

Who Is Seated in the Temple of God?

Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4

July 14, 2024

Greg L. Price

In the Old Testament, God revealed His presence with His people by means of a visible glory/cloud that shone in the temple over the ark of the covenant between the two angelic cherubim. That was a constant reminder to them that they were mercifully God's people and He was their God and that they had been brought into a gracious covenant with God (not by the mere blood of animals), but ultimately by means of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus in payment for the sins of His people.

God's glory is the revelation of who He is in His everlasting love, grace, righteousness, power, and beauty, which glory is fully realized in our blessed Jesus ("the Lord of glory" 1 Corinthians 2:8). Old Testament saints realized that there was coming a far greater glory that would shine in and upon the greater Ark of the Covenant—Jesus Christ (John 1:14). As the Law was in the Ark, so Jesus the Law was in Jesus and perfectly kept by Jesus and who became a perfect sacrifice to atone for sin.

Now that Jesus has come in His glory, where is the glory of the Lord Jesus especially realized? It's not in a tabernacle of fabric (as constructed by Moses) nor in a temple of stone (as constructed by Solomon). The glory of the Lord Jesus is in a new and greater temple composed of living stones—believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit wherein Jesus Christ (as our Ark of the Covenant) dwells and where the glory of who He is, is revealed in His appointed ordinances for our worship (1 Peter 2:5).

It is most important that we understand here in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 what this temple is in which The Man of Sin/The Son of Perdition is seated as a king in usurping the place of God/Christ. If we do not properly interpret the temple, we will not properly identify who The Man of Sin/The Son of Perdition is. Our main points are: (1) The Son of Perdition Opposes Christ; (2) The Son of Perdition Sits in the Temple of God as God.

I. **The Son of Perdition Opposes Christ** (2 Thessalonians 2:4a).

A. Review

1. We are seeking to understand who "the king" is that is prophesied to come in Daniel 11:36. "The king" is not an ordinary king, for he claims to be both a political king and an ecclesiastical king from the language used there.

2. Having considered the characteristics of "the king" in Daniel 11:36, we have turned to the New Testament to help us identify who "the king" is; for the Apostle Paul's description of "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition" in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 is very similar to that of Daniel 11:36. It is what we would expect the Holy Spirit to do by shedding further light in the New Testament upon Old Testament prophecies.

3. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul says that the Second Coming of Christ cannot occur until a great falling away (apostasy) within the church occurs (1 Timothy 4:1-3). This great apostasy from the faith is realized in the Church of Rome from which comes The Man of Sin or The Son of Perdition (Judas is the exemplar for The Son of Perdition).

B. **The Son of Perdition opposes God—So Does the Papacy.**

1. Despite what the Papacy may say in word, in deed the Papacy opposes Christ. Though the Papacy claims to be the Substitute Christ upon earth, the Papacy actually usurps the titles and rights that belong alone to God/Jesus Christ (Titus 1:16). How does he oppose God?

2. He opposes God by perverting the gospel of Christ (by changing faith alone in Christ alone to faith in Christ plus something in man or performed by man—contrary to Galatians 2:16—the doctrine of the Judaizers). The Papacy declares faith ALONE in Christ to be anathema.

If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence [i.e. trust—GLP] in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are

justified: let him be anathema (“Canon XII on Justification”, Council of Trent, Sixth Session, January 13, 1547).

Faith alone means we look away from self to Christ alone and His perfect obedience which is imputed to the believer. As the believer personally trusts in Jesus as his/her personal Savior and Lord, God forever removes the guilt and condemnation of sin from the believer and declares him/her to be righteous before Him—as righteous as Jesus Himself, for Jesus is our righteousness alone. God does not justify the righteous, but justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5). The Papacy opposes God by making Christ’s righteousness insufficient to justify the believing sinner; and then damns all who stand by faith alone upon the righteousness of Christ alone.

3. The Papacy opposes God in instituting idolatry—the bowing down to images (contrary to the Second Commandment), the setting forth of mediators in heaven (especially Mary) to hear with God-like omniscience and Divine-like omnipresence the prayers of those on earth (contrary to Christ alone being the Mediator between God and man, 1 Timothy 2:5).

4. The Papacy opposes God by claiming headship over the Church upon earth instead of Christ’s sole headship (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18); by replacing the commandment and doctrine of God in Scripture with the tradition of man (like the immaculate conception of Mary, the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven after her death, purgatory, indulgences and penance for the cleansing and forgiveness of sin); and by binding the consciences of men to the decrees of the Papacy (even the apostles did not claim such an authority, 2 Corinthians 1:24).

C. **The Son of Perdition exalts himself above all that is called God—So Does the Papacy.**

1. The Papacy has historically exalted himself in pride above the authority of all magistrates and emperors. He has claimed an unrivaled authority above all kings and emperors, "deposing some, and advancing others, obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, [or] to wait barefooted at his gate . . ." (Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, 2:113). For example, Pope Gregory VII deposed Henry IV (Holy Roman Emperor) and made him wait barefooted at his gate in the snow for three days (1076).

a. Pope Gregory VII's *Dictatus Papae* (1075) claimed for the Papacy "that it may be permitted to him to depose emperors" and asserted the papal power to "absolve subjects from their fealty."

b. Other prominent papal depositions include:

Pope Innocent III deposed King John of England, 1212.

Pope Innocent IV deposed Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, July 17, 1245.

