

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS 2

In this chapter the apostle guards against a notion, as if the second coming of Christ was at hand; declares that, previous to it, there must be a great apostasy, and a revelation of antichrist; comforts the saints against fears of being included in this defection; exhorts them to stand fast in the faith, and closes this chapter with petitions for them. He entreats them in a most tender and solemn manner not to imagine that the day of Christ was at hand, and that they would not be disturbed and moved at it; and points unto the several ways, and cautions against them, they might be imposed upon and deceived by men with respect to it, ([2 Thessalonians 2:1,2](#)) and assigns his reasons why it could not be yet, because before this time there was to be a general apostasy, and antichrist must appear; whom from his character, he calls the man of sin, and from his end, the son of perdition; and describes him as an opposer of God, an exalter of himself above all that is called God, as sitting in the temple of God and declaring himself to be God, ([2 Thessalonians 2:3,4](#)) of which things he had told them before, ([2 Thessalonians 2:5](#)) nor were they ignorant of what at present hindered the revelation of the man of sin, who was then in being, and was working and growing up apace; only there was something (the Roman empire) which hindered, and would continue to do so, until the fixed time of his revelation was up, ([2 Thessalonians 2:6,7](#)) when he should be manifest; though he should not always continue, being to be consumed and destroyed by the breath of Christ's mouth, and the splendour of his coming, ([2 Thessalonians 2:8](#)) and the appearance of antichrist in the world, being a matter of considerable importance, it is described by being after the working of Satan, and as attended with lying and false miracles, and with all deceitful and unrighteous doctrines and practices; which reprobate men would be left to give into, as a punishment of their not receiving cordially the truth of the Gospel; upon which account God would give them to such judicial blindness, as to give credit to a lie, which would bring on their final damnation, they not believing the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness, ([2 Thessalonians 2:9-12](#)), but lest this account of things should be discouraging to the saints at Thessalonica,

the apostle styles them brethren; asserts them to be the beloved of the Lord; gives an instance of it, for which he gives thanks, namely, their election of God; the date of which was from everlasting; the means sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; the end salvation by Jesus Christ; and the evidence of which was their effectual calling by the Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of Christ, (<sup><sup>13</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:13,14) and then he exhorts them to stand fast in the doctrines that had been taught them, either in an epistolary way, or by the ministry of the word, (<sup><sup>15</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:15) and concludes the chapter with petitions for them made to God the Father, and to Christ who had loved and comforted them, and given them good hope of everlasting things; that they might be comforted more and more, and be established in every good doctrine and practice, (<sup><sup>16</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:16,17).</sup></sup></sup>

**Ver. 1.** *Now we beseech you, brethren,* &c.] The apostle having finished his first design in this epistle, which was to encourage the saints to patience under sufferings, proceeds to another view he had in writing it, and that is, to set the doctrine of Christ's coming, as to the time of it, in its proper light; and this is occasioned by what he had said concerning it in the former epistle, which was either misunderstood or misrepresented; and as he addresses the saints with a very affectionate appellation as his "brethren", so by way of entreaty "beseeching", and yet in a very solemn manner:

*by the coming of our Lord Jesus:* which is to be understood not of the coming of Christ in the flesh, to procure the salvation of his people; nor of his coming in his kingdom and power to take vengeance on the Jewish nation, for their rejection of him as the Messiah; but of his coming to judge the quick and dead, than which nothing is more sure and certain, being affirmed by angels and men, by prophets and apostles, and by Christ himself, or more desirable by the saints; wherefore the apostle entreats them by it, that whereas they believed it, expected it, and wished for it, they would regard what he was about to say: so that the words, though an entreaty, are in the form of an adjuration; unless they should be rendered as in the Ethiopic version, as they may, "concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and so express subject matter of the discourse now entering upon, with what follows:

*and by our gathering together unto him;* which regards not the great gatherings of the people to Christ the true Shiloh upon his first coming, and the preaching of the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, when there

were not only great flockings to hear it, but multitudes were converted by it; nor the greater gatherings there will be in the latter day, at the time of the conversion of the Jews, and when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in; nor the conversion of particular persons, who are gathered in to Christ, and received by him one by one; nor the assembling of the saints together for public worship, in which sense the word is used in (<sup><8105></sup>Hebrews 10:25) but the gathering together of all the saints at the last day, at the second coming of Christ; for he will come with ten thousand of his saints, yea, with all his saints, when their dead bodies shall be raised and reunited to their souls, and they with the living saints will be caught up into the air, to meet the Lord there and be ever with him; when they will make up, complete and perfect, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven: this will be the gathering together of all the elect of God; and so the Arabic version reads, “the gathering of us all”; and which, as it is certain, is greatly to be desired; it will be a happy meeting and a glorious sight; by this the apostle entreats and adjures them to regard what follows.

**Ver. 2.** *That ye be not soon shaken in mind*, &c.] Or “from your mind or sense”, as the Vulgate Latin version; or “from the solidity of sense”, as the Arabic version; that is, from what they had received in their minds, and was their sense and judgment, and which they had embraced as articles of faith; that they would not be like a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; or be moved from the hope of the Gospel, from any fundamental article of it, and from that which respects the second coming of Christ particularly; and especially, that they would not be quickly and easily moved from it; (see <sup><8006></sup>Galatians 1:6)

*or be troubled*; thrown into consternation and surprise, for though the coming of Christ will not be terrible to saints, as it will be to sinners; yet there is something in it that is awful and solemn, and fills with concern; and to be told of it as at that instant might be surprising and shocking: the several ways in which their minds might be troubled and distressed with such an account are enumerated by the apostle, that they might guard against them, and not be imposed upon by them:

*neither by spirit*; by a prophetic spirit, by pretensions to a revelation from the Spirit, fixing the precise time of Christ's coming, which should not be heeded or attended to; since his coming will be as a thief in the night:

*nor by word*: by reason and a show of it, by arguments drawn from it, which may carry in them a show of probability; by enticing words of man's wisdom; by arithmetical or astronomical calculations; or by pretensions to a word, a tradition of Christ or his apostles, as if they had received it "viva voce", by word of mouth from any of them:

