

# Times of Refreshing

Volume II Letter 12

By Daniel Yordy

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Dear Friends,

A close friend of mine who reads these letters shared with me that he had heard some things taught concerning the mystery of iniquity and the “man of sin” described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians Two. He was troubled in heart by the things he heard and wondered what I believed God was speaking though that passage.

When I opened those pages in 2 Thessalonians and sought the Lord as to what was being said, I became excited about a word I believe God is speaking to His people at this time.

The gist of the teaching my friend heard was this. That *the man of sin is none other than the old man, the flesh, the human part of you and me all rolled up into one. That this man of sin is not dead as Paul claimed, and we are not to consider it dead, as God commanded, but that it is very much alive and is standing in the temple of God (our bodies) and is giving direction as the self in our lives. As such it is declaring itself to be God. That the work Jesus is doing in us is revealing to us how evil this man of sin in us is and that only if we grapple with the truth being presented by that particular ministry will we survive the destruction of the man of sin as he is destroyed in the brightness of Christ’s coming.*

Again, as we saw before, there is much truth mixed up in this teaching and it sounds quite plausible divorced from the context of the entire letter to the Thessalonians. It is true that our bodies are the temple of God, that the Holy Spirit is in the process of teaching us what it means to be sons — to separate ourselves from sin and selfishness and to devote ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in all we do and say.

But what do we do, here, with the command of the Spirit of God to reckon the old man dead? If we are to follow this teaching, we have to stop obeying God’s command and start reckoning that the man of sin is very much alive in us and that we are very much in danger of being destroyed ourselves along with it.

Now, I do believe in jeopardy. Why? Because the New Testament teaches jeopardy from beginning to end. The most frequent command in the New Testament is “Take heed,” “Beware,” “Watch!” That means something.

The writer of Hebrews states it clearly in Chapter 3: “We are partakers of Christ if we hold the rejoicing of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” In other words, if I stop being excited and confident that Jesus is my Savior, I may miss being a part of what Christ is doing at the end of the age. There is no question that those who do so will weep at their lost opportunity. But there it is. I am in jeopardy if I stop actively trusting in the assurance of my salvation and start believing in jeopardy only, or simply stop caring any more one way or the other. People go in either direction all the time.

But what is this passage on the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians teaching us? Is it important to us?

I am convinced it is critical to the present time as well as being exciting to our faith.

The second rule of understanding what God is speaking through a particular passage is to never, never take that passage or verse out of context. Anytime a man of God has something burning in his heart, he shares the totality of that word. Every part of the passage is critical to the overall message being conveyed.

[The first rule of understanding Scripture, of course, is to approach it in humility, in the Spirit of God, without preconceived ideas or intellectual formulas, open to Jesus, wanting to hear what He is saying, regardless of what it means and where it might take you. There is no hearing of truth without immediate trust in Jesus.]

The “man of sin” passage begins with Chapter 1 verse 3 and ends with Chapter 3 verse 5. Before are greetings, after are some housekeeping issues. Take the time to read the entire passage: 2 Thessalonians 1:3 — 3:5, prayerfully, listening to the gentle voice of the Spirit, not imposing anything on the word — especially no mental or political formulas or pre-conceived interpretations. Let the words themselves speak to you.

Something you may notice is that Paul speaks in two voices in this passage, and that he goes back and forth between two topics. The first topic that runs through the entire passage is how blessed and pleased Paul is with the lives and testimonies of the Thessalonian believers. In fact, that is what this passage is about. We must start with the **main idea**, in order to understand peripheral issues. The “man of sin” is a peripheral issue.

Now, how does Paul speak when he addresses these believers? What words and phrases does he choose to express the burning passion of his heart, the need to convey to these precious saints the critical things they must know to stand strongly in the midst of difficult times.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren...”

“We ourselves boast of you among the churches of God.”

“Brethren, beloved by the Lord...”

“...God from the beginning chose you for salvation...”

“Now may... Jesus... who has... given us everlasting consolation... comfort your hearts...”

“We have confidence in the Lord concerning you.”

