

A Skeletal Look at 2Thessalonians 2:1-12

Consider with me a little bit of an odd approach to the text of 2Thessalonians 2:1-14. There is a whole body of thought that first needs to be stripped down to the *'bare bones.'* These bare bones are the main statements or thoughts of the text. Then we want to consider putting the various parts that we stripped away back to the bones, kind of like the Lord did at the valley of the dry bones in Ezekiel (cf. Ez.37.1-8) We want to lay back onto the bones the sinews, the flesh and the skin, or the adjectives and adverbs, phrases and clauses to the main statements. When we're finished hopefully we have the proper form of doctrine that the Spirit of God communicated through the pen of the apostle Paul for the Thessalonians (and us). So, here is the skeleton, nine bare bones of the text:

1. Now we beseech you ...
2. Let no man deceive you ...
3. Remember I told you ...
4. Now you know what ...
5. The mystery doth work ...
6. The wicked shall be revealed ...
7. [His coming] is [described] ...
8. God shall send a delusion ...
9. We are bound to give thanks ...

The first bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 1, 2. *Now we beseech you ...*

Now we beseech you, we ask you. Why? We ask you by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ... 'that' is the Greek 'eis,' for purpose, the goal, to the end. Let's get right to the purpose for Paul and those with him beseeching them. That purpose is that *'ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.'* We could say the same thing like this: 'By the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him we ask you now that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.'

The second bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 3, 4. 'Let no man deceive you ...

'Let deceive' is a subjunctive mood (is relation to reality) verb. The subjunctive is the mood of probability. It is conceivable that you could be deceived, so don't let that happen. How is it conceivable? ... by (adverbial phrase) any means or way. But there is another adverbial telling 'why' they should not be deceived. 'for that day ...' or, because that day ... To what day does this refer? It refers to day of Christ in v.2. That day of Christ shall not come except (unless) there come (arrive) a falling away first. Ah, first (in the order of things relative to the coming of the day of Christ) there comes a falling away (an apostasy), but not only a falling away, but also this ... AND that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition (destruction). This man of sin, this son of perdition is described by the adjective clause, 'Who (that man of sin, son of perdition) *opposeth and exalteth himself above all this is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God (is worshipped) sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

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The third bone to fill out in this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in v. 5. Remember I told you ...

'Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?' Of course this is an interrogative rather than a statement. Positively stated it simply reads, 'Ye remember that ...' ('that' is a noun in this case and the object the object of the verb. Everything that follows 'that' is the object of this statement.) *Remember ye not, that, ... I told you these things,* when (adverb modifying 'remember') *I was yet (still) with you.* Negate it, 'No?'

The fourth bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 6. *'Now you know what ...'*

'And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.' Ye know NOW (adverb, when ... now) 'what' or 'that', or 'that which', but it is NOT 'Ye know now who ...'. 'What' does NOT refer to a person. In this case 'what' and all that follows 'what' forms the object of the verb 'to know.' For example, Now ye know 'something.' Clearly something is withholding, restraining something else. Whatever it is that is withholding it must be drawn from some previous thought that Paul already supplied in the text. We practice exegesis, right?

What is withholding what? There are only two alternatives. Either the day of Christ is withholding the time of the apostasy and revealing of the man of sin, or vice versa. Verse 3 gives the answer this question. There we read 'that day, [the day of Christ] shall not come except...' So, the day of Christ cannot come until something else necessarily precedes it. It is the apostasy and revealing of the man of sin that is withholding, restraining the day of Christ. Read the verse again all of the way to the end to prove whether this is correct or not. *'Now ye know what (that which) withholds that ('that', Gr. eis, to the end, with the goal, for the purpose) he might be revealed in his time.'* The apostasy and revealing of the man of sin withholds, restrains the day of Christ to the end that the 'he' (this pronoun agrees in gender and number to 'the son [of perdition] might be revealed in his time.

Very many dear brethren and the greater part of Christendom have erred in the interpretation of this text. Rather than following Paul's thoughts through sequentially they breeched them in order to superimpose ideas that are completely foreign to the text. Handling the Scriptures in this manner, by superimposing ideas into the text that aren't there, is called eisegesis. We should learn to draw out only the sense that is in them, and that is called exegesis.

'That he might be revealed in his time ... The man of sin has a time when he is to be revealed. Remember this, first in the order of things comes an apostasy AND the revealing of the man of sin, then the day of Christ.

The fifth bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 7. *'The mystery doth work ...'*

'For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.'