*nor by letter, as from us*; by forging a letter and counterfeiting their hands, for such practices began to be used very early; spurious epistles of the Apostle Paul were carried about, which obliged him to take a method whereby his genuine letters might be known; (see <sup>scrip</sup>2 Thessalonians 3:17,18) or he may have respect in this clause to his former epistle, wherein he had said some things concerning the Coming of Christ, which had been either wrongly represented, or not understood; and as if his sense was, that it would be while he and others then living were alive and on the spot: wherefore he would not have them neither give heed to any enthusiastic spirits, nor to any plausible reasonings of men, or unwritten traditions; nor to any letters in his name, or in the name of any of the apostles; nor even to his former letter to them, as though it contained any such thing in it,

*as that the day of Christ is at hand*; or is at this instant just now coming on; as if it would be within that year, in some certain month, and on some certain day in it; which notion the apostle would have them by no means give into, for these reasons, because should Christ not come, as there was no reason to believe he would in so short a time, they would be tempted to disbelieve his coming at all, at least be very indifferent about it; and since if it did not prove true, they might be led to conclude there was nothing true in the Christian doctrine and religion; and besides, such a notion of the speedy coming of Christ would tend to indulge the idle and disorderly persons among them in their sloth and negligence: and now for these, and for the weighty reasons he gives in the next verse, he dissuades them from imbibing such a tenet; for though the coming of Christ is sometimes said to be drawing nigh, and to be quickly, yet so it might be, and not at that instant; besides, such expressions are used with respect to God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years; and because the Gospel times, or times of the Messiah, are the last days, there will be no other dispensation of things until the second coming of Christ; and chiefly they are used to keep up the faith, and awaken the hope and expectation of the saints with respect to it. The Alexandrian copy, and

some others, read, “the day of the Lord”; and so the Vulgate Latin version; and accordingly the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, “the day of our Lord”.

**Ver. 3.** *Let no man deceive you by any means,* &c.] By any of the above means; by pretending to a revelation from the Spirit; or to have had it from the mouth of anyone of the apostles; or to have a letter as from them, declaring the day of Christ to be instant; or by any other means whatever; do not be imposed upon by them for the following reasons, for there were things to be done before the coming of Christ, which were not then done, and which required time: for that day shall not come,

*except there come a falling away first;* either in a political sense, of the nations from the Roman empire, which was divided into the eastern and western empire; for which, way was made by translating the seat of empire from Rome to Byzantium, or Constantinople; the former of these empires was seized by Mahomet, and still possessed by the Turks; and the latter was overrun by the Goths, Huns, and Vandals, and torn to pieces; Italy particularly was ravaged by them, and Rome itself was sacked and taken: or rather in a religious sense, of the falling of men from the faith of the Gospel, from the purity of Gospel doctrines, discipline, worship, and ordinances; and this not of some Jews who professed faith in Christ, and departed from it, or of some Christians who went off to the Gnostics; but is to be understood of a more general defection in the times of the Papacy; when not only the eastern churches were perverted and corrupted by Mahomet, and drawn off to his religion, but the western churches were most sadly depraved by the man of sin, by bringing in errors of all sorts in doctrine, making innovations in every ordinance, and appointing new ones, and introducing both Judaism and Paganism into the churches; which general defection continued until the times of the reformation, and is what the apostle has respect to in (~~500~~1 Timothy 4:1-3) where he manifestly points out some of the Popish tenets, as forbidding marriage to priests, and ordering abstinence from meats on certain days, and at certain times of the year: this was one thing that was to precede the coming of Christ, another follows, which should take place at the same time;

*and that man of sin be revealed;* who was now hid, though secretly working; by whom is meant not only any particular person or individual; not the devil, for though he is the wicked one, a damned spirit, an opposer, an adversary of God and Christ, and his people, and who has affected deity, and sought to be worshipped, and even by Christ himself; yet the

man of sin is here distinguished from Satan, (~~scrip~~2 Timothy 2:9) nor is any particular emperor of Rome intended, as Caius Caligula, or Nero, for though these were monsters of iniquity, and set up themselves as gods, yet they sat not in the temple of God; nor is Simon Magus designed, who was a very wicked man, a sorcerer, and who gave out himself to be some great one, and was called the great power of God, before big profession of faith in Christ; and afterwards affirmed that he was God, the Father in Samaria, the Son in Judea, and the Spirit in the rest of the nations of the world; and, because of his signs and lying wonders, had a statue erected by the Roman emperor with this inscription, “to Simon the holy god”; but then this wicked man was now already revealed: nor is this to be understood of a certain Jew, that is to be begotten by the devil on a virgin of the tribe of Dan, and who is to reign three years and a half, and then to be destroyed by Christ, which is a fable of the Papists; but a succession of men is here meant, as a king is used sometimes for an order and succession of kings, (~~scrip~~Deuteronomy 17:18) and an high priest for that whole order, from Aaron's time to the dissolution of it, (~~scrip~~Hebrews 9:7) so here it intends the whole hierarchy of Rome, monks, friars, priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and especially popes, who may well be called “the man of sin”, because notoriously sinful; not only sinners, but sin itself, a sink of sin, monsters of iniquity, spiritual wickednesses in high places: it is not easy to reckon up their impieties, their adulteries, incest, sodomy, rapine, murder, avarice, simony, perjury, lying, necromancy, familiarity with the devil, idolatry, witchcraft, and what not? and not only have they been guilty of the most notorious crimes themselves, but have been the patrons and encouragers of others in sin; by dispensing with the laws of God and man, by making sins to be venial, by granting indulgences and pardon for the worst of crimes, by licensing brothel houses, and countenancing all manner of wickedness; and therefore it is no wonder to hear of the following epithet,

*the son of perdition*; since these are not only the Apollyon, the king of the bottomless pit, the destroyer, the cause of the perdition of thousands of souls, for the souls of men are their wares; but because they are by the righteous judgment of God appointed and consigned to everlasting destruction; the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, will have their portion together in the lake that burns with fire, (~~scrip~~Revelation 20:10) the same character as here is given of Judas, the betrayer of Christ, (~~scrip~~John 17:12).

