

## Is the Papacy That Man of Sin and Son of Perdition?

Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

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The calling of a faithful minister is not only to feed the sheep God's truth in the gospel, commandments, and doctrine revealed in Scripture, but also to expose deceivers and false teachers who mislead God's people from the truth and into error and heresy.

What kind of a friend would one be who allowed you (without warning) to marry a fraud and a deceiver, who only desired to rob you of your inheritance? That is not a friend. So likewise, a faithful minister must warn the sheep about wolves that come in sheep's clothing to rob the sheep's spiritual inheritance.

The Old and New Testaments are filled with many warnings about false prophets/false teachers. Jesus said we would know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-16)—the fruit of their doctrine and the fruit of their lives (character, speech, conduct, and marital fidelity). So please understand that my words of warning today proceed from a heart of love for Christ and His sheep to protect and defend the sheep.

For the past two Lord's Days, we have been seeking to understand who it is that is identified in Daniel 11:36 as "the king". As noted in the previous sermons, there are very good reasons to associate "the king" with the Papacy of the Church of Rome, for he reigns over not only an ecclesiastical kingdom, but also a political kingdom. A place in the New Testament that seems to draw from the language found in Daniel 11:36 is in 2 Thessalonians 3:4. Many sound biblical scholars (past and present) have noted the connection between what is said about "the king" (Daniel 11:36) and the "man of sin" and "son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 3:4).

Listen to the description of "the king" in Daniel 11:36, and then listen to the words describing "the man of sin" and "son of perdition" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Both passages speak concerning a notable historical figure who will exalt himself above all gods and who will usurp the authority of God. I submit that Daniel 11:36 depicts the historical figure in his political rule as a civil leader (king); whereas 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 depicts him in his ecclesiastical rule as a church leader (bishop). The Papacy (unlike any other) assumes both of these offices at the same time.

We will be focusing our attention today upon 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: (1) The Apostasy Is Revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a); (2) The Man of Sin Arises from the Apostasy (2 Thessalonians 3b).

### I. The Apostasy Is Revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a).

A. The occasion for the Apostle Paul penning by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the words that we find here in 2 Thessalonians 2 about the apostasy and the Man of Sin/the Son of Perdition is due to a deception that was being circulated by false teachers living at that time of Paul.

1. That deception stated that the bodily Second Coming of Christ was so near that it was said to be "at hand" (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Paul makes clear that Christ's Second Coming could not come until two historical events first occurred.

2. As a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, Paul sees it as his duty to specifically address this deception that had occasioned Christians being "shaken in mind" (2 Thessalonians 2:2—like a ship tossed to and fro on the sea by every wind of doctrine, Ephesians 4).

3. Paul indicates (in 2 Thessalonians 2:2) that this deception may come to the Thessalonian Christians by "spirit" (i.e. by an alleged prophecy, 1 John 4:1); or it may come by "word" (i.e. by a sermon or teaching); or it may come by "letter" (i.e. by a forged letter as if sent by Paul to them). It would appear that as a result of this particular deception, Christians had even stopped working due to the alleged imminent Coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Doctrines have consequences. What we believe will be manifested in our lives. A firm conviction in a sovereign, holy, wise, and loving God will bring peace, joy, meaning, and hope into one's life in the midst of great affliction and trial.

B. Paul declares to the sheep in Thessalonica, “Let no man deceive you by any means” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This command of Paul implies that we don’t have to be deceived, if we know, believe, and love the doctrine found in Scripture—deception is avoidable (John 7:17).

1. Paul declares there are two significant historical events that must first be realized sometime after he pens these words before the bodily Second Coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:3): (1) the apostasy (“except there come a falling away first”); and (2) the revelation and destruction of the Man of Sin, who is also called, the Son of Perdition (“and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”).

2. It’s interesting that the most popular brand of prophetic interpretation today (Dispensational Futurism) states (contrary to Paul) that Jesus first comes and we are gathered to Him, then comes the apostasy and the Man of Sin (Antichrist). Futurism also declares that Christ’s coming for His church is imminent (at any time), which is not true. It’s not what is most popular that is right, but what is most biblical (even if only a few embrace it).

C. The first historical event mentioned by Paul that must come before the Second Coming of Christ and our gathering to Him is “the falling away” (*apostasía* or apostasy) in 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

1. This is no small “falling away” (or apostasy) on the part of a few, but a major apostasy. It must be a very significant historical event if it must occur before the Second Coming of Christ. This is not simply “a falling away” (as it is worded in our Authorized Version), but is quite literally, “THE falling away” (or THE apostasy, i.e. the great, notable apostasy).

2. The Greek word used here for “falling away” (*apostasía*) is only used one other time in the New Testament (Acts 21:21), where it speaks of a falling away in a religious sense from the teaching of Moses. This great apostasy is a falling away from the pure doctrine, worship, and government of Christ revealed in Scripture and from the faithful Church of Christ. This is a great Christian apostasy—not a Jewish apostasy, not a Muslim apostasy, not a pagan apostasy. One cannot fall away from that which they have not been a part of. These groups were never members of Christ’s Church and fell away from it.

