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THE MIDDLE AGES WITHIN THE SCOPE OF APOCALYPTIC PROPHECY

HANS K. LARONDELLE*

In view of the popular preterist and futurist applications of the beasts of Revelation it is essential for an adequate Biblical interpretation to place Revelation against its OT background, specifically of the unique book of Daniel. The prophetic series in the book of Daniel forms a progressive parallelism in which covenant history is outlined as an historical continuum from Babylon's rule until the establishment of the glorious kingdom of God and the resurrection of the saints (Daniel 2; 7; 8; 11-12). In this respect Daniel is manifestly different from the other OT prophets. The other prophetic books are characterized by the motif of a double focus of God's judgment: the immediate, national fulfillment (as a type), and the end-time, worldwide consummation (as the antitype). Daniel's prophetic outlook is unique because his future perspective intends to outline a definite succession of the God- and Israel-opposing world powers until the final judgment day. This apocalyptic style of a sequential order of future events is typical of Daniel's book. It does not deny that the historical narratives of Daniel's own experiences in Babylon and Persia carry also typological significance for the end time.[1]

The comforting message for the covenant people is Daniel's stress on the supreme rulership of Israel's God over all evil powers. This is expressed specifically in the supernaturally-determined time periods, by which the sovereign Ruler has "numbered" the days of the reign of evil rulers or has set specific boundaries of time to the raging of persecuting world powers (see Dan 5:26-28; 8:14; 9:24-27; 11:29, 35, 40; 12:4, 7, 11-12). Daniel summed up his essential message in a spontaneous doxology when the God of Israel revealed to him the "mystery" of the future: "He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them" (2:21 *NIV*). God not only foresees the future but also actively participates in each century or age and ultimately determines its outcome. He alone therefore is to be acknowledged as "the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries" (2:47 *NIV*; cf. Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2).

Daniel twice forecasts the reign of four successive world empires (chaps. 2; 7), which most Jewish and Christian interpreters have identified

* Hans LaRondelle is professor of theology at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

[1] See H. K. LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1987) 155-157.

as: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.[2] The critical point in Daniel's vision, which needs careful attention and proper stress, is the significant revelation that the fourth beast has ten horns among which an eleventh, "a little one," gradually arises to become the anti-God, anti-Messiah and anti-Israel kingdom that makes blasphemous claims.

The interpreting angel explains in more exact terms (Dan 7:24-26 *NIV*):

> The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this [fourth] kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.

The angel does not suggest that the fourth empire itself will be ruled by ten contemporary kings, a perspective that would moreover contradict Roman history. Of decisive importance is the angel's statement that "from" this world empire will come forth ten kings, who will then rule contemporaneously. This historical sequel of the replacement of the Roman empire in A.D. 476 by the divided kingdoms of Europe was also indicated earlier by Daniel's explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the metallic statue: "Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom" (2:41 *NIV*).

The divided kingdom of the ten rulers begins with the fall of the Roman empire and will not end until the kingdom of glory replaces them all in the day of judgment (2:44-45; 7:26-27). Thus both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 include the whole spectrum of the eventful middle ages within the prophetic scope and forecast. To ignore this crucial and portentous phase of Daniel's prophetic perspective is the fundamental oversight of the dogmatic constructs of preterism and of futurism. Both interpretative systems create an unjustified gap of more than 1500 years in Daniel's prophetic history, as if the middle ages—characterized by the rise of the papal kingdom among the ten rulers of Europe—were totally irrelevant in God's view of Church history. The symbols of Daniel must be interpreted in harmony with well-known historical facts, specifically of ecclesiastical history. Prophecy is best interpreted by its fulfillment.

The NT reinforces the relevance of Church history, from Christ's time until his return, with unmistakable seriousness in Christ's prophetic discourses in the gospels (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), in the apostolic epistles (2 Thessalonians 2; 1 Timothy 4; 1 John; 2 Peter 2-3), and most comprehensively in John's Apocalypse. It is essential for Christian eschatology to recognize that Christ predicted that the imminent destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies would be a fulfillment of Daniel's proph-

[2] See L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (4 volumes; Washington: Review and Herald, 1946-1954).

ecies (see Matt 24:15; Luke 21:20-24). This implies Christ's endorsement of the view that the fourth beast of Daniel 7 represents pagan Rome (cf. Dan 9:26-27).

Scholars who interpret the prophetic sections of the NT without proper consideration of the underlying Danielic composition and matrix are bound to produce one-sided and contradictory theories, as many NT commentaries and monographs[3] with but few exceptions[4] show.