**Ver. 4.** *Who opposeth, &c.*] Or is an opposer, an adversary of Christ, the antichrist; who opposes him in his kingly office, styling himself the head and spouse of the church, assuming to himself all power in heaven and in earth, taking upon him to dispense with the laws of Christ, and to make new ones; who opposes him in his priestly office, by pretending to offer him up again in the sacrifice of the mass, and by making angels and saints departed, intercessors and advocates; and also in his prophetic office, by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and setting up unwritten traditions before the word of God, requiring the worshipping of images, angels, and saints, when Christ requires that the Lord God only should be worshipped and served; and by introducing the doctrine of works and of merit instead of grace, and with a multitude of other things, in which he most manifestly appears to be diametrically opposite and contrary to Christ:

*and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.*

The Syriac version renders the last clause, **al j dw**, “and religion”; and the Greek word does signify religion, worship, or devotion, as it is translated, in (<sup><4173></sup>Acts 17:23) but here the act of worship is put for the object, and is rightly rendered, “or that which is worshipped”; as it is in the Vulgate Latin version, and in the Arabic version, “or that which is to be worshipped”; and it was usual with the Jews to call God the object of worship, by the name of worship itself, and by which they used to swear: it is said <sup>f3</sup> of R.

Benjamin the just, that he was appointed over the alms chest; one time a woman came to him and said, Rabbi, relieve me; he replied to her, **hdwb[ h**, “by the worship” (that is, by God who is worshipped) there is nothing in the alms chest: and elsewhere <sup>f4</sup> it is said by one, concerning two that were fatherless, for whom the collectors of alms gathered, **hdwb[ h**, “by the worship”, they go before my daughter: and a little after, **hdwb[ h**, “by the worship”, these things are holy to thee; where the gloss says, it is an oath: and so here the word is to be understood of Deity itself; and the meaning is, that antichrist would exalt himself above all the gods of the Gentiles, who are only nominally, and not by nature, gods; to these were ascribed, some one thing, to some another; one had the government of heaven, another of hell, another of the seas, and an other of the winds, &c. but this haughty creature antichrist assumes to himself all power, both in heaven, earth, and hell. Angels are sometimes called gods, (<sup><4173></sup>Psalm 8:4) because they are sent of God, and sometimes represent him; the popes of Rome have exalted themselves above these; Pope Clement VI. proclaimed

a jubilee, and promised forgiveness of sins to all that should come to Rome; and in his bull for it says, that

“if any that was confessed should die by the way, he should be free from all his sins; “and we do command the angels”, that they take such a soul out of purgatory entirely absolved, and introduce it into the glory of paradise:”

and in a manuscript in the library at Helmsted are these words,

“we command the angels that they carry such a soul into Abraham's bosom, as soon as it has left the body:”

kings and civil magistrates are called gods, (<sup>15816</sup>Psalm 82:6) and this monster of iniquity and firstborn of Satan, the popes of Rome, have exalted themselves above these; they have not only took upon them to excommunicate emperors and kings, but to depose them, and take away their crowns from them, and give their kingdoms to others, and absolve their subjects from allegiance and fidelity to them; an emperor has held a pope's stirrup while he alighted from his horse, and was severely reprimanded for holding the left instead of the right stirrup; and the same emperor held another pope's stirrup while he got on his horse, and who set his foot upon his neck when he absolved him, being before excommunicated by him, using these words in (<sup>15913</sup>Psalm 91:13) “thou shall tread upon the lion”, &c. An emperor and an empress waited at a pope's gates three days barefoot; another emperor and empress were crowned by the Pope with his feet; he took the crown with his feet, and, they bowing down, put it upon their heads, and then kicked it off; and one of our own kings resigned his crown and the ensigns of his royalty to the Pope's legate, who kept them five days; and when he offered a sum of money to the legate as an earnest of his subjection, to show his master's grandeur, he spurned at it; a king was thrown under a pope's table to lick the bones like a dog, while he was eating: so truly has this passage had its accomplishment in that impious and insolent set of men. Rome is by the Jewish<sup>f5</sup> writers called “Magdiel”, which signifies “magnifying itself”; the reason is, **l dgtyç**, “because it magnifies itself” above all these<sup>f6</sup>; that is, above all kingdoms and states: but what is worse, and most dreadfully blasphemous, follows,

*so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God*; not in the temple of Jerusalem, which was to be destroyed and never to be rebuilt more, and



was destroyed before this man of sin was revealed; but in the church of God, so called, (~~416~~1 Corinthians 3:16 ~~416~~2 Corinthians 6:16) the Ethiopic version renders it, “in the house of God”; for antichrist rose up out of, and in the midst of the church; and it was a true church in which he first appeared, and over which he usurped power and authority; though it has been so corrupted by him, as now to be only nominally so; here he sits, and has homage done him by his creatures, as if he was a god, and is not only stiled Christ's vicar, but a god on earth, and our Lord God the Pope; so in the triumphal arch at the entry of Pope Sixtus IV, these lines were put, “*oraculo vocis, mundi moderaris habenas, et merito in terris crederis esse Dens*”; the sense is, that he governed the world by his word, and was deservedly believed to be God on earth; and their canon law<sup>f7</sup> says,

“it is clearly enough shown, that the Pope cannot be loosed or bound by any secular power; since it is evident that he is called God by that pious prince, Constantine, and it is manifest that God cannot be judged by men:”

and Pope John XXII is expressly called<sup>f8</sup> “our Lord God the Pope”: the Ethiopic version reads, “he shall say to all, I am the Lord God”; (see ~~450~~Ezekiel 28:2), the Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version, leave out the phrase, “as God”, but the Syriac retains it: however, the same blasphemy is expressed in the next clause,

*shewing himself that he is God*; by usurping a power over the consciences and souls of men; by dispensing with the laws of God and man; by assuming to himself all power in heaven and in earth; by taking upon him to open and shut the gates of heaven at pleasure; and by pardoning sin, which none but God can do; this is the mouth speaking blasphemies, (~~413~~Revelation 13:5,6).

