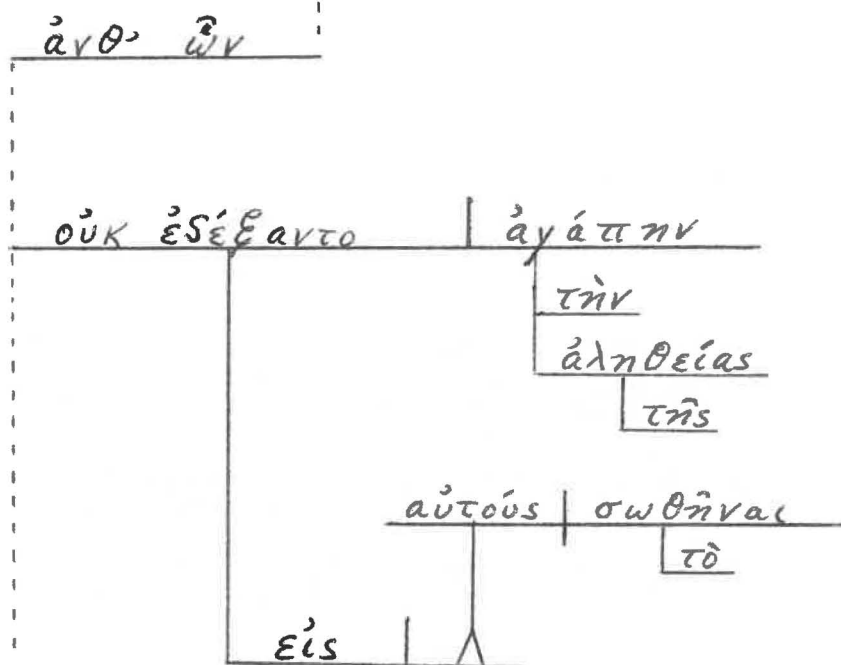
"Only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;"

VERSE NINE



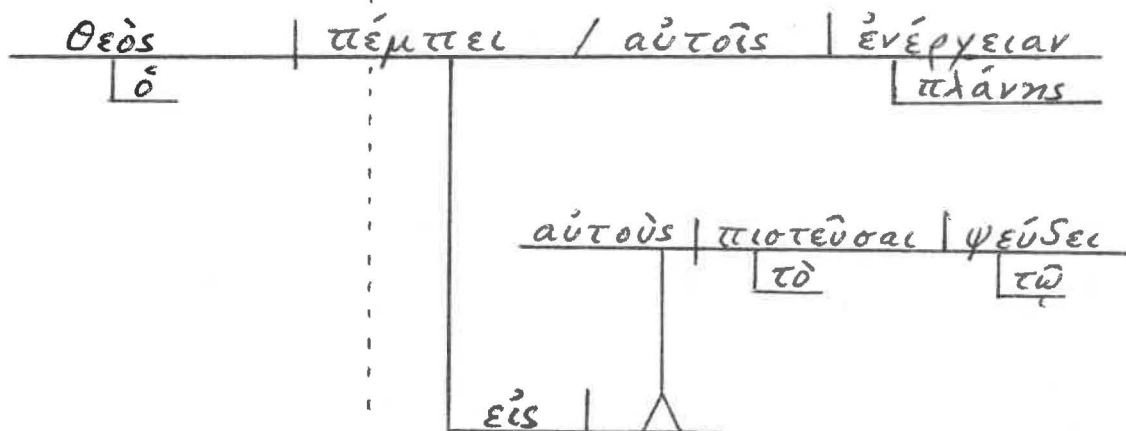
"That is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish,"

VERSE TEN



Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο

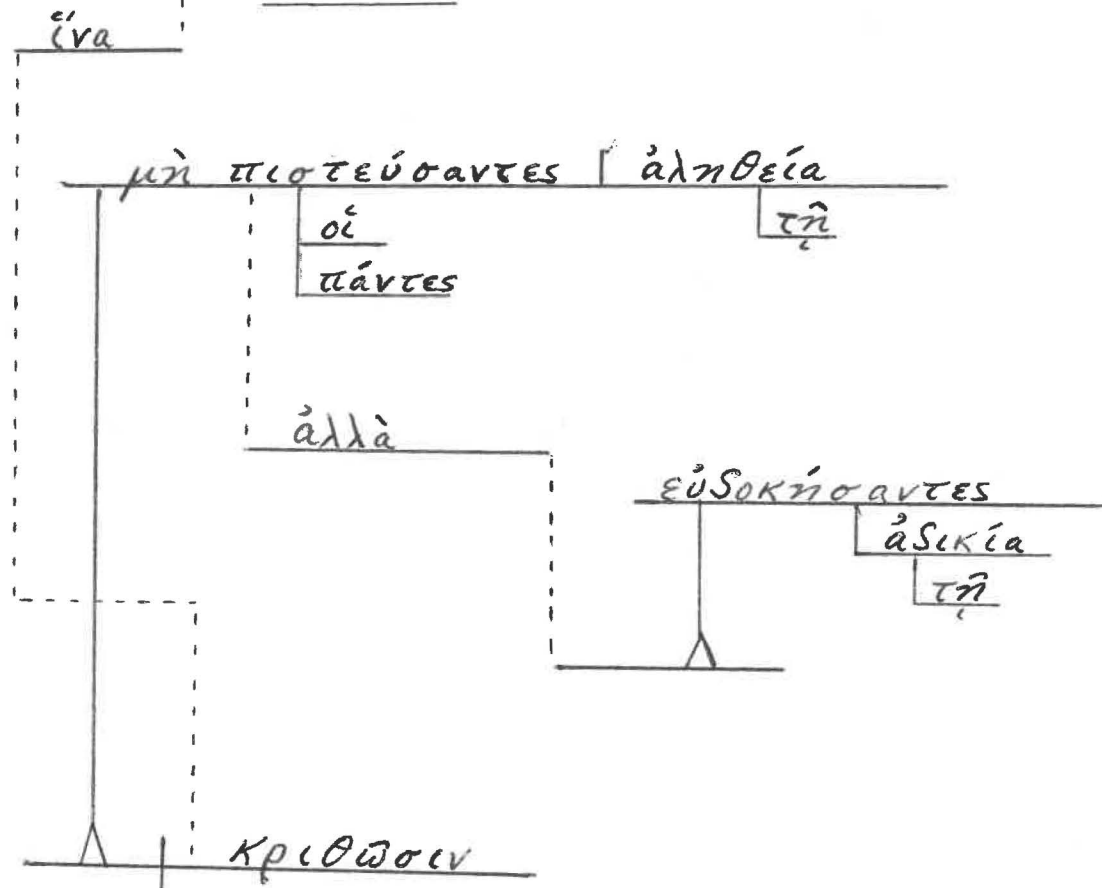
VERSE ELEVEN



ἵνα

"because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,"

VERSE TWELVE



"In order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

Diagrammatical Outline

The diagrammatical outline will allow the interpreter to illustrate in English the interrelationship of the Greek words of the text. This will give the reader a preliminary understanding of the passage. The Greek words are placed in parentheses for quick comparison to the Greek language.