The prophetic outline of Church history by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 forms an important and illuminating link between Daniel and Revelation.[5] In his view, knowledge of the sequential order of basic events in the coming history of the Church was essential to meet the unjustified imminency-expectation of Christ's coming in his time. Paul's warning focuses on the coming of the religious apostasy of the "man of lawlessness" within the NT temple of God on earth, within the Church as an institution,[6] an apostasy that will remain until the glorious return of Christ:

> Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion (*hē apostasia*) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thess 2:3-4 *RSV*).

Two features characterize Paul's prophetic outline of uninterrupted Church history from his time until Christ's return, both of which deserve careful attention: (1) the chronological development—that is, the historical timing of the emergence of the "man of lawlessness" (or antichrist) within Church history; (2) the religious nature of his blasphemous messianic claims.[7] It becomes evident on close examination and comparison with the OT that Paul composed his antichrist description by conflating or blending three OT revelations concerning anti-God powers: (1) the historical timing of the rise of the anti-Messiah in Daniel 7, 8 and 11; (2) the religious blasphemy of self-deification by the kings of Tyre and

[3] A typical example is C. H. Giblin, *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Re-examination of 2 Thessalonians 2* (AnBib 31; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967). Recognizing Paul's dependence on Dan 11:36 in 2 Thess 2:4, he dismisses any consideration of Daniel's own theological message and influence by stating: "And the context which Paul deems most relevant is that of his own catechesis (vs 5) . . . revealing no minute dependence on a given source" (p. 63).

[4] Cf. the instructive study of C. Wordsworth, *Is The Papacy Predicted by St. Paul? An Inquiry* (3d ed.; Cambridge: The Harrison Trust, 1985); cf. also *Union With Rome* (London: Thynne and Jarris, 1924). See also C. A. Auberlen, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John, Viewed in Their Mutual Relation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1856).

[5] The Church father Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 25, already explained Daniel 7 by means of 2 Thessalonians 2 (ANF, 1. 554).

[6] Cf. 2 Cor 6:16-18; 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:19-21. Giblin, *Threat* 77, astutely comments on the "temple" in 2 Thess 2:4: "The view that the earthly temple [in Jerusalem] is meant does not accord with the view of Jerusalem in Gal 4:25-26."

[7] The following section is a summary of R. K. LaRondelle, "Paul's Prophetic Outline in 2 Thessalonians 2," *AUSS* 21 (Spring 1983) 61-69.

Babylon in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14; (3) the final destruction of the wicked one by the glorious appearance of the King Messiah in Isaiah 11.

One can see the literary and thematic allusions of 2 Thess 2:4 to the OT prophecies more clearly in the following survey (*RSV* translation):

2 Thessalonians	*OT Passages*
2:4a who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god	Dan 11:36 he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above very god
2:4b so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God	Ezek 28:2 You have said, "I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods"
2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth	Isa 11:4 And he [the Davidic Messiah] shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked

These three concept allusions to the eschatological anti-God king in Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah are fused together by Paul to inform the saints how to identify and recognize the antichrist when he arises in the Church age, even within organized Christendom as the NT "temple of God" on earth (cf. Acts 20:29-31).

There is no doubt that Paul uses the NT hermeneutic of Christian typology in his application of God's OT promises and threats for Israel to the Church (see e.g. 1 Cor 10:1-11; Gal 4:21-31). The relationship of an OT type and a NT antitype is determined exclusively by their theological qualifications to Yahweh (prior to the cross) and to Christ. In this bifocal prophetic perspective the temporal distance between type and antitype is of no concern to the classical prophets. The blending of type and antitype within the OT prophetic outlook shows no regard for the intermediate time span. Classical prophecy rather stresses that the same God, who acts in the imminent historical fulfillment, will also act in the final apocalyptic judgment and salvation.

In this way Paul applied the self-idolization of the kings of Tyre and Babylon (Ezek 28:2; Isa 14:13-14) typologically to the eschatological antichrist (2 Thess 2:4). He is the religious rebel in the Christian age who not only will teach as a false prophet but will also assert himself as a false Messiah.[8]

[8] Giblin, *Threat* 69, even describes the "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thess 2:3 as "the false prophet *par excellence*," referring to v. 9 (his pseudo-parousia) and to Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22; Rev 13:13-14; 19:20; Deut 13:1.

I. PAUL'S HISTORICAL TIMING OF THE ANTICHRIST

Paul's specific pastoral burden in 2 Thessalonians 2 is to correct the false view among the Thessalonian Christians that the day of the Lord has begun already (2 Thess 2:3). He reminds them of his explicit oral teachings that "first" (*prōtos*, omitted in *NIV*) the predicted rebellion (*hē apostasia*) must arise within the "temple of God." Only after this development has occurred will the day of Christ break in and destroy "the lawless one" by "the splendor of his coming" (2:3-8 *NIV*).