**Ver. 5.** *Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, &c.*] At Thessalonica, for the apostle had been there in person, and had preached there with great boldness and success; he had declared the whole counsel of God, and the Gospel came in power and worked effectually in them, and yet there was too great a forgetfulness of it; with which the apostle tacitly charges them, and rebukes them gently for it; and as a faithful monitor, stirs up their pure minds by way of remembrance, and reminds them of former truths delivered to them:

*I told you these things:* or “words” as the Arabic version; concerning the coming of Christ as that it would not be yet, that there, must be a defection from the faith, and antichrist must be revealed; which shows that these were things of moment and importance, and were useful and profitable to be insisted on; and therefore the apostle had told them of them, and spoke freely and largely about them, at his first preaching among them, and were what he inculcated everywhere; and also that his doctrine was all of a piece at one time as another; it was not yea and nay, or contradictory; what he now said was no other than what he had said before; and therefore it was the more inexcusable in them, to be shaken or troubled by any means with another doctrine.

**Ver. 6.** *And now ye know what withholdeth,* &c.] Or hinders the revelation of the man of sin, or antichrist; by which is meant not the Apostle Paul, though he by his ministry was a very great hinderance of the growth of error, and the spread of evil practices in the churches, and so of the more open appearance of the man of sin in his forerunners; and after his departure from Ephesus, and imprisonment at Rome, and suffering death, there was a great falling off in the churches, and among professors of religion, which made way for the manifestation of antichrist in due time: nor the preaching of the Gospel, in its power and purity, in the several parts of the world; though so long as this obtained, got ground, and gained success, the man of sin could not show his head; and therefore it must, as it did, decline, and was gradually taken away that he might appear: nor the Spirit of God, as the spirit of truth and holiness, though as long as he continued in his gifts and operations of grace in the churches, they were preserved from antichristian doctrine and worship; but when he removed from them, this enemy and adversary of Christ and his Gospel came in like a flood: nor the general defection in (<sup>scribes</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:3) though that was to be previous to the revelation of antichrist, and was to be what would usher him in; nor could he appear until the wickedness of men was come to a pitch, that they would be ready to receive him, and pay homage and worship to him: nor is the decree of God meant, though till the time came fixed by God for his appearance, the decree must be a bar in his way; since as there is a time for every purpose, nothing can come to pass till that time comes: but by that which withheld, let or hindered the open appearance of antichrist, were the Roman empire and emperors; these stood in his way, and while this empire lasted, and the emperors wore the imperial crown, and sat on the throne, and held the government in their

hands, the popes could not come at the height of their ambition, dignity, and authority, nor shine in their glory; nor could the whore of Babylon take her seat, and sit upon the seven hills of Rome until the Roman emperor was taken out of the way: this therefore hindered,

*that he might be revealed in his time.* The Ethiopic version renders it, “until his time appointed came”: wherefore till the time that God had fixed for the appearance of this monster of iniquity, this son of perdition, the Roman empire must continue, and Roman emperors must keep their place and dignity to prevent his appearance sooner: the reason why the apostle expresses this not in plain words, but in an obscure manner, and with so much caution, was, that he might not offend the Roman emperors, and provoke them to a severe persecution of them as seditious persons, that sought the destruction of the empire: the word here used, which is rendered “withholdeth”, or “letteth”, as in the next verse, signifies a ruler or governor, and answers to the Hebrew word רָחַץ, “to keep back, or restrain”; and which is used of kings, who by their laws and government restrain and withhold people from doing what they would; (see <sup><0097></sup>1 Samuel 9:17 <sup><4411></sup>2 Chronicles 14:11) to which the apostle, who well understood the Hebrew language, doubtless had reference; so רָחַץ צַרְמָי, is rendered, “a magistrate”, in (<sup><0787></sup>Judges 18:7).

**Ver. 7.** *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, &c.]* Or “the mystery of that wicked one”, as the Syriac; meaning either antichrist himself, and the spirit of antichrist, which were already in the world, (<sup><6128></sup>1 John 2:18 4:2), “mystery” being one of the names of antichrist, (<sup><6175></sup>Revelation 17:5) and anciently this word was engraven on the mitres of the popes of Rome: or the evil doctrines and practices of antichrist may be intended; for as the doctrine of the Gospel is called a mystery, and the mystery of godliness; so the doctrines and practices of antichrist may be called the mystery of iniquity, especially as they were now secretly spread, imbibed, and practised: the foundations of it were now laying in the church by false teachers; for errors and heresies of every sort, respecting the person and offices of Christ, and in opposition to them, were now broached; idolatry, and holding communion with idolaters, now obtained; worshipping of angels was used by some; and superstition and will worship, worship after the commandments of men, were practised; days, and months, and years, distinguished by Jews and Pagans, and difference of meats, were observed; celibacy and virginity began to be admired and

commended; dominion and magistracy were despised, and church authority contemned, and many, as Diotrephes, loved to have the pre-eminence; and the doctrine of justification by the works of the law was industriously spread, and zealously preached and received; all which laid the foundation, and are the life and soul of popery:

*only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way;* that is, the Roman empire and Roman emperors, and which were by degrees entirely removed, and so made way for the revelation of this wicked one: and which was done partly by Constantine the emperor receiving the Christian faith, whereby the Roman empire as Pagan ceased; and by increasing the riches of the church, and feeding the pride, ambition, and covetousness of the bishops, especially the bishop of Rome; and next by removing the seat of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, which he called Constantinople: here the Greek emperors continued in succession, and neither they themselves, nor even their exarchs, resided at Rome, but at Ravenna; so that way was made for antichrist to come to his seat, and there was nothing to rival and eclipse the grandeur, power, and glory of the Roman popes: and that which let was also taken out of the way, by the division of the empire, by Theodosius, giving to his elder son Arcadius, the eastern, and to the younger, Honorius, the western parts of it: the eastern empire was in process of time seized upon and possessed by Mahomet and the Saracens; and the western empire was overrun by the Goths, Vandals, and Huns, and became extinct about the year 476, in Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, who was obliged to abdicate the government by Odoacer king of the Heruli; when the kingdom of the Lombards took place in Italy, and afterwards that was translated to Charles the great, king of the French; so that there was nothing more of the Roman empire remaining than the bare name, as at this day; and by this means the popes of Rome got to the height of their power and glory, which is meant by the revelation of the man of sin.

