

Eschatology I.5: Pauline Eschatology
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Tullahoma - Adult Sunday school
Sunday, February 18 2024

Lesson 16: “The Man of Lawlessness” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

I. Biblical Origin and Development:

- “The abomination of desolation” - Daniel 7:7-8,9:27,11:31; Matt. 24:15/Mk. 13:14 /Lk. 21:20
- “The beast” - Rev.13:1-10
- Is this the “Antichrist”? - 1 John 2:18-22; 2 John 7-8

II. Mysterious identity:

“There are no darker words in the entire Pauline corpus than these, and any interpretation must be at best a hypothesis.” George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*

“Church history is littered with incautious, self-confident but mistaken attempts to find in Paul’s text a reference to some contemporary person and event. Let this be a warning to us to be more cautious and tentative than some others have been. At the same time, we have no liberty to abandon the task as hopeless.” John Stott, *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*

- Options we can rule out: Nero, a second Jewish “messiah,” Mohammed, the Pope, purely symbolic
- Has to be a real person empowered by Satan. Vos: “We may take it for granted, then, that the Antichrist will be a human person.” *TPE*
- ... but is it just one person? Stott: “The biblical prediction of the Antichrist may during the course of church history have had (and still have) multiple fulfillments.”
- Biblical Typology: prototype, antitype,... and countertype? (Mk. 13:6; Mt. 24:23-26)

III. How does this impact the timing of Christ’s return?

- His return is still **IMMANENT** (Mt. 24:29-30; Mark 13:32-37; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:15-5:2)
- Paul’s motive: to assure the Thessalonian church that they haven’t *missed* Christ’s return. (2 Thess. 2:1-3a)

“For as Antichrist cannot stand otherwise than through the impostures of Satan, he must necessarily vanish as soon as Christ shines forth. In fine, as it is only in darkness that he reigns, the dawn of the day puts to flight and extinguishes the thick darkness of his reign. We are now in possession of Paul’s design, for he meant to say that Christ would have no difficulty in destroying the tyranny of Antichrist, which was supported by no resources but those of Satan.” John Calvin, *Commentaries*