And so on.

Wow! What encouraging words! Does the ministry you sit under encourage you in this way? Do you encourage other believers in this way?

This is how the Apostle of the Third Feast speaks to all believers God placed under his care. Yes, he sometimes corrects sharply, but always, always, he returns to profound encouragement as quickly as he can. Such is an apostle of Christ.

But then we notice that Paul inserts another voice and another topic into this passage of profound encouragement.

What is that voice, and how does Paul treat the other topic? Let’s look first at the context in which the second topic is introduced.

“We ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations which you endure... since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you...”

Paul is saying, “Look, we know that you are being persecuted by ungodly people and you are doing so well in patience and faith that everyone is encouraged greatly when they hear about it.”

Then, in verses 8 and 9, Paul switches to his other voice.

“...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished...”

In verse 10 Paul switches back to his encouraging voice.

Now, I’d like you to go back through this entire passage and note those verses that are in the encouraging voice and those that are in the “other”

voice. Note the distinction of topic. Ask the Lord, “Why the difference?”

Also note that **inside** the encouraging voice you will see challenge to righteousness, warning, pointing in the direction of overcoming sin and complete victory in Christ. All that is wrapped up **within** the all-enveloping encouragement.

Then note that when Paul switches to the other voice and topic, there is none of that. NONE! **No redemption of any kind** is found there.

Furthermore, the people Paul is speaking about between the two topics are entirely different people. And the difference between these two groups of people is found in these words:

“... God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

**VS.**

“... on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

[Now, of course, the argument can come in that there are those who profess to believe in Jesus but whose works deny Him — who say, “Lord, Lord,” but do not do what He says. There certainly are such people, but I am not writing to any of them, nor will they be reading this letter.]

Let us assume, though, for sake of argument, that the “man of sin” is in fact in those of us who truly believe in Jesus and that being a “mature” Christian means that we are grappling with the reality that everything Paul says about the man of sin pertains directly to us and not to anyone else. At what point does Paul indicate to the Thessalonian believers, these Christians about whom Paul boasts everywhere he goes as examples of faith and maturity, at what point does Paul warn them that when he says, “the man of sin,” “mystery of iniquity,” “strong delusion” **he is talking about them!**

He doesn’t, you say? I don’t find it either.

But — *“the meat of the word would direct this “man of sin” teaching to mature Christians, the Thessalonians must still have been babes in Christ and could not receive the meat of the word.”* (I paraphrase what my friend heard.)

I do not know if the Thessalonian Christians were mature or babes, whether or not Paul could not tell them the “meat of the word,” but could only give the milk of encouragement and confidence in Jesus to these baby Christians.

That may be so.

But I do know this! **I need Jesus to love me**, I need Him to give me everlasting consolation. I need from Him good hope by grace. And I especially need Him to comfort my heart and to establish me in every good word and work.

If that means I am a babe in Christ, so be it!

But through all this discussion, another verse crowds into my mind, insisting on being heard.

**“Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”**

When I look within, I see Christ.

And He has commanded me to reckon the old man of sin **dead**. He has not given me permission to reckon him alive.

Come on! Either Christ is being revealed in me, or the man of sin is being revealed in me. I cannot be both. And the way I see myself is the way I see Christ.

**To find the man of sin Paul talks about, I must look without.**

My friend also asked me to consider, what did I believe Paul was talking about here as it applies to us today, in our world, right now?

To do that, I will switch both topic and voice, as Paul did. But at the end, I want to come back to the word of encouragement God has given me through this passage in 2 Thessalonians.

Please bear with me through this next section. I would not say these things if I were not convinced they are true. I do not have the space here to document what I assert, but I do not assert these things without reason.

The word that I sat under nearly thirty years ago, that set my heart in the direction of the fulfillment of the kingdom of God in us, also included a full understanding of exactly what this mystery of iniquity and subsequent man of sin is all about. In my life-long study of history, geography, and current events, I find full reason to understand today's world in the same way.