**Ver. 8.** *And then shall that wicked be revealed,* &c.] That lawless one, who sets himself above the laws of God and man, and dispenses with them at pleasure, who judges all men, but is judged by no man; as he was in his ecclesiastical power, when Phocas, who murdered the Emperor Mauritius, granted to Boniface III. to be called universal bishop; and in his civil power in succeeding popes, who took upon them the power over kings and emperors, to crown, depose, and excommunicate at pleasure:

*whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth*: that is, the “Lord Jesus”, as the Alexandrian copy, and Vulgate Latin version read; and the Syriac version, “our Lord Jesus”: who is Lord of lords, and God over all; and so able to do what he is here said he shall do: and which he will do

*with the Spirit of his mouth*; meaning either the Holy Spirit, the third person which proceeds from him, as in (<sup>43316</sup>Psalm 33:6), and so the Ethiopic version, “whom the Spirit of our Lord Jesus shall cast out”; Christ will by his Spirit blow a blast upon antichrist and his kingdom, which he shall never recover again, but ever after consume and waste away: or else by his spirit is meant his Gospel; the Scriptures in general are the breath of God, being divinely inspired by him, and are the sword of the Spirit, the twoedged sword of law and Gospel, which proceeds out of Christ's mouth; the Gospel contains the words of Christ, which are spirit and life; these come out of his mouth, and are sharper than any twoedged sword; and as hereby sinners are cut to the heart, hewn and slain, convicted and converted, so by this likewise antichrist will be consumed, and is consuming; for this phrase denotes the beginning of his destruction, which took place at the time of the reformation by the preaching of the Gospel by Luther and others; by which this man of sin received his deadly wound, and has been in a consumption ever since, and is sensibly wasting in his power and glory every day, and will ere long come to utter destruction:

*and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming*; either in a spiritual way, when he shall come in his spiritual kingdom and glory, by the light of his Gospel and the illuminations of his Spirit; when at eventide it shall be light; when he the sun of righteousness shall arise; when latter day light and glory shall appear, and latter day darkness, the gross darkness of Popery, Paganism, and Judaism, which cover the people, shall, be removed, and antichrist in every form shall disappear: or in a personal manner, when he shall come to judge the quick and dead, which will be in flaming fire and great glory; and then will antichrist and his followers, the beast and those that have worshipped him, be cast with the devil and the false prophet into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; and this will be the last and utter end of him. In this passage there is a manifest reference to (<sup>23104</sup>Isaiah 11:4), “with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked”: which the Targumist paraphrases,

“with the words of his lips he shall slay a[yçr swl ymra,  
“Armillus the wicked”.”

and which the Jews say will be done by the Messiah at his coming;

“for so <sup>f9</sup> (say they) that phrase in (<sup>46218</sup>Deuteronomy 22:8) “if a man fall from thence”, has respect to Armillus the wicked, who at the coming of our Messiah will be slain, as it is said in (<sup>23104</sup>Isaiah 11:4)”

This Armillus, the Jews say <sup>f10</sup>, is the head of all idolatry, the tenth king who shall reign at Rome, the city of Satan; that he shall rise up after Gog and Magog, and shall go up to Jerusalem, and slay Messiah ben Joseph, and shall himself be slain by Messiah the son of David; yea, they say expressly <sup>f11</sup>, it is the same whom the Gentiles call antichrist: it is the same with Romulus the first king of the Romans, and designs a Roman, the Roman antichrist; and it may be observed, that the Targumist interprets “the breath of his mouth”, by his word; and so says another of their writers <sup>f12</sup>,

“the meaning is by the word of his lips, for the word goes out of the mouth with the vapour and breath:”

such an expression as this is said <sup>f13</sup> to be used by Moses, when he was bid by God to answer the angels who objected to his having the law given him;

“I am afraid (says he) they will slay (or burn me),  $\mu\eta\upsilon\eta\beta\omicron\varsigma$  |  $b\eta\eta b$ ,  
“with the breath of their mouth:”

much more may this be feared from the breath of Christ's mouth.

**Ver. 9.** *Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan,* &c.] That is, as a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer; for such was the working of Satan with our first parents; he seduced Eve, not only by subtlety, but by lying; he abode not in the truth, is the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning: and such is the working of antichrist his firstborn; he comes in a deceitful way, under a profession of Christ, and a pretension of faith in him, and love to him; but speaks lies in hypocrisy, for such are his doctrines and tenets; and is not only a murderer of the bodies of the saints, but of the souls of men; which are the wares the whore of Babylon deals in:

*with all power;* not omnipotence, for that is peculiar to God, and is not in Satan nor in antichrist, though the latter assumes to himself all power in heaven and in earth, and claims a jurisdiction both temporal and spiritual over men; but rather this means great power, or all kind of power of doing miracles, as follows:

*and signs, and lying wonders*; that is, such signs and miracles as are not real, but reigned, only in appearance, not in truth, like those that were done by the magicians of Egypt; and these were done to countenance lies, and to induce persons to believe them; and how many miracles and lying wonders the church of Rome pretends to, everybody knows.