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'For' (Gr. gar) explains what has just been said, with reference to the phrase 'that he might be revealed.' [v.6] 'The mystery doth work.' What kind of mystery? The kind of mystery concerning iniquity or lawlessness. When does this mystery work? It *doth work* (a present tense [time], middle voice verb; the mystery is presently working to unfold itself) *already* or now. To further explain this we have what follows after the punctuation of the colon, '*Only he who now letteth ...*' The '*he*' is with reference to the same person in v.6, that is the man of sin, the son of perdition in verse 3. '*Leteth*' is the same Gr. word translated '*withholdeth*' in v.6. Only he who now withholds the day of Christ will withhold it. For how long will this man of sin withhold or restrain the day of Christ? *Until he, the man of sin, be taken out of the way.*

The sixth bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 8. '*That wicked [one] shall be revealed...*'

'*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*' '*And then*' (reference '*in his time,*' v.6), that is, when the mystery has unfolded, *that wicked [one] 'shall be revealed* (fut. verb). This is when He shall be revealed for who he is and for all which he stands. There will be no question that THIS is the man.

'*Whom*' (objective case pronoun referring back to '*that wicked [one]*' and introduces an adjective clause describing more concerning him. *The Lord shall consume him* (Gr. fut. of analiskō, 'to consume' or 'to use up'), AND the Lord *shall destroy him* (Gr. fut. of katargeō, to destroy, make of none effect, to put down, to do away, which to abolish). '*To consume*' and '*to destroy*' are modified with prepositional phrases (functioning as adverbs) telling how he is consumed and destroyed. The Lord shall consume him '*with the spirit of His mouth,*' that is by speaking the word or giving the command. The Lord shall destroy him '*with the brightness of His coming,*' means that when Jesus Christ appears in bodily presence that man and all this he stands for is brought to nothing, destroyed. The Gr. noun for '*brightness,*' epiphaneia is also tss. '*appearing*'. The English equivalent is '*appearance*.' Further, the Gr. verb, phaino, is also tss. '*to appear, to be seen, to shine*. Now, the Gr. noun for *coming* is parousia, '*para*', by, near + '*ousia*' (eimi) substance (cf. Lk.15.13). The idea of parousia is '*presence*.' Together '*brightness of his coming*' refers to both the appearance and presence of Jesus Christ. But keep focused on the main thought here which is that the Wicked [one] shall be revealed for everything that he is.

The seventh bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 9, 10. '*[His] coming is [described] ...*'

2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

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Even him is properly supplied by the translators and refers to *'that wicked [one]'*. *'Whose'* is the possessive form of the pronoun *'who.'* The idea is, *'that wicked one's'* (or think of *'his'*, the 3ps. possessive pronoun). His what? His parousia, his coming, his presence. These words – *'Even him, whose coming (presence)'* – is the subject of this sentence. So, his presence *'is'* something. This something is described by the use of four predicate adjective phrases. Here they are: 1. The presence of this wicked man is *'after the working (operation) of Satan.'* 2. The presence of this wicked man is *'with (Gr. en, in) all power and signs and lying wonders.'* 3. The presence of this wicked man is *'with (Gr. en, in) all deceivableness of unrighteousness.'* 4. The presence of this wicked is *'in' or 'with' (Gr. en, in) them.* *'Them'* is described with the adjective phrase *'that perish'* (meaning *'the lost'* or *'the [spiritually] dead'*).

Finally, the reason the presence of that wicked one is with (among) the lost is *because* (Gr. anti, contrarily) *they received not the love of the truth, that* (Gr. eis, purpose, to the end) *they might be saved.* These prefer receiving the presence of this *wicked [one]* to the love of the truth. This thought is further developed by what follows.

The eighth bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vs. 11-12. *'God shall send a delusion...'*

2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

And for this cause or *'And because of this'* or *'Through this means,'* primarily, the means of the presence of *that wicked [one]* or, secondarily, because they received not the love of the truth – *God shall send them* (that perish, the [spiritually] dead) a *strong delusion.* *'Strong'* is an adjective describing a kind of delusion. In the Greek it is a noun. With the word delusion (also a noun) this could read *'an operation of error.'* So the idea is of an *effectual delusion.* This is a delusion that will work successfully in them that perish, in them that are lost.

Now there are two reasons that God shall send an effectual delusion to them that perish, to the lost. 1. *'that' ...* a purpose clause (Gr. eis, purpose, to the end) *'they might believe a lie.'* And, 2. *'that',* meaning *'in order that'* or *'with the consequence'* *'they all might be damned'* (judged, condemned) *'who'* (relative pronoun referring to the antecedent pronoun *they,* and *'who'* introduces an adjective clause defining who *they* are: *who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* God sends an effectual delusion to them that perish with the purpose that they should believe a lie to bring them into judgment because of their unbelief and pleasure in unrighteousness.

This is the world without Jesus Christ. Essentially, God judges them with that judgment they've judged against Him. Why? Because, to the truth and righteousness of God, they preferred lies and unrighteousness. So this is precisely what God gives them.