Two Chronological Developments Relating To The Day Of The Lord In 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12

- I. The Ministry Of The Holy Spirit Prior To The Day Of The Lord (vs. 6-7)
 - A. Knowledge of the Holy Spirit's ministry
 1. Knowledge of the Holy Spirit's ministry stated (*οἶσατε*)
 - a. A complete knowledge
 - b. A real knowledge
 - c. An active knowledge
 - d. A present knowledge (*νῦν*)
 2. Knowledge of the Holy Spirit's ministry presented
 - a. Holy Spirit is a restraining power
 - (1) Restraining power delineated
 - (a) A present restraining power (*κατέχον*)
 - (b) An active restraining power (*κατέχον*)
 - (2) Restraining power designated (*τὸ*)
 - b. Holy Spirit's season of restraining limited
 - (1) Expression of the reason for the limitation (*εἰς*)
 - (2) Explanation of who will cause the limitation
 - (a) Antichrist identified (*αὐτὸν*)
 - (b) Antichrist revealed (*ἀποκαλυφθῆναι*)

(1a) His designation (τὸ)

(2a) His sphere of time (ἐν καιρῷ)

(1b) Particularization of time (τῷ)

(2b) Possessor of time (ἐαυτοῦ)

B. Reason for the Holy Spirit's ministry

1. Because the mystery of sin is yet to be revealed (μυστήριον)

a. Designation of the secret to be revealed (τὸ)

b. Description of the sin to be revealed

(1) A violation of law (ἀνομίας)

(2) A particular violation of law (τῆς)

2. Because the mystery of sin is presently at work

a. Energizing power of sin described (ἐνεργεῖται)

(1) A present power of sin

(2) Agent of the power of sin is Antichrist

(3) A real power of sin

b. Present sphere of activity of sin expressed (ἥδη)

C. Ending of the Holy Spirit's ministry

1. Duration of the Holy Spirit's ministry

a. Restraint set forth (κατέχων)

b. Restraint particularized (ὅ)

c. Restraint's sphere of time to work (ἄρτι)

d. Restraint's accompaniment (μόνον)

2. Removal of the Holy Spirit's ministry

a. Removal described (γίνονται)

b. Removal delineated

(1) Emphatic nature of removal (ἐκ)

(2) Area of previous service stated (μέσου)

II. The Revelation Of The Antichrist Begins The Day Of The Lord (vs. 8-12)

A. The Manifestation of the Antichrist with power

1. Description of Antichrist

a. One who violates the Law

(1) Lawless nature described (άνομος)

(2) Lawless one particularized (ό)

b. One whose power will be terminated

(1) Identification of the One who will stop Antichrist

(a) Official title

(1a) Lord or Master (κύριος)

(2a) Designation of title (ό')

(b) Appositional personal name (['Ιησοῦς])

(2) Termination of power described

(a) Christ's method of destruction

(1a) Murderous blow inflicted (ἀνελεῖ)

(1b) A future event performed by Christ

(2b) An active event produced by Christ

(3b) A real event performed by Christ

(2a) Agency is the breath of Christ (πνεῦματι)

(1b) Breath designated (τῷ)

(2b) Breath stated (στόματος)

(1c) Possessor particularized (τοῦ)

(2c) Possessor identified (αὐτοῦ)

(b) Resultant destruction

(1a) Annihilation of Antichrist inflicted
(καταργήσεις)

- (1b) A future event by Christ
 - (2b) An active event produced by Christ
 - (3b) A real event performed by Christ
- (2a) At Christ's appearing (ἐπιφάνεια)
 - (1b) Appearing designated (τῇ)
 - (2b) Appearing occurs at Christ's coming (παρουσίας)
 - (1c) Coming particularized (τῆς)
 - (2c) Coming identified (αὐτοῦ)
- (3) Antichrist named (ὄν)
 - c. One who has the power of Satan
 - (1) Antichrist's own appearance
 - (a) His coming stated (παρουσία)
 - (b) His coming designated (ῇ)
 - (2) Existence of Satan's power in Antichrist
 - (a) Statement of existing power (ἐστίν)
 - (1a) A present state
 - (2a) An active state
 - (3a) A real state
 - (b) The many powers utilized by Antichrist
 - (1a) In accordance with an energizing (κατ')
 - (2a) Powers described as energetic (ἐνέργειαν)
 - (1b) Powers under the auspices of Satan
 - (1c) Naming of Satan (Σατανᾶ)
 - (2c) Designation of Satan (τοῦ)
 - (2b) Powers identified

- (1c) Realm of Antichrist's power
(ἐν)
- (2c) Antichrist's powers listed
 - (1d) Ability to do great acts
 - (1e) Described as dynamic powers
(δυναμει)
 - (2e) Every kind of power included
(πάντη)
 - (2d) Extraordinary wonders performed (σημείοις)
 - (3d) Miracle acts accomplished
 - (1e) Miracle acts identified
(τέρασιν)
 - (2e) Miracle acts described as false (ψεύδους)
 - (4d) Deceptive works performed
 - (1e) Sphere of activity (ἐν)
 - (2e) Deceptive works named (ἀπάτη)
 - (1f) Covers all areas of deception
(πάντη)
 - (2f) Performed within the realm of unrighteousness
(ἀσικίας)

(c) Powers utilized by Antichrist on the unsaved

(1a) Unsaved described as perishing
(ἀπολλυμένοις)

(2a) Unsaved personalized (τοῖς)

2. Unveiling of Antichrist stated (ἀποκαλυφθήσεται)

a. A future event

b. An event received by Antichrist

c. An actual event

B. Subjects Of Antichrist Reject The Truth Of The Gospel

1. His subjects did not have a receiving heart towards the Gospel

a. Subjects' negative reception described (οὐκ ἐδέξαντο)

(1) A definite act of rejection in the past

(2) A participation act by Antichrist's subjects

(3) An actual event that happened

b. Subjects' eternal reward that they forfeited

(1) Intention of their purpose (εἰς)

(2) Rejecters named (αὐτοὺς)

(3) Salvation offered to subject

(a) Salvation stated (σωθῆναι)

(b) Salvation particularized (τὸ)