Pope Pius V declared Elizabeth I of England deposed, February 25, 1570.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_deposing_power

2. The Papacy has claimed authority over all that is called God and is worshipped; for he has even claimed and received from others the very titles of God and has been worshipped as God on earth.

a. Christopher Marcellus in Oration addressed Pope Julius II in the Fifth Lateran Council, Session IV (1512) as follows,

Take care that we lose not that salvation, that life and breath which thou hast given us, for thou art our shepherd, thou art our physician, thou art our governor, thou art our husbandman, thou art finally another God on earth (Council Edition. Colm. Agrip. 1618, [Sacrorum Conciliorum, J.D. Mansi (ed.), Vol. 32, col. 761], (also quoted in History of the Councils, vol. XIV, col 109, by Labbe and Cossart).

b. Cardinal Bellarmine (one of the most famous teachers in the Church of Rome—1542-1621) affirmed that every title which in Scripture is given to Christ appertains also to the Pope (Head of the church; Mediator between God and man; King of kings):

All the names which are attributed to Christ in Scripture, implying His supremacy over the church, are also attributed to the Pope (*Disputationes*, "On the Authority of Councils," Book 2, Chap. 17).

c. In the "Dictates of Hildebrand," who reigned as Pope Gregory VII (1073-1087), we read of the infallibility of the Papacy:

18. That his sentence is not to be reviewed by anyone; while he alone can review the decisions of all others.

19. That he can be judged by no one.

(Annals of Baronius, 1076, Vol. XI, col. 506. See Gieseler's "Ecclesiastical History," third period, div. 3, par. 47, note 3; and Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," book 3, cen. 11, part 2, chap. 2, par. 9, note).

d. From *The Gloss of Extravagantes of Pope John XXII*, the Papacy is referred to as "our Lord God the Pope" (*The Gloss of Extravagantes of Pope John XXII*, Cum. Inter, title 14, chapter 4, "Ad Callem Sexti Decretalium", Column 140 [Paris, 1685]. In an Antwerp edition of the Extravagantes, the words, Dominum Deum Nostrum Papam ["Our Lord God the Pope"] can be found in column 153).

e. Pope Boniface VIII (*Unam Sanctam*, 1302) decreed:

Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

f. Pope Leo XIII (*Sapientiae Christianae*, 1890) said:

We [i.e. the Papacy—GLP] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty . . .

4. I submit that such representative (though not exhaustive) claims to titles and prerogatives that belong to God and Christ alone demonstrate that the Papacy fulfills the statements made here by Paul concerning the Man of Sin and the Son of Perdition who has exalted himself in pride by his own claims that he is "above all that is called God upon earth, or that is worshipped" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

II. The Son of Perdition Sits in the Temple of God as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4b).

A. Here is just one more unmistakable prophetic utterance that identifies the Papacy as the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition.

1. For the Son of Perdition sits enthroned in God's temple as if he were God. How does he do so? He does so by usurping the authority and titles of God and sitting as head/king of the Visible Church upon earth, claiming to rule over it, and claiming to rule over all magistrates and nations as well (as if he were King of kings and Lord of lords).

2. The declaration of Vatican I (1869-1870).

We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra* [i.e. from the seat or throne—GLP], that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable [i.e. they cannot be reformed—GLP] (Sess. IV, Const. de Ecclesia Christi, c. iv). [Emphases added—GLP]

B. The Man of Sin sits as God in the temple of God—so does the Papacy: "he as God sitteth in the

temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4b).

1. The temple of God in the Old Testament was God’s earthly throne, as manifested by the glory that appeared between the two cherubim over the ark of the covenant within the temple.

2. But as we turn from the temple (and its priesthood, sacrifices, and ceremonies) of the Old Covenant (which Hebrews 10:1 calls a “shadow of good things to come”), and turn to the temple (its ministry, sacraments, and ordinances) of the New Covenant, we see a glorious change. The temple (*naos*) as described by the apostles in the New Testament refers not to a building of dead stones, but rather refers to the living Church of Jesus Christ, each member being a living stone that is built upon the foundation of Christ (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21; Revelation 3:12).

3. Clearly, the Papacy has usurped the place of Christ in sitting upon a throne and ruling over the Universal Church of Christ (this he even claims to do, as we have already seen—*ex cathedra*).

C. Application

1. As Protestant/Reformed/Presbyterian ministers of Jesus Christ, we may not claim to be the Vicar of Christ, but we may nevertheless usurp the authority of Christ by introducing into worship that which Jesus has not commanded or authorized in Scripture. Everything we do in worship should have a, “Thus saith the Lord”. We must not take Christ’s silence in Scripture as a warrant to introduce holy days, hymns, entertainment that Jesus has not authorized. We are His holy temple, and must be ever so careful not to defile it by our own innovations, unbiblical doctrine, or unloving speech/behavior to one another (secret service provided a shield to former President Trump as he was targeted by a shooter—so must we do with one another rather than acting like the shooter). To enter into worship unprepared to worship the Most High God infers that we don’t really believe Jesus in all of His glory through His Spirit is among us. We can evaluate what we truly think about God’s real presence among us as His living temple by how we worship the Lord Jesus each Lord’s Day (with great joy at His love/mercy and with great reverence at His holiness).

2. Not only is the Church of Christ called the holy temple of God, but our body is also called the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Pride was the chief sin of Satan and of the Papacy in exalting themselves and robbing God of His glory. Let us pray that God would search our hearts, our speech, and our actions and reveal to us our pride that manifests itself in us. Our body and spirit have been bought by Christ. They belong to Him to bring Him honor and not dishonor by how we use our tongues, our eyes, our ears, our hands, and our feet. God is merciful and there is hope in Christ. Let us flee to Him and pray that He would use us to bring others to Christ and to build up others in Christ.

Copyright 2024 Greg L. Price.