

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 287 – October 14th – 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Thessalonians

John Eadie *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*, MacMillan, London, 1877

Leon Morris *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1991

Verse 1

Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν,

2 Thess 2:1-12 is one of the most obscure passages in the New Testament. Paul is writing to supplement what he had taught them when present with them (v.5). Our ignorance of what Paul had taught them earlier makes it difficult for us to be certain of the meaning of these verses which are so full of references to his earlier teaching. For one treatment of this see G Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, 1953) pp. 94-133.

ἐρωτάω ask, request, beg, urge

The single definite article indicates that one event is being spoken of.

παρουσία, ας see 1 Thess 2:19

ἐπισυναγωγή, ης f assembling, gathering

Cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18.

Verse 2

εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς μηδὲ θροεῖσθαι μήτε διὰ πνεύματος μήτε διὰ λόγου μήτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι’ ἡμῶν, ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου.

ταχέως adv. (formed from ταχύς) quickly, at once, soon

The thought here is 'precipitately' cf. 1 Tim 5:22.

σαλευθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin σαλευω shake, disturb

νοῦς, νοός, νοί, νοῦν m mind, thought, reason, purpose, understanding

Here stands for the whole mental balance of the person.

μηδε negative particle nor, and not, not even; μηδε ... μηδε neither ... nor
θροεομαι be alarmed, startled

Cf. Mk 13:7.

μητε and not; μητε ... μητε neither ... nor

"He speaks of three possible ways in which they may be affected. 'Spirit' ... must be understood in the light of the fact that the early church expected supernatural communications from time to time, for example, through the ministry of prophets (cf. 1 Cor 14:29-30; 1 John 4:1). It means some revelation divinely communicated. Paul, of course, encouraged the right use of prophecy (1 Thess 5:19-20), but here the content of the supposed prophecy showed that it could not have come from God. 'Report' ... may refer to a sermon, though the term is broad enough to cover all sorts of oral communications." Morris

ἐπιστολή, ης f letter

"It indicates that Paul feared that a communication of some kind had been reputed to have come from him (and his assistants?). But he writes in general terms, and we are probably justified in inferring that he was not quite sure of exactly what had happened. Either that, or else he felt it not wise to refer to it too directly. But he is making quite clear that he accepts no responsibility whatever for the report. However it had come, and however it had been attributed to him, he had had nothing to do with it. He does not want his friends to be worried by these speculations, and he completely renounces them." Morris

ἐνέστηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ἐνίστημι be present, perf had come

"To say that the day of the Lord had come did not mean that it was completed and that all the glorious events associated with it had occurred. That was so obviously untrue that it needed no refutation. What it did mean was that the day had dawned. They were even then living in it. This being so, the climax must infallibly be reached, and that within a short space of time." Morris

Verse 3

μή τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον· ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας,

ἐξαπατήσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3s ἐξαπαταω
deceive, lead astray
μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν no one, nothing
τροπος, ου m way, manner; κατα μηδενα τ.
in no way
ἐὰν μη unless

Requires the addition of some such phrase as 'that day will not come unless ...'

ἀποστασια, ας f apostasy, rebellion

The inclusion of the definite article implies that Paul is referring to *the* rebellion about which he had already spoken to them. "Paul's thought is that in the last times there will be an outstanding manifestation of the powers of evil arrayed against God ... It is as though Satan were throwing all his forces into one last despairing effort." Morris

ἀποκαλυφθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s
ἀποκαλυπτω reveal, disclose

ἀνομια, ας f wickedness, lawlessness, sin

Concerning the rival readings ἀνομιας and ἀμαρτιας (so TR), Metzger writes, "Despite the broader external testimony supporting ἀμαρτιας, on the whole it appears that the early Alexandrian witnesses preserve the original reading, ἀνομιας, a word rarely used by Paul, which was altered by copyists to the much more frequently used word, ἀμαρτιας. Furthermore, γαρ ... ἀνομιας in v.7 seems to presuppose ἀνομιας here."