2. His subjects rejected the Gospel of love (ἀγάπην)

a. Gospel of love designated (τὴν)

b. Truth is the content of the Gospel

(1) Truth named (ἀληθείας)

(2) Truth particularized (τῆς)

C. Subjects Of Antichrist Worship Him

1. Worship of Antichrist initiated

- a. Initiator of the worship of Antichrist is God (*θεός*)
- b. Initiator designated (*ὅς*)

2. Worship of Antichrist caused by God

- a. God directly causes Antichrist's subjects to believe the lie (*πέμπει*)

- (1) A future action by God
- (2) An action in which God is actively involved
- (3) An actual action by God

- b. God's purpose for causing Antichrist's subjects to worship Antichrist

- (1) Intention of purpose expressed (*εἰς*)
- (2) Purpose is that subjects of Antichrist will believe his lie

- (a) Subjects named (*αὐτοὺς*)

- (b) Subjects responsible action stated

- (1a) Belief by the subjects (*πιστεύουσι*)

- (1b) A definite time of belief in the past

- (2b) A choice made by the subjects

- (2a) Designation of the ones believing (*τὸ*)

- (c) Subjects ultimately accept falsehood

- (1a) Stated to be a lie (*ψεύδει*)

- (2a) A definite lie (*τῷ*)

3. Worshipers of Antichrist named (*αὐτοῖς*)

4. Worship of Antichrist caused by a deluding influence

- a. An energizing power (*ἐνέργειαν*)

b. Described as an error of deception (πλάνη)

D. Resulting Judgment On Antichrist's Subjects

1. Final judgment by God on Antichrist's subjects deserved

a. His subjects' alternatives

(1) Chose not to believe

(a) Decision of unbelief

(1a) Unbelief denoted negatively (μὴ)

(2a) Unbelief stated

(1b) Unbelief expressed (πιστεύσαντες)

(2b) Ones who did not believe designated (οἱ)

(b) Scope of unbelief (πάντες)

(2) Chose to approve of unrighteousness

(a) Approval verified (εὐδοκήσαντες)

(b) Object of approval stated

(1a) As an approval of unrighteousness (ἀδικία)

(2a) As a particularization of unrighteousness (τῇ)

b. His subjects refusal to accept the Gospel

(1) Gospel described as truth (ἀληθεία)

(2) Gospel truth designated (τῇ)

2. Final judgment by God on Antichrist's subjects pronounced (κριθῶσιν)

a. A pronouncement already completed

b. A pronouncement participated in by Antichrist's subjects

c. A pronouncement with the element of contingency

Diagrammatical Observations

This section will concern itself with drawing observations from the text. The intention of these exegetical observations is not to be exhaustive, for, to do so would take more time and space than is necessary to prove the thesis of this endeavor. Therefore, only those observations absolutely pertinent to proving the author's thesis will be presented.

Adverbs Of Time

Introduction.--There are several adverbs of time used in this passage which are important to the establishment of the author's basic principles of belief. These are *νῦν*, *ἤδη*, *ἄρτι*, and *τότε*.

νῦν.--The adverb *νῦν* qualifies *οἴσατε* in verse six. At the present time the Thessalonians had a knowledge (*οἴσατε*) of the Restrainer. The above combination of *νῦν* and *οἴσατε* describes a present knowledge due to past instruction, whether immediate or more distant. This is significant for it agrees with the conclusion that the Restrainer does work in the present dispensation of grace.

ἤδη.--The adverb *ἤδη* modifies *ἐπεργέται* in verse seven. It is important because Paul is writing,

about the eschatological period which has begun and in which he and his readers live. The apostasy has not taken place, nor has the Rebel appeared (vv. 3ff) but rebellion even now opposes God; this rebellion will culminate in the revelation of the man of rebellion¹ who will be utterly vanquished by Christ in his parousia (vv. 8ff).

¹Ernest Best, A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians," in Harper's New Testament Commentaries, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), p. 293.

This adverb of time ($\eta\sigma\eta$), then, implies that while the mystery of iniquity is already ($\eta\sigma\eta$) working, it will increase in proof that the Restrainer be taken away when the Day of the Lord arrives.

$\alpha\rho\tau\iota$.--The adverb $\alpha\rho\tau\iota$ modifies $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega\upsilon\iota$ in verse seven. This adverb refers to present time while $\eta\sigma\eta$ is more subjective and refers to a period of time. $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\nu$ qualifies $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega\upsilon\iota$ which is the restraint at the present time that holds down lawlessness, and veils its nature by limiting its activity, until $\delta\ \alpha\nu\omicron\mu\alpha\varsigma$ shall arrive. $\alpha\rho\tau\iota$ indicates a particular juncture, or epoch; it suggests a brief transitional period. Therefore, Antichrist will not come "before his appointed season"¹ ($\epsilon\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\omega}\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$) and until the Restrainer is removed ($\epsilon\kappa\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\omicron\upsilon$).

$\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$.--The adverb $\tau\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$ is in contrast with $\nu\upsilon\upsilon$, which stands as a modifier of $\alpha\pi\omicron\kappa\alpha\lambda\upsilon\phi\theta\eta\sigma\kappa\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$, between what has been said in verses six and seven and now in verse eight. "Now the lawless one is being held back, but 'then' he will be revealed."² Robertson says that this adverb is an "emphatic note of time."³ Thus, this word marks a dramatic event in time; the coming of Antichrist.

Conclusion.--These adverbs of time verify the chronological events as set forth by the author. Ellingworth and Nida say that:

¹Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. 4, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 64.

²Hendriksen, "Exposition of I and II Thessalonians," p. 183.

³A. T. Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul," in Vol. 4 of Word Pictures in the New Testament, (Nashville: Broadman Press, n.d.), p. 52.

the main contrast between verses 1-4 and 6-10 lies in the difference of time perspective. In verses 1-4 Paul is concerned to say that the Day of the Lord will not come until certain other events have first taken place. In verses 6-10 he says positively and in more detail what these events are and in what order they will occur. This concern with order of time is shown by the use of such expressions as now, at the proper time (v. 6), already (v. 7), and then (v. 8). Paul distinguishes three groups of events: the first group are already occurring; the second are still in the future, but will happen before the Day of the Lord; and the last will take place on the Day of the Lord.¹

So these adverbs of time are in keeping with a pre-tribulational rapture, a Restrainer of sin before the Day of the Lord, and a sudden appearance of the lawless one to begin the Day of the Lord.

Participles

Introduction.--There are five participles in the text which will be pointed out for their contribution to the thesis of this endeavor. They are *κατέχον* and *κατέχων*, *ἀπολλυμένοις*, *πιστεύσαντες*, and *εὐδοκήσαντες*.