**Ver. 10.** *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, &c.] Not that he deceives, or goes about to deceive, or thinks to deceive by open unrighteousness; but by unrighteousness, under a pretence of righteousness and holiness; as with the doctrines of justification and salvation by a man's own righteousness, with the doctrines of merit and of works of supererogation, which are taking to men, and by which they are deceived, and are no other than unrighteousness with God, and betray ignorance of his righteousness, and a non-submission to it; as also with practices which carry a show of holiness, religion, and devotion, when they are no other than acts of impiety, superstition, and will worship; as their litanies and prayers, their worship of images, angels, and saints departed, their frequent fasts and festivals, their pilgrimages, penance, and various acts of mortification and the like: but then these deceptions only have place

*in them that perish*; whom the god of this world has blinded, from whom the Gospel is hid, and to whom it is foolishness: all men indeed are in a lost perishing condition, through original and actual sin; but all shall not perish, there are some that God will not have perish, whom Christ is given for that they should not perish, and whom he has redeemed by his blood, and to whom he gives eternal life; but there are others that are vessels of wrath afore ordained to condemnation, reprobate men left to themselves, and given up to their hearts' lusts; and these, and only these, are finally and totally deceived, by the signs and lying wonders, and false appearances of antichrist; (see <sup>1181</sup>Matthew 24:24)

*because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*; by the "truth" is meant either Christ the truth of types, the sum of promises, in whom the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are, and by whom grace and truth came; or the Gospel, often called truth, and the word of truth, it coming from the God of truth, has for its subject Christ the truth, is dictated and directed into by the spirit of truth, and contains nothing but truth: and by "the love" of it is meant, either the loveliness of it, for truth is an amiable, lovely thing, in its nature and use; or an affection for it, which there is, where true faith in it is, for faith works by love: there

may be a flashy affection for the truths of the Gospel, where there is no true faith in Christ, or the root of the matter is not, as in the stony ground hearers; and there may be an historical faith in the doctrines of the Gospel, where the power of them is denied, and there is no true hearty love for them; and in these persons there is neither faith nor love; the truths of the Gospel are neither believed by them, nor are they affected with them, that so, they might be saved; for where there is true faith in the Gospel of Christ, and in Christ the substance of it, there is salvation; the reason therefore of these men's perishing is not the decree of God, nor even want of the means of grace, the revelation of the Gospel, but their rejection and contempt of it.

**Ver. 11.** *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, &c.*] Or “efficacy of error”, which God may be said to send; and the Alexandrian copy reads, “does send”; because it is not a bare permission but a voluntary one; or it is his will that error should be that truth may be tried, and be illustrated by its contrary, and shine the more through the force of opposition to it; and that those which are on the side of it might be made manifest, as well as that the rejecters of the Gospel might be punished; for the efficacy of error is not to be considered as a sin, of which God cannot be the author, but as a punishment for sin, and to which men are given up, and fall under the power of, because they receive not the love of the truth, which is the reason here given: and this comes to pass partly through God's denying his grace, or withholding that light and knowledge, by which error may be discovered and detected; and by taking from men the knowledge and conscience of things they had, (see <sup>412</sup>Romans 1:28). So that they call evil good, and good evil, and do not appear to have the common sense and reason of mankind, at least do not act according to it; and by giving them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart, and to the god of this world, to blind their minds; and without this it is not to be accounted for, that the followers of antichrist should give into such senseless notions as those of transubstantiation, works of supererogation, &c., or into such stupid practices as worshipping of images, praying to saints departed, and paying such a respect to the pretended relics of saints, &c., as they do; but a spirit of slumber is given them, and eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, because of their rejection of the Gospel: and

*that they should believe a lie*; that the pope is Christ's vicar on earth, and has power to forgive sins; that the bread and wine in the Lord's supper are transubstantiated into the very body and blood of Christ; with other lying



tenets spoken in hypocrisy concerning good works, merit, pardon, penance; &c. with a multitude of lying wonders and false miracles, of which their legends are full; and this is the first and more near end of strong delusion or efficacious error being sent them; the more remote and ultimate one follows.

**Ver. 12.** *That they all might be damned*, &c.] Or judged, discerned and distinguished from true Christians and real believers, or rather that they might be condemned and punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; where the devil, the false prophet, and the beast, whose followers they are, will be cast; and it is but a righteous thing with God to give them up to such delusion,

*that they may be damned*, since they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; and the following character of them justifies the divine procedure:

*who believed not the truth*; neither the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation, nor Christ, who is truth itself; and therefore were righteously given up to believe a lie; and whose damnation is just, according to the declaration of Christ, he that believeth not shall be damned:

*but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; in sin, as all unrighteousness is; in sinful ways and works, and in unrighteous doctrines; as the doctrines of merit, of works of supererogation, and of justification by works, being derogatory to the justice of God, and to the righteousness of Christ; and in the unrighteous persecution and bloodshed of the saints, the martyrs of Jesus; in which the followers of antichrist take as much delight and pleasure, as an intemperate man does in drinking wine or strong drink to excess; and therefore the whore of Babylon is said to be drunk with the blood of the saints; and it is but just she should have blood to drink, or be punished both with temporal and eternal destruction.

**Ver. 13.** *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you*, &c.] Lest the saints should be discouraged by the above account of antichrist, and his followers, and fear they should be left to the same deceptions, and damnation be their portion; the apostle being persuaded better things of them, gives their character, and represents their case in a quite different light; and signifies, that he and his fellow ministers were under obligation to be continually thankful to God for what he had done for them; for as

God is the Father of mercies, whether spiritual or temporal, thanks are to be given to him; and saints are not only to bless his name for what they themselves receive from him, but for what others enjoy also, and that continually; because spiritual blessings, especially such as are afterwards instanced in, are permanent and durable, yea, everlasting: the characters which show them to be different from the followers of antichrist, are

*brethren, beloved of the Lord* or “of God”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read: they were the brethren of Christ, being the dear children of God, born of him, and belonging to his family, and of the apostles, and of one another, being of the household of faith; and they were beloved by God the Father, as the instances of their election to salvation by him, and their calling to eternal glory, show; and by the Lord Jesus Christ, who had wrought out for them the salvation they were chosen to; and by the Lord the Spirit, by whom they were regenerated, called, sanctified, and brought to the belief of the truth; and since they had interest in the everlasting love of the three divine Persons, there was no danger of their falling away and perishing. The reason of the apostle's thanksgiving for the persons thus described is,