The man of sin comes out of the mystery of iniquity. A mystery is a secret, hidden reality that is understood by very few, yet in reality it dominates everything. There are two mysteries presented in the Bible, the mystery of iniquity and the mystery of godliness. These two mysteries are the foundations of the two forms of government in human history. To find the beginning of both, we look back to Cain and Abel. Cain is the beginning of the mystery of iniquity and Abel is the beginning of the mystery of godliness.

The mystery of iniquity is expressed in Cain's actions: the domination of others through violence. The mystery of godliness is expressed through Abel's actions: the refusal to use earthly force to prevail, and the final victory found in laying down one's life for the truth.

The mystery of iniquity is the foundation of human government. Human government rests upon the use of violence to force others to the will of the ruler (it doesn't matter if that ruler is one man, a king, or the majority, a democracy, both rule by force, democracy far more than royalty.)

The mystery of godliness is the foundation of freedom. God's government rests upon the woo-

ing of love and the voluntary giving of oneself to that love. Compulsion is an abomination to God. Satan dominates through force. Power to compel others is utterly evil. Jesus wins by laying down his life, refusing to fight back against people. Satan wins by killing.

But behind the scenes of human government there has always been a controlling elite. This controlling elite sometimes is visible in the government, but usually prefer to stay hidden, ruling through puppets set up and controlled by them. One of these once stated, "I care not who writes the laws, so long as we control the money."

This controlling elite has worked through both religion and finance. Many people are willing to understand that two crooks could work together to rob a bank, but they refuse to believe that two crooks could work together to rob a nation, or even to run for public office. We are willing to believe that organized crime exists, that there are groups that work successfully together, including the mafia, drug barons, etc, in order to increase their criminal reach, but the idea that one or more of these crooks would win public office is immediately banned from acceptable thought.

C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* gives us a picture that helps us understand how this ruling elite works. There are three levels within this group. The first level is large. It consists primarily of people who believe that by working together to solve the problems the world faces, they are benefiting mankind overall. Of course, we could call this a "messianic" complex — "we are the saviors." Many "good" people give their lives wholeheartedly to the work of this more visible part of the elite, including many politicians, business leaders, and academics.

Within this group, however, is a second group. This second group understands that none of what they do has anything to do with helping the world, but everything to do with setting themselves up in power. This second group is much smaller than the first group, but works together to infiltrate and control the larger, outer group.

But, of course, within the second group is a third group. This third group is very small. They know perfectly well they have no interest in solving the world's problems, but neither do they work for their own power. They work for one purpose, and that is so that the spirit of Lucifer (Satan) which controls them can come to eliminate the presence of any other god in this world, knowing full well that as soon as they have lost their usefulness to Satan, he will destroy them.

From the beginning of the church age, the primary opponents of the church of Jesus Christ were those leaders of the Jews who refused to submit to Jesus as the Christ. As with Jesus, these leaders of the Jews usually did not attack the church directly (though they did if they could), but they used the secular Roman authorities to do the deeds, while they remained hidden in the background. Paul called these Jewish leaders, "the enemies of the gospel." He was plagued with their opposition all of his life. When the veil of the temple was rent in two upon the crucifixion of Jesus, the Spirit of God removed Himself from the Jewish temple. Up until that moment, God accepted the offerings of sacrifice in that temple according to the law. After that moment, those same offerings were blasphemy. John said that those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are antichrist.

There is no question that there is an international elite working together in today's world to control and dominate. This elite consists primarily of Zionist/Communist Jews and English/European royalty (including all American presidents). These two groups have merged together over the centuries and there is little meaningful distinction between them. Before I go any further, I want to make two critical distinctions. First, all who reject the authority of Jesus as king of this world are antichrist, whether Jew or Gentile. Second, the majority of the Jewish people are just like everyone else, desiring to live at peace with their neighbors and to see their children happy. In fact, the Zionist elite is a greater enemy of the average person of Jewish descent than any other.