Κατέχον and κατέχων.--These two participles were discussed in chapter one under the topic of the Restrainer. Both of these participles are in the present tense and singular.² The Holy Spirit is carrying on a continual ministry of restraining today. See chapter one for the difference in gender between the two participles. These substantival participles support the view that the Restrainer works actively today until he must be removed (*γένηται ἐκ μέσου*).

¹Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A Nida, A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians, (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, n.d.), pp. 166-67.

²Supra, p. 8.

ἀπολλυμένοις .--This causal participle is in the present tense and in the middle voice. It describes a class of men in verse ten. The present tense connotes their perdition as commenced and going on, there is no sensitivity towards the truth and an unwillingness to receive the things of God. Eadie adds that the present tense, "characterizes their future perdition already decided."¹ The middle voice emphasizes that these rejecters of the truth perish because of their own doing, not God's doing. This participle sets in contrast to σωθῆναι, an aorist infinitive in verse ten. The significance of the word cannot be overlooked. Their rejection occurs sometime subsequently to the emphatic τότε of verse eight. Therefore, the possibility is present that τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις are not considered rejecters until after they believe τῷ ψεύσει of the Antichrist.

πιστεύσαντες .--This result participle is in the first aorist tense and active voice and is used with the negative conjunction μὴ in verse twelve. "The first aorist, πιστεύσαντες, glances back at the period which has passed before the judgment,"² thus pointing to the first half of the tribulation in the writer's viewpoint. The active voice shows the persistent and obstinate refusal to believe the truth from God's witnesses in that time period.

ἑυσεκήσαντες .--The alternative that these rejecters chose was to take pleasure in unrighteousness. This result participle in verse

¹ John Eadie, A Commentary of the Greek Text of the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, edited by William Young, Minneapolis: James Publications, 1976), p. 286.

² Ibid., p. 290.

twelve is in the first aorist tense and in the active voice so it also points back to a time when they actively made this choice. The dative case of unrighteousness, (*ἀδικίας*), points to where their satisfaction lie, that is, in obedience unto unrighteousness. Because they deliberately chose sin, judgment must follow (*κριθῶσιν*). Again, the aorist tense can point to the possibility of their choosing taking place after the rapture as well as before it.

Conclusion.--The writer concludes that these participles permit the interpretation that this thesis is presenting. They allow for the possibility that the rejecters will once again hear the Gospel in the tribulation period.

Infinitives

Introduction.--Three infinitives occur in the text and each bears some evidence to support the author's conclusion. They will show purpose dependent upon chronological circumstances. Each infinitive is connected with the purpose phrase *εἰς τὸ*.

ἀποκαλυφθῆναι.--This first aorist passive infinitive in verse six shows purpose in relation to the participle *κατέχον*. The Restrainer works presently so that the Antichrist's appointed time will be unaltered. The first aorist tense points to a particular time when Antichrist shall be revealed.

σωθῆναι.--The Greek words *εἰς τὸ* point to this as an infinitive of purpose. This infinitive in verse ten is aorist passive and refers to salvation in the general sense. "The love of the truth had salvation as

its object, but that they disregarded the message. In their indifference to the means they rejected the end; or rather being careless about the end, they neglected the means."¹ Therefore, the passive voice should not be understood as meaning that the rejecters were guiltless because it reveals them to be participants. The verb *οὐκ ἐσέβαντο* bears this out. Robertson says that this is a construction of "epexegetic purpose of the truth if they had heeded it."² The truth then could have been heeded if they had listened to God's witness.

πιστεῖν .--This is a first aorist tense infinitive of purpose in verse eleven. It explains why God is sending a delusion to rejecters of the truth. *πιστεῖν* means belief or adherence. "The thought of purpose, and not mere result being undoubtedly uppermost here, is in accordance with the leading thought of the main sentence."³ God's purpose, then, is for these rejecters to believe *τῷ ψεύσει* of the Antichrist. The active voice indicates the responsibility of the rejecters.

Conclusion.--All three infinitives are prefixed with *εἰς τὸ* and are therefore purpose infinitives according to their own context. They are significant because they show why the Antichrist does not appear before his appointed time and why the followers of Antichrist received not the truth of God. Subsequently, God directly sends them a strong delusion to believe the lie of Antichrist.

¹Ibid., p. 287.

²Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul," in Vol. 4, p. 53.

³George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 105.

Verbs

Introduction.--The verbs in this passage that are critical to a proper interpretation will be discussed. Points of significance will be explained. The verbs not referred to in this section are not pertinent to the thesis' purpose.

οἶσατε .--This verb introduces the 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 passage. It is the perfect tense, the active voice, and the indicative mood. The root word is οἶσα meaning "to have seen or perceived; hence, to know, to have knowledge of."¹ Vine also points out the difference between οἶσα and γινώσκω:

(a) γινώσκω , frequently suggests inception or progress in knowledge, while οἶσα suggests fulness of knowledge, . . . (b) while γινώσκω frequently implies an active relation between the one who knows and the person or thing known, οἶσα expresses the fact that the object has simply come within the scope of the knowers' perception.²

The perfect tense bears out the fact that the Thessalonians had full knowledge of some prior teaching by Paul. The significance is that Paul is building on present knowledge from the past to inform the Thessalonians about the Restrainer's removal and the Antichrist's appearance in relation to the Day of the Lord.

ἐνεργεῖται .--The verb is the present tense and the middle voice in verse seven. It means to work or to energize for action. Eadie says that, "ἐνεργεῖται , middle, has an active sence as usual in the New

¹W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. 2, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), p. 298.

²Ibid., pp. 298-99.

Testament; not 'is being wrought,' . . . but 'worketh'.¹ The middle voice indicates strong personal involvement of the subject. "The middle voice is that use of the verb which describes the subject as participating in the results of the action."² Therefore, the τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας is actively energizing the world today in this dispensation of grace. The "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Th. 2:7) is the mass of lawlessness yet hidden, but which will be revealed in the person of the Antichrist. Morris aptly says that "the Bible does not mean a 'mystery' in our sense of the term, but a secret which man can never fathom, and which can be known only by revelation."³

γίνονται.--The verb in verse seven is the second aorist tense, the middle voice, and the subjunctive mood. Such construction is normal when relating to some future event. "It is quite probable that the future indicative is just a variation of the aorist subjunctive."⁴ Concerning the phrase γίνονται ἐκ μέσου Hiebert comments that:

there is a time limit upon the present restraint of the mystery of lawlessness. The restraint will continue only "until he be taken out of the way." "Be taken" is more literally "became, may come to be." The aorist tense points to a definite event, while the subjunctive mode leaves the time undetermined. The deponent verb does not denote removal by an outside force but rather a voluntary act on the

¹Eadie, Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, pp. 276-77.