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The ninth bone to fill out this skeletal look at 2Th.2.1-14 is in vss. 13-14. *'We are bound to give thanks ...'*

2Th.2.13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the back-bone of this skeleton: *But we are bound to give thanks to God because God chose you.*

'But' introduces a contrast to all that has been said of the coming of that wicked one and them that fall for his deception, *'we are bound to give thanks to God for* (Gr. peri, concerning) *you.'* 'You' is defined by the clause *'brethren beloved of the Lord.'* The reason Paul *always* gives thanks to God for them is *because* of what God has done to them. *Because* (Gr. hoti, the reason that, or, the reason why Paul, and others with him, are always bound to give thanks to God is because) *God has chosen you ...* (Chosen you when? prepositional phrase functioning as an adverb ...) *from the beginning* (Chosen you to what end? prepositional phrase as an adverb ...) *unto salvation* (Gr. eis soterian, for deliverance). Then that salvation is described as *through* (Gr. en, by) *sanctification of the Spirit, and through* (implied, Gr. en, through, by) ... *belief of the truth.* Because God chose them unto salvation the Holy Spirit shall work sanctification (holiness) in them all and they shall all believe the truth. God chose them *at the first* or from the beginning, and the rest are left to receive their just punishment. The children of God received grace, the others receive what they deserve for sin.

Whereunto (lit. 'to which' kind of salvation) *he called you by our gospel.* Or, *'He called you by our gospel* to this kind of salvation, deliverance. *'He called you, (How?) 'by our gospel to* (Gr. eis, purpose, to the end) *the obtaining* (acquirement, possession) *of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* God chose them to salvation, and He called them by the gospel purposing that they come into possession of the glory of Jesus Christ. At the least this means that one day they (and all of the elect of God) shall be as their Lord Jesus Christ, glorified. What a great contrast there is between the man of sin and them that perish to them that God has chosen unto salvation *from the beginning.*

In conclusion, as we review in our minds the main thoughts of this text, what was the main thought? It was not about the coming (presence) and day of the Lord Jesus Christ at all. 'We beseech you that (Gr. eis, to the end, the purpose) ye be not soon shaken ... as that the day of Christ is at hand. At hand means *'present'* or *'come.'* (Gr. perf. tense [time] verb of enistēmi.) In other words, they should NOT think that the day of Christ was upon them and that they were living in the results of that. (cf. vss.1, 2) The apostle Paul was clear to say that the day of Christ WAS NOT PRESENT. It was NOT COME.

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This applies to every Christian UNTIL he the time of the fulfillment of those things which Paul wrote of here in verses 1-12. But someone objects by saying, 'I believe in the imminent coming of Jesus Christ.' So do I! How do I explain the imminent coming of Jesus Christ in light of the apparent contradiction in this text? Remember the words of Paul, '*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*'? This wicked man, the man of sin, the son of perdition, the Antichrist has been on the verge of being revealing even in the day of the Thessalonians, BUT so has also the coming of the day of Jesus Christ. You see, the whole matter is imminent. But to be clear, the only reason that the man of sin hasn't come yet is because God has appointed him '*his time*.' (v.6)

First, in the order of things, the child of God should know that there shall be an apostasy and a revealing of the man of sin. (cf.v.3) Second, the child of God should understand who that man of sin is, what he shall do, and the end to which he shall come. (cf. vss.4-8) Third, the child of God should understand why the perishing, the lost, receive this man and the end to which they themselves also shall come. (cf. vss.9-12) And finally, as Paul and the brethren with him did, the child of God should be thankful to God because He, of His own sovereign pleasure, chose us from among the mass of a lost, perishing, spiritually dead world. If not for this act of God to save us through sending His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins, we would, as the world will, readily receive and blindly follow after that Wicked One rushing onward to eternal destruction. But for the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord that would be me, you, and the entire human race.

Brethren, so many of the children of God have been poorly instructed about this text of Scripture. It has absolutely nothing to do with a rapture or a snatching away of God's elect. There is nothing here about the Holy Spirit. There is nothing here about the Holy Spirit withdrawing from the world and necessarily withdrawing the saints of God from the world with Him at this time. This notion is a fiction. To say these things is to fail to follow through the reasoning of Paul's argument. Brethren the Spirit of God would have us informed of the truth, would have us prepared for that evil time ahead; would have us expecting the second coming of Jesus Christ as it is according to the truth of God's word. The truth shouldn't be bolstered with false notions.

Now, the word of God is sure. All the things that are written in the Book of God shall be fulfilled. If you know not Christ none of these things matters to you. You're probably brushing this off as nothing and, at the least, scoffing at it in your heart. But so be it, one day all the things we have just considered will come to pass. Antichrist shall come, but so also shall the Son of God, Jesus Christ. If you have not believed in Christ as the only Savior and Lord you're not going to fall for this. But worse, you're going to follow that man into the eternal fire of judgment. Here is your immediate concern: *God commands all men every where to repent* of sins, to turn away from your present, life in sin and to turn in faith to Him. If you understand that Jesus Christ bore your punishment for sins in his body when he was crucified on the tree, be baptized, come into His NT church and follow Him until the day of His second coming. Yes,

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we should be prepared against coming of the man of sin, but far more important it is that we are prepared for the coming of the Son of God. (cf. Re.19.11-16)