ἀπωλεια, ας f destruction, utter ruin

It is not clear who this individual might be but it will be an outstanding manifestation of the powers of evil – Antichrist. "All attempts to equate the Man of Lawlessness with historical personages break down of the fact that Paul was writing of someone who would appear only at the end of the age; the Man of Lawlessness is an eschatological figure. Paul wrote that he will appear just before the Lord comes again, and therefore it seems futile to try to identify him. Scripture tells us that there are many Antichrists (1 John 2:18), and it does not surprise us accordingly that through the ages of history many have appeared whose evil lives remind us of this or that trait of the Man of Lawlessness. But that does not give us grounds for identifying the supreme embodiment of evil with any of Satan's lesser lights along the way." Morris

Verse 4

ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός.

ἀντικειμαι oppose, be against
ὑπεραιρομαι be puffed up with pride; rise
in pride (ἐπι) against
σεβασμα, τος n sacred thing, object of
worship, place of worship
ὥστε so that, with the result that
ναος, ου m temple, sanctuary, inner part
of Jewish Temple

"While the temple is not easy to identify, the best way to understand the passage seems to be that some material building will serve as the setting for the blasphemous claim to deity that the Man of Lawlessness will make as the climax of his activities." Morris

καθιζω intrans sit down, sit
ἀποδεικνύντα Verb, pres act ptc, m acc s
ἀποδεικνυμι claim, set forth
ἑαυτος, εαυτη, εαυτον him/her/itself

Satan's great desire is to dethrone God. "Most commentators draw attention to the attempt by Caligula to set up an image of himself in the temple at Jerusalem, an attempt that was frustrated only by his death. This took place in AD 40. The attempt aroused widespread horror among the Jews. It may well be that Paul has this incident in mind in writing these words, but we should bear in mind that what he says goes beyond anything Caligula attempted. The Man of Lawlessness is not pictured as setting up a statue of himself but as taking his seat in person (cf. Ezek 28:2)." Morris

Verse 5

οὐ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ἔτι ὦν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταῦτα ἔλεγον ὑμῖν;

μνημονευω remember, keep in mind
ἔτι still, yet, moreover

ελεγον – the imperfect suggests repeated teaching on this subject.

Verse 6

καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε, εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ·

κατέχον Verb, pres act ptc, n nom/acc s
κατεχω hold fast, keep, restrain

Conventionally thought here to mean 'hold back' or 'restrain,' though the verb can also mean 'hold fast.' It is difficult for us to be certain of Paul's meaning.

οἶδα know, understand

At present there is something that restrains the manifestation of the Man of Lawlessness. It is difficult for us to know what Paul was referring to here though clearly he had told the Thessalonians. It is wise for us to avoid dogmatic assertions since they can only be speculative.

ἀποκαλυφθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin

ἀποκαλυπτω see v.3

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself
καιρος, ου m time, appointed time

What is clear is that God is in control. The Man of Lawlessness will only be revealed at the time of God's appointment.

Verse 7

τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται.

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery

"The use of the term here reminds us that there are secrets as well as sin. We can never, by our own reasoning, plumb the depths of iniquity, the reason for its existence, or the manner of its working. Paul points out that even as he writes there is a secret activity of lawlessness at work. The explanation of it all is not open to us, but the fact of its being in operation is clear enough." Morris

ἤδη adv now, already

ἐνεργεω work, be at work (in)

ἀνομια, ας f see v.3

The forces of Satan are clearly already at work in opposition to the work of God, though they are restrained.

μονος, η, ου i) adj only, alone; ii) adv μονον only, alone

κατεχω see v.6

ἄρτι now, at the present

ἕως until

μεσος, η, ου middle

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι

Verse 8

καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ,

τοτε then, at that time

ἀποκαλυφθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s

ἀποκαλυπτω see v.3

ἀνομος, ου lawless, outside the law

ἀνελεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἀναιρεω do

away with, kill, destroy

στομα, τος n mouth, utterance

Emphasises the ease with which Christ destroys the final rebellion – with a word.

καταργεω render ineffective, do away with

ἐπιφανεια, ας f appearing, appearance
παρουσια, ας see 1 Tess 2:19

What is clear from this passage is the outcome of this final unrestrained rebellion.

Verse 9

οὗ ἔστιν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους

οὗ refers to the lawless one who, in many ways, counterfeits Christ.

παρουσια, ας f coming, arrival, presence

ἐνεργεια, ας f (supernatural) working, power

δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις

σημειον, ου n miraculous sign, sign

τερας, ατος n wonder, object of wonder

ψευδος, ους n lie, untruth, that which is false/imitation

The signs and miracles will be real enough but they are part of a plan of deception, a show designed to lead people astray.