²H. E. Dana and Julius Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, (Toronto, Canada: The MacMillan Company, 1957), p. 175.

³Leon Morris, "The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians," in Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1976), p. 131.

⁴A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 924.

part of the restrainer. He will terminate his restraining function when he is "out of the way," literally, "out of the midst."¹

From these comments it is observed that the aorist subjunctive classification of this verb points to the yet future event when the Holy Spirit will leave, ushering in the appearance of the Antichrist.

ἀποκαλυφθήσεται.--The verb means to bring to light or disclose in verse eight. It is classified as future tense, passive voice, and indicative mood. At a future time, τότε, the Antichrist will be disclosed or revealed. The indicative mood shows that it is an actual event while the passive voice denotes that the subject, Antichrist, is receiving the action. It is significant in that this real event will initiate the tribulation period and God will be the Revelator.

ἀνελξει and καταργήσει.--Both of these verbs are the future tense, the active voice, and the indicative mood. The subject of these verbs is the Lord Jesus and He will instantly destroy and bring to an end the Antichrist. These events are yet future and will occur at the end of the tribulation period. It is accomplished through the agency of the "breath of His mouth" and the "appearance of His coming" (2 Th. 2:8).

ἔστιν.--The verb in verse nine is in the present tense, the active voice, and the indicative mood of εἰμί. "ἔστιν the ethical present, asserts the certainty of the coming event, either as unchangeably determined, or about to take place by some unalterable arrangement."²

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 313.

²Eadie, The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, p. 283.

This verb, then states the reality of the Antichrist's coming and introduces the manner and recipients of his coming.

ἔσέξαντο.--Here the verb is the first aorist tense, middle voice, and indicative mood of σέχομαι, meaning to take or receive. It is accompanied by the negative οὐκ which asserts the rejecters' refusal to welcome or entertain the "love of the truth" (2 Th. 2:10). The significant phrase, ἀνθ' ὧν which introduces ἔσέξαντο, means "in requital that, for the reason that."¹ The middle voice co-operates with the meaning of ἀνθ' ὧν for it indicates the rejecters' active participation in the results. The aorist presents their fate as having occurred in the past; this is often done in prophecy when the prophet contemplates the fulfillment as being already accomplished. The ultimate purpose in their rejection is to spurn salvation (εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι).

πέμψει.--A verb in the present tense, active voice, and indicative mood which means to send or deliver. "This use of the present tense denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass."² There is an indication, then, that God has already determined to perform this act, due to the use of the futuristic present (2 Th. 2:11).

Conclusion.--The observations from these verbs are in direct agreement with a pre-tribulational rapture of the church followed by a

¹Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, p. 104.

²Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul" in Vol. 4 of Word Pictures in the New Testament, pp. 53-4.

period of tribulation. At the midst of the tribulation, the Antichrist will rise to full power with many believing his lie. The section on verbs climaxes to the conclusion that the unbeliever will be the recipient of a direct judgment from God.

Nouns

Introduction.--There are several nouns in this passage which must be given particular attention. They indicate the real character of Antichrist in relation to the rejecters. It is not necessary that all of the nouns be observed but only those of importance to the thesis.

ἄνομος.--Here in verse seven the title given to Antichrist means "without law or lawless."¹ He can be clearly identified with "the man of sin" (2 Th. 2:3). Eadie comments:

the terms *ἀνομία, ἄνομος* point out so far what the form of wickedness is which the Man of Sin will assume--lawlessness, as described in verse 4--not heathenism, nor polytheism, but the audacious and profligate setting aside of all rule, the casting off of all divine supremacy, and the establishment of an autonomy, his arrogant and godless self-will being the only law.²

δυνάμει, σημείοις, and τέρασιν.--These words in verse nine describe the activities of the Antichrist to gain his following. All of these works are energized by the power of Satan (*κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ*). *δυνάμει* means power or miracle and emphasizes the strength that the performer possesses. "When the Greek word *dunamis*

¹Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. 4, p. 317.

²Eadie, The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, p. 280.

'power' is used in the plural, it often means miracles."¹ Since the word is singular here, it is best translated as 'power'. The adjective is taken to mean full in the sense of 'to the highest degree', and goes with all three substantives. The second noun, *σημείois*, means "a sign, mark, indication, or token."² The adjectival *ψεύδous* is taken to modify *τέρατιν*. This third word, *τέρατιν*, means "something strange, causing the beholder to marvel."³ It is also stated in the immediate context the sphere in which this miracle will be performed (*ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀσκήας*). These three words are synonymous with the lie (*τῷ ψεύσει*) of Antichrist. It is significant that all three of these words are used of Christ and His ministry (Heb. 2:4). Wolff gives a good overview of the significance of these words:

Power: is the potential power, the root of the operation. Miracles are called power because the cause gives the name to the effect (cf. Acts 8:10). Signs: indicate a supernatural presence. The signs point beyond themselves and in the case of the miracles of Christ indicate the near presence of God. The sign is the credential, legitimizing the mission. Wonders: speak of the result, the astonishment which miracles produce. Both the word all and pretended belong to all three words, power, signs, and wonders. The miracles are real, their reality is not denied, but they are false (pretended) because they are misleading, undergirding a false belief. Everything about them is false or lying; their origin (from the father of lies, Jn. 8:44b), quality, purpose, and effect. Performed by dark, gloomy powers, they are indeed at bottom nothing really creative, but assumptions, imitations, manifestation of a sham strength. . . .⁴

¹Ellingworth and Nida, A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter's to the Thessalonians, p. 175.

²Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. 4, p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 228.

⁴Richard Wolff, "The First and Second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians," in Contemporary Commentaries, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), pp. 88-9.

ἐνέργειαν.--This word indicates a working or operation, in verse eleven. The noun ἐνέργειαν is in the accusative case, object of the verb, to send, which indicates that it is a direct result of the subject's action. The adjective, πλάνης, means "wandering, roaming, error, delusion, deceit, deception."¹ Thus, God sends this energized delusion so that the rejecters believe the lie of the Antichrist.

ψεύσει.--The word means falsehood or lie. It is important to observe the definite article (τῇ) which accompanies this word in that it is a particular lie in verse eleven. Because the article was originally a demonstrative, it still retains the function "to point out an object or to draw attention to it."² It is significant that in the immediate context the word ψεύσους appears (2 Th. 2:9). Therefore, the lie of verse eleven is the same from verse nine because of the use of the article of previous reference. While these two words have different case endings, they both refer to Antichrist's tactics. The important fact is that this lie can be connected with the events of Revelation chapter thirteen where Antichrist sets himself up as God, hence, the lie of the text.