Nevertheless, the Zionist elite, working together with European royalty, has focused for years on the destruction of Christianity. There is no question in my mind that the government of the state of Israel is the particular head of the beast that was wounded unto death and now lives. The primary assault against the Church of Jesus Christ at this end of the age will come from the Zionist government of Israel. The laws are already in place, the courts are already set up. Christians will learn that what I am saying is true as they are extradited to Israel to be tried and executed for the "hate crime" of believing that Jesus is God's Messiah.

Dear friends, every aspect of life in this world is dominated by Satanists. These are evil, evil men. Did you imagine it would be otherwise?

Now, Paul states here in Thessalonians that the man of sin will appear in the temple of God, that is, the church.

The ruling elite has wanted nothing better than to get the church of Jesus Christ working with all their might for the establishment of the final, Revelation-13 beast government upon the earth. They are succeeding beyond their wildest dreams using a simple bait and switch tactic. Clinton vs. Bush. If you want to get a pig into a pickup, simply let him face his pen, and then put a bucket on his head. To get away from the bucket, he will back up all the way into the pickup. It works every time. Clinton is the bucket. George W. Bush is the man slamming the tail gate shut.

Let me explain how I understand it. When Clinton was president, the American evangelical church opposed his every move. By the end of his presidency he could do very little. All of the "world government" plans were stalled. Seeing the power (and the fear) of the American church, the elite that control this country came up with a plan. They took one of their own, a man who had a nominal experience with Christ, but who never renounced his involvement in the occult, and presented him to the nation as "God's choice" a man for "such a time as this."

People throughout this country and all over the world cannot understand how George Bush can commit crime after crime, trashing the constitution and our freedom, and no one opposes him in any serious way. The evangelical church, which had always been the primary force for liberty, has been effectively harnessed for the triumph of Satan. Now, most American Christians thank God for every new world order decree that comes sweeping through the present government without opposition. The waving of George W.'s "Christianity" is simply the trick to get the silly, deluded, and fearful evangelical church in America lined up behind unspeakable evil.

What evil?

Specifically, mass murder. Mass murder is how men worship Satan. Killing and violence is his glory. "Christians" have murdered over one and a half million Muslims over the last 15 years including staging the most barbaric and deadly siege in the history of the world. I am so astonished when people point out how "Muslims" have killed innocent Americans. Can people be so ignorant of reality?

Yes they can!

Most American Christians get their understanding of this world from the image of the beast (television). They believe everything the image of the beast teaches them. I am always stunned the few times I watch the world news on television. It is so absolutely false it is incredible how they can get away with blatant lies.

But they do. Because people want to believe. ("He will send them strong delusion.") The present "worship" of America, Israel, and war found in today's evangelical church has a lot to do with this "man of sin" in the temple of God.

But, far more surely than the mystery of iniquity, there has been working a far more powerful mystery all down through the centuries. It is the mystery of Christ in you. It is the mystery of love, of laying down one's life for others.

Remember, the man of sin is a peripheral issue. The main idea of 2 Thessalonians is the glory of Christ in His people.

It never occurred to Paul that the "man of sin" was the Thessalonian believers to whom he was writing. Why? Because when Paul looked at them, he saw Christ. And because he saw Christ, Paul saw victory and spoke encouragement.

When you look at yourself, what do you see? One who struggles, won who fails, one who may not "make it," one who has to make a choice between serving the flesh and serving the spirit, one who still must "die" before anything good will come to you?

In order to change, we have to change the way we think. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Specifically, we have to change the way we think about God, and by extension, we have to change the way we think about ourselves.

I dishonor God when I see Him as a miser (think third servant), and I fall short of Christ when I see myself as evil.

How I see myself is how I see Christ. If I see myself struggling, I do not see Him victorious. To see the man of sin in me is to blaspheme Jesus. Here is my confession: (Colossians 3:11)

**Christ is ALL in me.** I see nothing else. My eye is set on God; my whole being is filled with His light.

We are entering a time more terrible than any we have known in our lives. It will seem to many that the man of sin and the mystery of iniquity is the main idea. But we know the truth.

**Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

**Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.**

### **Times of Refreshing**

Daniel Yordy  
16 Uvalde Road 202D  
Houston, TX 77015  
daniel@dyordy.com