

**the book of life** of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

The saints of Daniel in this **far fulfillment** are not primarily Jews, but the entire *invisible* and *universal* Christian church, from every tribe and language and nation and people, including believing Jews (see the attachment – “*Reasons why the saints in Daniel refer to the Church*”).

Therefore to summarize this view in the language of our text 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where Paul describes Antichrist the one who “*opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God,*” it appears as though Paul is using the term “*temple*” here to speak in terms of the very locus of the true worship of God, which has now in the New Testament shifted from the Temple in Jerusalem, to the assembly of the Church. This is supported by the text in Daniel as the language describing Antichrist’s work is clearly focused on the “*truth*” and the “*holy people,*” and the New Testament language speaks of an attack on the Christian Faith and the Christian Church. The parallels are clear and obvious.

**Daniel 8:11-13** - 11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and **it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.** 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow **both the holy place and the host to be trampled?"** NASB

**Daniel 8:24-25** - 24 "And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And **he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.** 25 "And through his shrewdness **He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence;** And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency. NASB

**Matthew 24:8-13** - 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "**And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.** 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. NASB

**2 Thessalonians 2:9-12** - 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and **with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.** 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence **so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.** NASU

In fact, the parallel between Daniel 7:21-25 and Revelation 13:5-7 is very striking and reveals the church as the primary target of His deceiving work.

**Daniel 7:21-22, 25** - 21 "I kept looking, **and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them** 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom..... 25 "And **he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One,** and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and **they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.** NASB

**Revelation 13:5-7** - 5 And there was **given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.** 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 And **it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.** 8 **And all who dwell on the earth will worship him,** everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

This is plausible because in order to “*oppose God*” and “*exalt*” oneself “*above God*” in the New Covenant age, one must certainly focus their work *against* the person and work of Christ (the Christian Gospel), and seek to deceive concerning the true worship of God, which happens only

in the Christian Church, who are God's only **"holy people,"** made holy by the blood of Jesus Christ. Judaism and even a rebuilt Jewish Temple are not God's holy worship, and surely a daily sacrifice of blood in a Jewish Temple would be an abomination to God in this New Covenant age, of which God has spoken in loud commentary in 70 A.D. concerning this matter. Further, this view that the **"temple of God"** is the church or more specifically the *universal* and *visible* Christian church, there is an overwhelming amount of commentators who hold this view. Of the over 20 commentators I read on this, as many as 13 of them hold this view and include, GK Beale, Calvin, Poole, Adam Clarke, Barnes, Matthew Henry, Thomas Scott, Doddridge, Burkitt, and Poole asserts that it was the position of Augustine, Jerome, Hilary, Chrysostom. Surely this is not proof of itself that the view is correct, but yet another item in consideration of the whole.

These are the reasons that I do not prefer the Dispensational view of this text about the **"temple"** of 2 Thessalonians 2:4. I do agree and affirm with Dispensationalism that Israel will be regenerated and saved at the Second Coming of Christ, and receive the promises of land, seed and blessing from God and enjoy them throughout the Millennium and beyond, but with all of this biblical evidence of the church in the Great Tribulation, I cannot hold a Pretribulational view of the rapture.

What then will it look like for the ultimate deceiver Antichrist to come and deceive? What will be the focus of his lies and deception? I would like to suggest that he will try to twist and pervert the essentials of Christian faith..... a new Gospel, an attack against Holy Scripture (the Bible), a new Christ (himself), as he will successfully deceive **"those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved,"** (v-10) and **"who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness"** (v-12). In fact the deception will be so powerful because of his **"power and signs and false wonders,"** and **"all the deception of wickedness,"** that even the very **"elect of God"** would be deceived if it were **"possible"** (Matt 24:24). But of course it is NOT possible for the elect to be deceived, because God has elected them to salvation and applied this election by regeneration, which is an irreversible act of God which **"seals them for the day of redemption"** (Eph 4:30, 2 Cor 1:22). However, his deception will be successful against all the non elect, as **"authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him"** (Rev 13:7-8). Therefore acting as the ultimate false Christ, he will **"set himself up"** in the true Covenant (where the truth abides), and seek to cause apostasy from the true Faith and successfully mislead all the *professors* who are the apostates of the **"rebellion"** of 2 Thess 2:3 who follow his deception. All of this will end of course in his **"sudden destruction,"** when Jesus will **"slay"** him **"with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming"** (v-8), as He **"cuts short"** this **"great Tribulation"** (Matt 24:21-22) period at the *parousia* or Second Coming (Matt 24:29-31, 1 Thess 4:16-17, 2 Thess 1:7-10, 2 Thess 2:1).