Conclusion.--The nouns of this section have been examined to assist the reader in a proper understanding of their function. All of them contribute to the eventual conclusion of this thesis. They

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 671.

²Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 137.

indicate the character and tactics of the Antichrist towards the rejecters of this passage.

What The Passage Does Not Say

It is just as important to know what 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 does not say as what it has said in this chapter. First, while the writer firmly believes in a pre-tribulational rapture and that the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit, it is admitted that there are no direct statements to this effect in the passage itself. However, all of the available facts in the passage lend themselves readily to the writer's position. Secondly, this passage does not state the exact time that the rejecters failed to receive and believe the Gospel. Based on the available facts either of the two proposals presented in chapter two could be true.¹ There should be caution taken before one dogmatically presents his view as an absolute truth. These two absent truths from 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 must be taken into consideration.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to inform the reader of the author's interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12. First, the diagrammatical analysis showed in picture form the relationship and function of the words of the text. Secondly, a diagrammatical outline demonstrated in English the major and minor divisions of the passage. Last, observations were drawn from the passage concerning pertinent information towards the goal of the thesis. These exegetical comments will be

¹Supra, p. 12.

beneficial in arriving to a conclusion for the thesis. The writer will now examine how the text should be integrated with some events in the book of Revelation.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRIBULATION WITNESSES

An area much neglected in the interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 is its relationship with the ministry of the witnesses in the book of Revelation. Hermeneutically speaking, there is a very important principle used in searching for an interpretation in the Word of God. Comparing Scripture with Scripture is one of the more significant principles of hermeneutics. This method of interpretation will be utilized in this chapter. An examination will reveal that it is both possible and probable that the rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 are preached to in the first half of the tribulation. If this be true, then the conclusion concerning one's chronological identification of the rejecters will be greatly altered from the traditional viewpoint.

The Two Witnesses

There is a great variance of opinion as to when the two witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven minister. Their length of service is 1,260 days or three and one-half years (Rev. 11:2-3). Since the tribulation period of judgment lasts seven years, the problem is whether they minister the Gospel in the first or latter half of this time slot. It seems best to interpret their ministry within the context of the first half of the tribulation. A few of the major reasons for holding to a second half of the tribulation ministry will be presented with a brief rebuttal against each. Then the major arguments for the writer's position will be given.

Second Half Of The Tribulation Ministry

John F. Walvoord best represents the stand concerning the two witnesses. He comments that:

From the fact, however, that the two witnesses pour out divine judgment upon the earth and need divine protection lest they be killed, it implies that they are in the latter half of the seven years when awful persecution will afflict the people of God, as this protection would not be necessary in the first three and one-half years.¹

But if this be true, then why are they able to fight the Antichrist? The answer is that he is not yet risen to full power (Rev. 11:7). Also, if Antichrist had violently opposed the two witnesses why did they not use fire on him to kill him? The answer is that their time of ministry was complete when he was completely revealed in full manifestation after the power of Satan. Walvoord also, states that, "The punishments and judgments the witnesses inflict on them would also seem to fit better in the great tribulation period."² However, it can be argued that these punishments and judgments fit better in the first half because the two witnesses' ministry is primarily a message of repentance. This is based upon their apparel and demeanor. So their ministry is that of warning through the signs of authentication (Rev. 11:5-6). A third argument used is that the sounding of the seventh trumpet lends itself toward a second half position since Christ's near reign is seen. However, it must be noticed that Revelation 10:1-11:14 is a historical parenthesis. The passage does not advance the narrative but presents other facts which

¹John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 178.

²Ibid.,

contribute to the total prophetic scene. So, to tie in the seventh trumpet with the ministry of the two witnesses would be very tenuous.

First Half Of The Tribulation Ministry

Resistance to Antichrist.--There seems to be far more evidence that the chronological sphere of ministry that the two witnesses serve in will be the first half of the tribulation. First, the two witnesses resist the Antichrist, thus, showing that he is not yet in full power. Substantiation for this idea is borne out by the fact that when their time is over they are killed by him (Rev. 11:7). Cohen and Kirban remark that:

This is true because at the end of the second half of the week all of God's foes are destroyed and the Kingdom is inaugurated; but in contrast to this, at the end of the Two Witnesses' $3\frac{1}{2}$ year testimony the Two Witnesses are still lying dead in the street while God's foes make merry (Rev. 11:7-11). Thus the Two Witnesses are dead at the midpoint of the week, and consequently their ministry was in its first half.¹

Satan's power is not able to touch them until God is through with their witness.

Sealing of 144,000.--"In Revelation 7 we are told of the 144,000 Israelites who are saved and sealed (vs. 4-8). This took place during the first half of the Tribulation."² The 144,000 Israelites saved and sealed, therefore, will hear the message of salvation from the wrath of

¹Gary G. Cohen and Salem Kirban, Revelation Visualized, Huntington Valley, PA: Salem Kirban Inc., 1975), p. 216.

²Theodore H. Epp, Practical Studies in Revelation, Vol. 2 (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible Broadcast, 1969), p. 144.

God through the two witnesses. The sealing takes place between the sixth and seventh seal.

Comparison of Revelation 11:2 and 12:6 with 11:3.--Hoyt rightly observes that, "By comparing 12:6 with 11:2, you will note that the final three and one-half years of the tribulation period are under consideration."¹ The three and one-half years of Revelation 11:3 are distinct from the above references. Consequently, the two witnesses minister prior to the three and one-half years of Revelation 11:2 and 12:6.

Two Witnesses' Ministry in Relation to the Temple.--The immediate context shows that the temple and the worship of God is the thrust of the two witnesses' prophecy (Rev. 11:1-2). When they are killed the Antichrist will assert his control over the temple and set himself up as God (2 Th. 2:4; Rev. 13:3-5). Therefore, the first half of the tribulation fits best in relation to their ministry.

Two Witnesses' Apparel.--These ministers' dress of sackcloth shows them to be prophets of repentance and warning of judgment to come rather than of rejoicing (Rev. 11:3). If they ministered in the latter half of the tribulation it seems that their message would be to rejoice in light of the near return of Jesus Christ for His people. But this is not the case, so they cry out for repentance and warn people of involvement with the Antichrist.

¹Herman A. Hoyt, Studies in Revelation, (Winona Lake, IN: Brethren Missionary Herald, 1977), p. 74.

Two Witnesses' Death and Resurrection.--Part of the judgment placed upon Jerusalem for the killing of the two witnesses is that one-tenth of the city is smitten (Rev. 11:13). It seems strange that this is the end of the tribulation when later it states that the whole city will fall. Because of the difference in the two judgments, the two witnesses fit better in the first half of the tribulation.