*because God hath from, the beginning chosen you to salvation*; which is to be understood, not of an election of them, as a nation, for they were not a nation, only a part of one; nor of them as a church, for they were not so from the beginning; nor to the outward means of grace, the ministry of the word and ordinances, for the choice is unto salvation; nor to any office, for they were not all officers in the church, only some; nor does it intend the effectual calling, for that is distinguished from it in the following verse; but an eternal appointment of persons to grace and glory: and this is an act of God the Father, in Christ, from eternity; and which arises from his sovereign good will and pleasure, and is an instance of his free grace and favour, for the glorifying of himself; and is irrespective of the faith, holiness, and good works of men; all which are the fruits and effects, and not the motives, conditions, or causes of electing grace. This act is the leading one to all other blessings of grace, as justification, adoption, calling, and glorification, and is certain and immutable in itself, and in its effects. The date of it is “from the beginning”: not from the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel to them, and the sense be, that, as soon as the Gospel was preached, they believed, and God chose them; for what was there remarkable in them, that this should be peculiarly observed of them? The Bereans are said to be more noble than they were: nor from the

beginning of their calling, for predestination or election precedes calling; (see <sup><4880></sup>Romans 8:30) nor from the beginning of time, or of the creation of the world, but before the world began, even from eternity; and in such sense the phrase is used in (<sup><4083></sup>Proverbs 8:23) and that it is the sense of it here, is manifest from (<sup><4004></sup>Ephesians 1:4) where this choice is said to be before the foundation of the world. The end to which men, by this act, are chosen, is “salvation”: not temporal, though the elect of God are appointed to many temporal salvations and deliverances, and which they enjoy both before and after conversion; yet salvation here designs the salvation of the soul, though not exclusive of the body, a spiritual and an eternal salvation, salvation by Jesus Christ, as is expressed in (<sup><3189></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:9) and the same decree that appoints men to salvation, appoints Christ to be the Saviour of them; and there is salvation in and by no other. The means through which this choice is made, are

*through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth* by sanctification is meant, not anything external, as reformation of life, obedience to the law, or outward submission to Gospel ordinances; but internal holiness, which lies in a principle of spiritual life in the soul, and in a principle of spiritual light on the understanding; in a flexion of the will to the will of God, and the way of salvation by Christ; in a settlement of the affections on divine and spiritual things, and in an implantation of all grace in the heart; and is called the sanctification of “the spirit”, partly from the spirit or soul of man being the principal seat of it, and chiefly from the Spirit of God being the author of it; and this being a means fixed in the decree of election to salvation, shows that holiness is not the cause of election, yet is certain by it, and is necessary to salvation; and that the doctrine of election is no licentious doctrine, since it provides for and secures true and real holiness. “Truth” designs either the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth of types and promises, and the substance of the truth of the Gospel, in whom it lies, and by whom it comes; or the Gospel itself, which comes from the God of truth, lies in the Scriptures of truth, is dictated and directed into by the spirit of truth; the sum of it is Christ the truth, and has nothing in it but truth. The “belief” or “faith” of this intends, not an historical faith, or a mere assent to truth; but a cordial embracing of it, a receiving of the love of the truth, a feeling of the power of it unto salvation, and a believing in Christ, the substance of it; which is a seeing of him spiritually, and a going out of the soul to him in acts of hope; reliance, trust, and dependence; and this being also a means settled in the choice of men to salvation, makes it

appear, that faith is no cause of election, but the effect of it; that it is necessary to salvation, and therefore appointed as a means; that it is certain to the elect by it, and that they therefore cannot be finally and totally deceived, or be carried away with the error of the wicked, or with the deceivableness of unrighteousness with which antichrist works.

**Ver. 14.** *Whereunto he called you by our Gospel, &c.*] Salvation being appointed as the end in the decree of election, and sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, as means; the elect in the effectual calling are called to the participation of each of these; first to the one, and then to the other; to grace here, and glory hereafter: and the means by which they are called is the Gospel, which the apostle calls “our Gospel”, not because they were the authors, or the subject of it; for with regard to these it is styled the Gospel of God, and the Gospel of Christ; but because they were intrusted with it, and faithfully preached it, and in opposition to another Gospel published by false teachers. And by this they were called

*to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ;* not his essential glory, though he will be seen and known in the glory of his person as he is, so far as creatures in a state of perfection will be capable of; nor his mediatorial glory, though it will be one part of the saints' happiness in heaven to behold this glory of Christ; but rather the glory which shall be personally put upon the saints, both in soul and body, in the resurrection morn, is here intended: and which is called the glory of Christ, because it is in his hands for them; and is what he is preparing for them, and for which he gives them both a right and a meetness; and which he at last will introduce them into; and it will lie greatly in conformity to him, and in the everlasting vision and enjoyment of him: and now God's elect are called by the ministry of the word to “the obtaining” of this, not by any merit of theirs, or by any works of righteousness done by them, but to the “possession” of it, as the word used properly signifies. The Syriac version renders it, “that ye may be a glory to our Lord Jesus Christ”: as the saints will be at the last day, and to all eternity, when they shall be raised again, and have the glory of God upon them, and be forever with the Lord.

**Ver. 15.** *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, &c.*] In the doctrine of the Gospel in general, and in the article of Christ's second coming in particular, and not in the least waver about the thing itself, nor be shaken in mind, and troubled as if it was just at hand; and the rather it became them to be concerned that they stood fast in the truth, and persevered unto the end,

since there was to be a falling away, and the mystery of iniquity was already working, and antichrist would shortly appear, whose coming would be with all deceivableness, of unrighteousness; and they had the greater encouragement to continue firm and unmoved, seeing they were chosen from eternity unto salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth, and were called in time by the Gospel to the enjoyment of the glory of Christ in another world.

