

MIDDLE EAST PEACE – THE FULFILLMENT OF BIBLE PROPHECY (Part 6 of 9)

Fortunately for all of us who are serious students of God's Word, the Bible adds a great deal of detail to the identity and personality of this Gentile Prince. Simply put, he is the Biblical Antichrist. We can know this for certain from what the apostle Paul reveals to us in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4–

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 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.”

Verse four in the passage above perfectly harmonizes with and elaborates upon Jesus' warning in Matthew 24:15, confirming the prophetic utterance of Gabriel to the prophet in Daniel 9:27. In other words, the Antichrist will initiate a covenant of peace in the Middle East for the period of seven years (Daniel's Seventieth week); allowing for Israel to build their much longed-for temple. He will no doubt be hailed as a great hero by the Jewish people for doing so (John 5:43). But three and one-half years later, in the middle of that week, the Antichrist will order sacrifice and grain offering to stop. Why? So that his deception and self-exaltation may become complete, by taking *“his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”* This is why both Daniel and Jesus refer to such blatant self-idolatry as the abomination of desolation. Paul continues his discourse in vv5-12 by explaining the reason for the Antichrist's ultimate success in claiming to be God and demanding that the whole world worship him (Revelation 13:1-10). He will employ the power and influence of Satan in order to deceive the entire unbelieving world.

With the overwhelming amount of prophetic detail being provided here by the apostle, it is easy to overlook the primary purpose for his writing of 2 Thessalonians chapter two. An enormous amount of concern had arisen within the hearts of the believers at the Thessalonian church, due to a deceitful letter designed to undermine the hope which was theirs in Christ. In v2, Paul quickly renounces this document as not having its source in him or his ministry team. After giving them the necessary prophetic teaching in vv3-12, he then seeks to reassure them of the security of their salvation in Christ (vv13-14). He also provides them with much needed encouragement in ending the chapter with both an admonition, benediction and prayer in vv15-17 –

“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

Even in the midst of all this profound and difficult prophetic teaching, Paul was always concerned about the spiritual edification of fellow Christians. With that in mind, we now need to conclude our study of this highly informative chapter of Scripture, by considering the prophetic importance of how Paul begins his discourse in vv1-2. That will be our goal, next.