The evidence favors the conclusion that the two witnesses minister in the early half of the tribulation. This will be helpful in demonstrating that the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 will hear the Gospel message again.

The 144,000 Witnesses

It is beneficial to see that the 144,000 Israelites are the ones sealed under the ministry of the two witnesses. If this be true, these 144,000 witnesses will begin their task in the first half of the tribulation. This is important in that it reveals the probability of people being saved from their witness. However, it cannot be dogmatically stated to be so, but the possibility is present.

There are several observations concerning the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses. The purpose of the sealing of the 144,000 is twofold. First, this will "insure a remnant being ready to enter the millennial kingdom at the close of the tribulation."¹ Secondly, they will be evangelists in the tribulation period. Borden adds that:

Just as each individual saved today has been chosen to fulfill a particular and specific part in the marvelous plan of God, it is

¹Ibid., p. 56.

quite evident that the sealing of the 144,000 Israelites was not only for the preservation of a Jewish remnant, but was also for the purpose of evangelizing this great multitude of Gentiles.¹

The 144,000 will begin their ministry sometime in the first half of the tribulation and will continue to the end of the tribulation (Rev. 7 and 14). This group of witnesses will receive spiritual salvation and physical preservation (Rev. 9:4; 12:6; 12:14). Theodore Epp has a concluding word about their services:

These two witnesses and the salvation of the 144,000 take place during the first half of the seven year Tribulation. Many will turn to Christ as a result of the preaching of the two witnesses. Every Jew who turns to Christ naturally turns against the Antichrist who has signed a covenant of protection with Israel. Because many will turn against him, the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and brings intense persecution on the nation during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation.²

The witnesses from the Jewish nation will reach many people with the Gospel message. They were brought to salvation through the ministry of the two witnesses. These factors are important in their relationship to 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12.

Relationship To 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12

It is feasible, then, to take the witnesses of Revelation and fit them into the chronology of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12. Before the Antichrist comes in full power with signs and wonders (2 Th. 2:9; Rev. 13), the witnesses of Revelation chapters seven and eleven will present the Gospel of salvation or the love of the truth (*τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας*) to the rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11. The aorist

¹Malcolm J. Borden, "Grace in the Tribulation Period," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1959), p. 29.

²Epp, Practical Studies in Revelation, p. 77.

tenses of ἐσέβαντο, πίστευσαντες, and εὐσκησάντες support the idea that the rejecters in this passage will have another opportunity to hear the Gospel prior to their decision to believe the lie (τῷ ψεύσει) of the Antichrist.¹

Summary

This chapter has dealt with the integration of the witnesses of Revelation with the rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12. It is the writer's conclusion that the time sequence of the first half of the tribulation period fits best with these personages. In conjunction with the two witnesses' ministry, the 144,000 Jewish witnesses are sealed in the first half of the tribulation and continue to its end with a ministry of evangelism to the innumerable host of Gentiles who will be saved. When this information is placed beside that of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12, the author feels that it is possible to see that the witnesses of Revelation give these rejecters another opportunity to hear the message of salvation. This is grammatically possible and is reasonable in light of God's wonderful grace before judgment. The topic of God's dealing with men prior to judgment will be the last area of investigation.

¹Supra, pp. 34-41.

CHAPTER V

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MEN

PRIOR TO JUDGMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the thesis of the paper is nothing novel, but reveals the nature of God in His past, present, and future dealings with men prior to judgment. The chapter will first illustrate how God dealt with men prior to judgment in the past. Then an explanation of how messengers of the Gospel should preach judgment today will be discussed. The chapter will culminate in a presentation of tribulation grace which is shown prior to the wrath of God in judgment in the great tribulation.

Lessons From The Past

The pattern of judgment in the Old Testament is for God to send a prophet who would deliver the message of grace prior to judgment. His message would consist of a warning of impending judgment with a plea for repentance leading to deliverance and salvation. This section, then, will provide illustrations proving the truth of the principle stated in the introduction of this chapter.

Noah's Flood

God stated that he would "destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Gen. 6:7). God's reason for destroying man was because "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every

imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man" (Gen. 6:5-6). However, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). Grace is seen prior to this universal cataclysmic judgment in that Noah worked for 120 years preparing the ark. While men watched him build the ark "he condemned the world" (Heb. 11:7).

Sodom And Gomorrah

In this judgment God forewarns the people. The sin is called "very grievous" (Gen. 18:20). Abraham interceded before the Lord on behalf of the righteous people in the cities. The Lord reduced to ten the number of righteous men needed in order to not destroy the cities. The number of righteous men needed began at fifty (Gen. 18:23-33). This shows God's wonderful grace in warning before judgment and even willing to call off judgment if only ten righteous men were found in the cities.

Nineveh

The city of Nineveh of the Assyrian Empire was headed for judgment from God. He sent a man named Jonah to forewarn them. His message was "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jon. 3:4). Again, grace was demonstrated to these pagan Gentiles prior to judgment. They listened to Jonah's preaching and repented "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not (Jon. 3:10).

Judah

Habakkuk, the prophet, had the mission of foretelling the judgment of Judah. The sins were lawlessness and the oppression of the poor (Hab. 1:2-4). Therefore, God was raising up "the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation," (Hab. 1:6), to judge the Judeans. This message was delivered several years before Nebuchadnezzar made his first attack and subsequent deportation of captives from Jerusalem. Habakkuk chapter three contains a theophany of God prefaced with a prayer by the prophet. His prayer ends with the phrase "in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2). This is an indication of the grace God will bestow both before and during judgment.

The illustrations of God's grace in this section indeed demonstrate that prior to judgment God bestows grace. Of course, this grace has to be received to avoid judgment. But the principle, nevertheless, still remains valid. These illustrations show therefore, that God has been gracious to men prior to judgment.

Ethics For Preaching Judgment Today

The New Testament lays down principles of conduct for the messenger of God to follow. Some of these concern the realm of ethics in the ministry. Paul stated that "my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). The word 'enticing' (*πείθοις*) means "apt to persuade . . . it signifies the employment of plausible arguments, in

contrast to demonstration."¹ A preacher of judgment today should not persuade men with unsubstantiated truth. He should rather allow the Holy Spirit to control him and to bring conviction to the sinner. Paul again asserts that his "exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor guile" (1 Th. 2:3). On the basis of this knowledge, does the preacher pressure decisions by telling sinners that there is no hope of being saved after the rapture? Or does he proclaim the truth of judgment along with the truth that as long as man has breath there is hope of his salvation? It seems best to conclude that it is proper ethically for a preacher to present the facts of judgment honestly rather than deceptively. Proper ethics in preaching can only come by the honest declaration of the terribleness of the judgment to come. It must be pointed out that to have another opportunity to hear the Gospel in the tribulation is not the same as having another chance. To have another chance would mean that a sinner would die and then be given another time of decision for Christ. To have another opportunity to hear the Gospel is characteristic of God's grace. Consequently, it seems evident that the preacher of today must present future judgment in such a way that is not deceptive. A preacher of the Gospel must adhere to Biblical preaching controlled by the Holy Spirit in order to reach lost souls before judgment comes.