Verse 10

καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ' ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς:

ἀπατη, ης f deception

ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill, lose; midd be lost, perish, die

ἀνθ' ὧν because, therefore

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality; ἐν ἀ. truly

The truth of the Gospel is not an abstract philosophy but a revelation of the purposes of God to be embraced in love.

σωζω save, rescue, heal

Verse 11

καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει,

πεμπω send

The present tense may express the certainty of the future event or it "may also carry a hint that what will take place on the grand scale when the Man of Lawlessness comes is even now at work in principle in the case of lesser people Whenever people refuse the truth, God sends the working of error." Morris

ἐνεργεια, ας see v.9

πλανη, ης f error, deceit, deception

ψευδος, ους see v.9

Even in the deception suffered by many, God remains sovereign, yet (v.12) man remains responsible and answerable. "Men start by rejecting the Gospel voluntarily; they then reach the stage when they are unable to tell what is gospel and what is fallacy. This is the powerful 'delusion' which Paul rightly regards as an Act of God." Neil

Verse 12

ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκῆσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.

κριθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl κρινω
judge, pass judgement on, condemn
πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας
ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality
εὐδοκῆσαντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl
εὐδοκεω be pleased, take pleasure in

They are not passive agents in the rebellion against God.

ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

"The stark contrast reminds us that ultimately we must belong to one or other of two classes, namely, those who love God's truth and those who take their pleasure in wickedness. Those who begin by failing to accept God's good gift end by setting forward unrighteousness. Notice the way in which they become perverted. These people are not described as sinning through force of circumstance or any form of compulsion. They now find their pleasure in sin. They delight in wrong. For them evil has become good." Morris

Verse 13

Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὀφείλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου, ὅτι εἴλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας,

ὀφείλω owe, ought, must
εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks
παντοτε always
ἠγαπημένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
ἀγαπαω
εἴλατο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s αἰρεομαι
choose
ἀπαρχη, ης f firstfruit, first portion

The variant readings ἀπ ἀρχης and ἀπαρχην are both well supported in MSS, versions and patristic citations. The UBS committee favoured ἀπαρχην on the grounds that ἀπ ἀρχης occurs nowhere else in Paul who generally uses ἀρχη in the sense of 'power.' Bruce also favours this reading, understanding it as a title for the church of God. Morris, however, believes that transcriptional probabilities favour ἀπ ἀρχης for the very reason that it is not a typical Pauline expression. He adds, "Moreover, while Paul employs the concept of firstfruits on a number of occasions, he never elsewhere connects it with election. On the other hand, he often associates election with some expression rooting it in the beginning. A further point militating against ἀπαρχην is the absence of a qualifying genitive, which, as Frame points out, is usual in Paul's use of that noun."

σωτηρια, ας f salvation
ἀγιασμος, ου m sanctification, holiness
πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις
ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

Morris suggests that the final expression may be intended to highlight the divine and human aspects of salvation.

Verse 14

εἰς ὃ ἐκάλεσεν ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν, εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel
περιποιησις, εως f obtaining, gaining

Verse 15

ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν.

στήκετε Verb, perf act imperat, 2 pl ἰστημι
intrans (in 2 aor, pf & pluperf; all midd & pass) stand, stop, stand firm
κρατεω hold, hold fast, sieze, hold back
παραδοσις, εως f tradition
διδασκω teach
εἴτε if, whether
ἐπιστολη, ης f letter

What Paul had delivered to them, whether in preaching or by letter, had been the word of God.

Verse 16

Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν, ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν ἐν χάριτι,

Cf. 1 Thess 3:11-13. The highest possible position is given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

ἀγαπήσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
ἀγαπαω

It is not clear whether Paul is speaking of both persons or of the Father only. Morris thinks probably the latter.

δοὺς Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s δίδωμι
give

παρακλησις, εως f encouragement,
comfort

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope

χάριτι Noun, dat s χάρις, ιτος f grace,
unmerited favour

Verse 17

παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίζαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ.

παρακαλεω exhort, encourage, urge

I.e. strengthen the whole inner life.

στηρίζω strengthen, establish

"The prayer is for inner strengthening ... with a view to faithful Christian service." Morris