**2 Thessalonians 2:5-8** - 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; NASU

A. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? – Paul is here reminding the Thessalonians of the fact that he discussed these eschatological events with them in the short 3-4 weeks that he disciplined them. I do find it rather remarkable that Paul's discipling in 3-4 weeks would be so comprehensive that it would include detailed items of

eschatology including a discussion of the aforementioned events and circumstances. This clarifies that the Apostle had the Second Coming as a central theme in his instruction in the church and that this included discussion of the rapture, the day of the Lord, and the person of the Antichrist. This we know as Paul directly states that this was the case, ***“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”***

B. 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; - When Paul makes the statement ***“And you know what restrains him now,”*** he asserts that it is clear to them what this restraining power is. The subject of this restraining power is obviously ***“the man of lawlessness”*** himself, and this accords with the fact that he is now hidden from sight but yet will be ***“revealed”*** at the proper time, as verse 3 states, and also here, ***“so that in his time he will be revealed.”*** Note well that Antichrist is restrained by some power until the proper time allotted by God’s sovereign Providence, so that at the right time in history, he will be unrestrained to accomplish God’s sovereign will in bringing this age unto its climax and certain end. In regard to this **restrainer**, many have commented on what it is such as *the Roman Empire, the common civil order of law in the world, the Jewish state, Satan or one of his evil agents, some holy angel such as Michael the Archangel, or even the Holy Spirit Himself, or some related work of the Holy Spirit such as the preaching of the Gospel to all nations.* What ever the restrainer is, it is surely a personal being for it is referred to in the following verse with a personal pronoun when Paul states, ***“only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”*** This indicates that it is not some impersonal force, but it is at a very minimum represented by a person. The **exact identity of this restrainer is not clearly identified in this book** and has been in dispute since this book was written. The silence about this matter therefore speaks a loud word as to our speculations and my own opinion is that it is important but not disclosed in Scripture, and therefore not something of vital importance for understanding the main point and theme of our text. What is very clear is that the Antichrist is being restrained by some powerful personage ***“until he is taken out of the way,”*** that powerful restrainer in the sure command of God’s Providence, in order for God’s purpose with Antichrist to be accomplished ***“so that in his time he will be revealed.”*** The background of this time of restraint is the fact that ***“the mystery of lawlessness is already at work,”*** setting the stage for the revealing of this evil worker. This is a profound thought in light of who he is and what he will accomplish as outlined in Jesus Olivet Discourse, in Daniel’s prophecies and in the book of Revelation. This beast of Revelation 13 will receive power from God to garner the worship of the whole world (Rev 13:8), and set up a religious and economic system of idolatry that will deceive all the nations of the earthy. The scope of this character and his influence in the world is unprecedented by any, other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and these ideas show the importance of ***“the mystery of lawlessness”*** being ***“already at work”*** in the world in order to allow sin and evil to run its course and set the stage for the amazing deception that will occur under this man’s influence. When the stage has been set, and mankind has shown himself to fully reject the Gospel that has been preached ***“for a witness to all the nations, then the end shall come”*** and ***“then,”*** verse 8 states, ***“that lawless one will be revealed.”*** The parallel to Matthew 24:14-21 is striking here.

Matthew 24:14 - 14 "And **this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.** NASB

When this restrainer is removed and the lawless one is revealed and accomplished his brief but powerfully deceptive attack against the truth of the Christian Faith, Jesus will return at His glorious Coming and will destroy this evil worker, as Paul states, ***“whom the Lord will slay with***