¹Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. 2 p. 36.

Tribulation Grace

There is much evidence that God will extend His grace to the unbeliever during the tribulation. The seal, trumpet and bowl judgments intensify in severity and are inflicted in the latter part of the tribulation. Since the witnesses of God are present in the first half of the tribulation, the unbeliever will have ample opportunity to repent before the Antichrist presents his lie (2 Th. 2:11; Rev. 13). As in the past, God will again be gracious in warning unbelievers of impending judgment. There will be an innumerable host of Gentiles who will believe and be saved as a result of God's witnesses. At the initiation of the tribulation, that is, immediately after the rapture, there will not be any saved people in the world. When God's witnesses arrive, they will have fruit for their labor. The multitude of Gentiles who will believe illustrate that many appropriate this grace. It is obvious that many of these Gentiles could have been rejecters before the rapture and later believe in Christ. This is in keeping with the conclusion of this thesis. God's grace during this time is truly a marvelous matter as Borden points out:

Not only does the Word of God reveal a marvelous bestowal of God's grace to the individual Israelites, but a great host of Gentiles as well, are the objects of a gracious outpouring of blessing during this time of harsh judgment. This too, was promised in the Old Testament, particularly as it was revealed to the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 2:2, 4; 60:3, 5; 62:2). . . . It would seem permissible to conclude that the fact of this saving, on the part of God, is as marvelous a bestowal and blessing of His grace as the salvation received in this age. When one considers the darkness of the time and circumstances of this bestowal, it appears even reasonable to conceive that this will possibly be a greater manifestation of God's grace. This multitude has been saved out of a time of great tribulation; a time when the wrath of God is being poured out upon

mankind. Apart from the marvelous and miraculous grace of God, ¹ the salvation of this innumerable company would be inconceivable.

Summary

The fact that God gives opportunity for repentance before judgment stands proven. This is not a novel idea for it has been demonstrated through the Old Testament that this is part of God's nature to be gracious in His wrath. A plea has been made for preachers today to be honest in their presentation of judgment. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, while the messenger of the Gospel clearly presents the terribleness of God's judgment in the tribulation. During the tribulation period God will bestow grace sufficient to save a multitude of Gentiles. It has been shown that there is proof that some, but not all, rejecters of the Gospel before the rapture will be saved in the tribulation. There will be another opportunity to hear the Gospel but not a second chance. This chapter has contributed towards the thesis of this endeavor. The data of all chapters will be gathered for the purpose of concluding on the chronological identification of the rejecters in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12.

¹Borden, "Grace in the Tribulation Period," pp. 20, 27.

CONCLUSION

The rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 are either pre-rapture unbelievers or first half of the tribulation unbelievers. The endeavor of this thesis has been to demonstrate that it is both possible and probable that the latter choice is feasible. This is not to say that all of these pre-rapture rejecters will be saved. The possibility exists that they could be saved but the probability is somewhat limited.

The first two chapters of this thesis laid the foundation for what would be said in subsequent chapters. The writer's presuppositions were stated for the reader's better understanding. These presuppositions that envelop the background thinking of the writer are: a pre-tribulation rapture; Restrainer identified as the Holy Spirit; and the identification of the Wicked One as Antichrist who will be revealed in full power at the middle of the tribulation. The second chapter explains the two major proposals for the chronological identification of the rejecters in the text. Either these rejecters are from the pre-rapture era or from the first half of the tribulation. This chapter, then, explained the meaning of each alternative to the problem.

To insure that the reader understood the interpretation of the passage, the third chapter presented the author's work in this area. The passage was diagrammed to show the syntactical relationship of the Greek words in the passage. An outline from the diagram delineated the structure of the passage into an understandable presentation of the writer's interpretation. From the 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 passage it was concluded

that there are two chronological developments relating to the Day of the Lord. The first is the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit before the Day of the Lord and the second is the revelation of the Antichrist to begin the Day of the Lord. Observation from the Greek text proved that the writer's proposal has exegetical support. First, the adverbs of time in the text support the writer's presuppositions. Second, the aorist tense of ἔσειαντο, πιστεύσαντες, and εὐδοκούντες has shown that it is grammatically legitimate to say that these rejecters are from the first half of the tribulation. Third, τῷ ψεύσει of the Antichrist was demonstrated to be the συνάμει, σημείοις, and τέρασιν that he will perform in the power of Satan. This is significant in that it occurs at the middle of the tribulation (Rev. 13). Therefore, the exegetical observations show that the rejecters could have come from the first half of the tribulation.

In chapter four it was set forth that the two witnesses of Revelation will minister in the first half of the tribulation. During this time they will win the 144,000 Jews to salvation. These witnesses will preach to the whole world and many Gentiles will be saved. The ones rejecting their message are the rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 who will believe the lie of the Antichrist. It was pointed out that this is not teaching a second chance but a second opportunity to receive salvation.

The last topic discussed was God's grace in past, present, and future dealings with men prior to judgment. Old Testament illustrations were supplied to show that this has been God's nature in the past. Today, the preacher of judgment must clearly and honestly warn people of impending punishment without using scare or pressure tactics. In the future,

when God's wrath comes down upon the world, God will display grace to the unsaved people. His witnesses will cause some to be saved but the ones who reject will be judged for believing the lie of Antichrist (2 Th. 2:9-12).

Consequently, it is the conclusion of this endeavor that it is feasible to believe that the rejecters of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 will once again hear the message of salvation. Chronologically these rejecters are from the first half of the tribulation and can thus be identified as followers of Antichrist when he presents himself as God ($\tau\omega\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\epsilon\iota$ of 2 Th. 2:11). While it is true that many or most of today's rejecters will also reject the message of the witnesses in the first half of the tribulation not all of them will. There will be a great multitude of Gentiles saved, therefore, showing the possibility of salvation. But the limited probability of salvation in the rejecters of today does not overshadow the real possibility of salvation. This conclusion is not dogmatic, but feasible. A plea is made, then, for preachers of judgment to present the facts honestly in light of the knowledge of the Word of God.

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