3. Paul also refers to this great Christian apostasy in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 (this is also a religious apostasy particularly highlighted by the prohibition of eating meat and of marriage, both of which became laws to bind the conscience by the Papacy). We’ll have more to say about this when we return to Daniel 11:37.

4. This great falling away within the church from the purity of the gospel (of justification by faith alone, not by faith plus works), from the purity of worship (only what God has authorized in Scripture, not man-invented worship before images, of holydays, of hymns), and from the purity of Christ’s headship alone over His Church in heaven and on earth (not a two-headed church) was manifested as the Papacy gradually climbed in authority during the 5th and 6th centuries until it was proclaimed (in 606) by Emperor Phocas that Rome’s Bishop (or Pope) was superior in authority over all Churches, Bishops, and Christians throughout the whole world. From that time, the great apostasy within the Christian Church was realized and out of that apostasy arose the Man of Sin, who is also called the Son of Perdition (i.e. the Papacy as the alleged infallible head of the Universal Church).

## II. The Man of Sin Arises from the Apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3b).

A. The second reason why the Second Coming of Christ to gather His saints unto Himself could not be imminent (at any moment) was because “the man of sin” (“the son of perdition”) had not yet been revealed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

### 1. The Man of Sin.

a. This is the only time this phrase is used in Scripture. A man who is eminent in war is “a man of war” (1 Chronicles 28:3). A man distinguished for being “a bloody man” is literally “a man of bloods” (2 Samuel 16:8). A man characterized by deceit is literally “a man of deceit” (Proverbs 29:13). And so a man who is eminent and distinguished by his sin is “the man of sin” (note the definite article is used here to indicate that this is not just any man of sin, but is “THE Man of Sin”).

b. Sin is defined by God as the transgression of God's Law (1 John 3:4). Consider all of the commandments of God that the Papacy has broken and even commands others to break them— idolatry in bowing to images of Christ, Mary, and saints; in praying to mediators other than Christ; in making men lord of the conscience to an infallible Pope; in corrupting God's worship by human invention of holydays, eating and sacrificing the literal blood and flesh of Christ; in usurping the office of Christ as head of the Church upon earth; in murdering and persecuting countless faithful witnesses of Christ; in granting indulgences to escape purgatory for a price; in lying in regard to his many heresies; in the countless cases of sexual immorality in the lives of Popes and priests. It may be the evaluation of many sincere and yet deceived souls that the Pope is the Holy Father, but the evaluation of God is that the Papacy is the Man of Sin, for the Papacy is eminent in transgressing and authorizing the transgression of God's Holy Law. Just as Jeroboam led Israel to sin (1 Kings 14:16) by transgressing God's commandments and perverting God's worship, so has the Papacy (the Man of Sin) eminently done so.

## 2. The Son of Perdition.

a. The Son of Perdition partakes of and inherits Destruction, now and for all eternity (perdition means destruction).

b. This phrase only occurs one other time in Scripture, where it refers to Judas Iscariot (Jesus calls Judas the son of perdition in John 17:12). Judas was the apostle of Christ who betrayed Jesus. Note that Judas was a type of the Son of Perdition to come. Judas proceeded from within the Church, as does the Papacy. Judas was an apostle of Christ, as the Papacy claims to be in apostolic succession. Judas preached Christ and performed miracles, as does the Papacy (as the Papacy claims to do). Judas was the tool of Satan (Luke 22:3), as is the Papacy (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss, pretending to be Christ's friend, as does the Papacy.

c. This has been the overwhelming consensus of Protestant interpretation of "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition" from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (approved by the Church of Scotland in 1647) declares:

There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 25:6).

## B. Application

1. What we chiefly pursue in our life will define us. **What we chase and pursue in life is that by which we will be caught.** If we pursue friendship with the world, we will be a worldly man (which God says is to make ourselves the enemy of God, James 4:4). If we pursue the wealth of the world, we may gain the world, but will yet lose our own soul for all eternity (Matthew 16:26). If we (by God's grace) pursue God, we will become a man of God. If we (by God's grace) pursue God's truth, we will become a wise man. If we (by God's grace) pursue humility, we will become a humble man. If we (by God's grace) pursue fervent prayer to God through the only Mediator between God and man (Christ Jesus), we will become the friend of God. What my dear friend do you want to be caught by—Jesus Christ or the world? **Because that which you pursue is that by which you will be caught.**

2. But any pursuit of God in becoming a man of God must begin with coming to see our sin and our need of Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. We cannot be what God calls us to be until Jesus changes our heart and gives us faith to trust Him, to repent of our sin, and to love obey Him. To become a child of God, we must come to God through Jesus Christ as our door (John 14:6). He will supply all that we need in His Word and by His Spirit to grow to become like Jesus.

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