*And hold the traditions which ye have been taught:* meaning the truths of the Gospel, which may be called traditions, because they are delivered from one to another; the Gospel was first delivered by God the Father to Jesus Christ, as Mediator, and by him to his apostles, and by them to the churches of Christ; whence it is called the form of doctrine delivered to them, and the faith once delivered to the saints: and also the ordinances of the Gospel which the apostles received from Christ, and as they received them faithfully delivered them, such as baptism and the Lord's supper; as well as rules of conduct and behaviour, both in the church, and in the world, even all the commandments of Christ, which he ordered his apostles to teach, and which they gave by him; (see <sup><STR6></sup>2 Thessalonians 3:6 <sup><STR1></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:2). And so the Syriac version here renders it, “the commandments”: and these were such as these saints had been taught by the apostles, under the direction of Christ, and through the guidance of his Spirit; and were not the traditions of men or the rudiments of the world, but what they had received from Christ, through the hands of the apostles:

*whether by word, or our epistle,* that is, by “our” word, as well as by our epistle, and so the Arabic version reads; these doctrines, ordinances, and rules of discipline were communicated to them, both by word of mouth, when the apostles were in person among them, and by writing afterwards to them; for what the apostles delivered in the ministry of the word to the churches, they sent them in writing, that they might be a standing rule of faith and practice; so that this does not in the least countenance the unwritten traditions of the Papists; and since these were what were taught them, “viva voce”, and they received them from the mouth of the apostles, or by letters from them, or both, it became them to hold and retain them fast, and not let them go, either with respect to doctrine or practice.

**Ver. 16.** *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, &c.*] The apostle having exhorted the saints to perseverance, closes this second part of his epistle, relating to the coming of Christ, with a prayer for the saints, that they

might be comforted and established. The objects addressed are Christ and the Father. And in each of their characters are reasons contained, encouraging to believe the petitions will be regarded; for it is “our Lord Jesus Christ himself” who is prayed unto; who is our Lord, not by creation only, in which sense he is Lord of all, but by redemption, and through a marriage relation; and he is our Jesus, our Saviour, and Redeemer; and our Christ, the anointed prophet, priest, and King; even he himself, who stands in these relations and offices; and what may not be expected from him?

*and God, even our Father*; not by creation, but by adoption; and as it is in his power, he has a heart to give, and will give good things unto his children: and inasmuch as Christ is equally addressed as the object of prayer as the Father, and is indeed here set before him, or first mentioned, it may be concluded that there is an entire equality between them, and that Christ is truly and properly God; otherwise religious worship, of which prayer is a considerable branch, would not be given him, nor would he be set upon an equal foot with the other, and much less before him. The Arabic version reads, “our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father”; and the Ethiopic version also, “our Lord Jesus Christ, God our Father”; as if the whole of this, or all these epithets and characters, belong to Christ, and he was the only person addressed; but the common reading is best: which hath loved us; this refers both to the Father and to Christ. The Father had loved them with an everlasting and unchangeable love, as appeared by his choosing them unto salvation by Christ, securing them in his hands, and making an everlasting covenant with him, on their account; by sending his Son to be the Saviour of them; by regenerating, quickening, and calling them by his grace, adopting them into his family, pardoning all their sins, justifying their persons, and giving them both a meetness for, and a right unto eternal glory. And Christ, he had loved them with the same love; and which he showed by undertaking their cause in the council of peace; by espousing their persons in the covenant of grace; by assuming their nature in the fulness of time; by dying in their room and stead; and by his continued intercession and mediation for them, and by many other instances. And since they had such a share in the affection both of the Father and the Son, it need not to have been doubted but that what was prayed for would be granted: to which is added,

*and hath given us everlasting consolation*: all true solid consolation is from God and Christ: God is called the God of all comfort; and if there be any real consolation, it is in, by, and from Christ; and it is the gift of God,

an instance of his grace and favour, and not a point of merit; the least degree of consolation is not deserved, and ought not to be reckoned small: and it is everlasting; it does not indeed always continue, as to the sensible enjoyment of it, in this life, being often interrupted by indwelling sin, the hidings of God's and the temptations of Satan, yet the ground and foundation of it is everlasting; such as the everlasting love of God, the everlasting covenant of grace, the everlasting righteousness of Christ, and everlasting salvation by him, and he himself, who is the consolation of Israel, as well as the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, who ever abides as the earnest and pledge of future happiness. And the present spiritual joy of the saints is what no man can take away from them, and what will eventually issue in everlasting consolation, without any interruption in the world to come, when sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and all tears be wiped from their eyes:

*and good hope through grace.* The Syriac version reads, “in his grace”; and the Ethiopic version, “a good hope; and his grace”, hope, as well as faith, is the gift of God, a free grace gift of his: and it may be called a good one, because God is the author of it; and it is built on a good foundation, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; and is of good things to come, and therefore called the blessed hope; and is what is sure and certain, and will never deceive, nor make ashamed; and since consolation is given here, and hope of happiness hereafter, it may be concluded the following requests will be regarded.

**Ver. 17.** *Comfort your hearts, &c.*] That is, apply the comfort given, and cause it to be received, which unbelief is apt to refuse; and increase it, by shedding abroad the love of Christ, and of the Father; by the discoveries of pardoning grace; by the application of Gospel promises; by the word and ordinances, which are breasts of consolation; and by indulging with the gracious presence, and comfortable communion of Father, Son, and Spirit. The Arabic version reads, “comfort your hearts by his grace”, joining the last clause of the preceding verse to this. This petition stands opposed to a being troubled and distressed about the sudden coming of Christ, as the following one does to a being shaken in mind on that account, (<sup>2</sup>Thess. 2:2).

*And stablish you in every good word and work;* that is, in every good word of God, or truth of the Gospel, which contains good tidings of good things, so as not to waver about them, or stagger in them, or to depart from them;

in practice of every duty, so as to be steadfast, and immoveable, and always abounding therein; good words and good works, principles and practices, should go together, and the saints stand in need of stability in both. For though, as to their state and condition, they are established in the love of God, in the covenant of grace, in the arms of Christ, and in him the foundation, so as they can never be removed; yet they are often very unstable, not only in their frames, and in the exercise of grace, but in their attachment and adherence to the Gospel and interest of Christ, and in the discharge of duty.