In Paul's view, true knowledge of the sequential order of these major events was essential to cure the Thessalonians' apocalyptic fever. He introduced, however, the element of retardation of the coming antichrist because of the presence of a restraining power: "And you know what is restraining him now" (2:6 *NIV*). The apostolic Church apparently had no question about the identity of this "restraining" power. They knew what is was. It is interesting that most of the early fathers in the postapostolic Church taught that the civil order of the Roman empire, with the emperor at its head, was the hindering power Paul referred to in 2:6-7.[9] In spite of various new theories, several leading scholars today maintain that "the classical interpretation . . . is quite satisfying."[10]

Pagan Rome ruled the world from 168 B.C. till A.D. 476 and was destroyed before the ten kingdoms or nations of Europe arose on her territory. In Daniel 7 the blasphemous "little horn" arises not during but after the Roman empire will have been divided into ten simultaneously ruling kingdoms (Dan 7:7-8, 24). This historical sequence in Daniel's outline—first the "beast" and then the rise of the antichristian "horn"—lies at the basis of Paul's historical outline in 2 Thessalonians 2. Only when held against the background of this historical perspective of Daniel 7 can we expect to understand the riddle of Paul's mysterious "restrainer," who hinders the development of the antichrist.

More important of course than the "restrainer" is what Paul writes about the coming "man of lawlessness" (*anthrōpos tēs anomias*) or, according to less authoritative manuscripts, "man of sin" (*hamartias*).[11] Without providing an historical identification the apostle states that the public unveiling of "the lawless one" (*ho anomos*, 2 Thess 2:8) will come only after a protracted historical process of the secret working of forces that were already active in Paul's own time (v. 7). Paul places the actual unveiling of the lawless one, however, immediately after the Roman empire (as the "restrainer") will be "taken out of the way" (2:7)—in other words, not before the Roman empire has expired. The implication seems

[9] See J. T. Forestell in *JBC*, 2. 234.

[10] G. E. Ladd, *The Last Things* (Grand Rapids, 1978) 68. See discussion in Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1974) 560, concerning the interpretations of dispensationalism (the restrainer is the Holy Spirit) and of O. Cullmann (it is Paul himself and his missionary mission). Cf. also R. H. Charles, *Eschatology* (New York, 1963) 440; J. B. Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York, 1973) 565.

[11] See *TCGNT* 635.

to be that the very place and throne occupied by the restrainer will be occupied subsequently by the lawless one.

The implication of Paul's message in 2 Thessalonians 2 is unmistakable: When the empire of the city of Rome will have fallen, the rise of the antichrist will no longer be restrained or held back in Rome. Consequently the antichrist must be revealed without delay in the subsequent age, commonly called the era of the middle ages. This prolonged age was described by Daniel as the time of the "ten horns," symbolically represented by the three and a half times of political oppression of the true saints (Dan 7:25; 12:7). It is in this Christian era of time that Paul locates the apostasy that will arise "in God's temple." Anglican bishop Christopher Wordsworth[12] has drawn the inevitable logical conclusion:

> Since, also, the Man of Sin is described here by St. Paul as continuing in the world from the time of the removal of the restraining Power even to the Second Advent of Christ (vs. 8), therefore the Power here personified in the "Man of Sin" must be one that has continued in the world for many centuries, and continues to the present time. Also, since it has this long continuance assigned to it in the prophecy, a continuance very far exceeding the life of any one individual, therefore the "Man of Sin" cannot be a single person.

The purpose of the Apocalypse of John is to encourage the universal Church down through the ages until the very end to withstand the deceptive and persecuting power of the antichrist-beast and of his ally, the false prophet, and to overcome the eschatological mark of the beast when it will be superimposed on the nations. While Paul's letter to the Thessalonians focuses on the fourth beast of Daniel 7 and thereby teaches us that Daniel's "little horn" (in chaps. 7 and 8) could not arise during the Roman empire, John's Apocalypse focuses sharply on Daniel's "little horn" himself. John recasts this anti-Messiah power as a composite beast coming out of the sea (Revelation 13) and having the features of Daniel's little horn who will rule the nations for forty-two months (Rev 13:5), a variant of the three and a half times (Dan 7:25). This prophetic time symbolism in Daniel and Revelation should be applied therefore to the period subsequent to the fall of Rome in A.D. 476. This in turn brings the middle ages within the scope of Biblical apocalyptic.

In summary, Paul's outline and historical application of Daniel in 2 Thessalonians 2 endorses the continuous-historical approach rather than the contemporary-historical or futurist constructs.

II. THE RELIGIOUS NATURE OF PAUL'S ANTICHRIST

It deserves special attention that Paul describes "the apostasy" (*hē apostasia*) of the coming "son of lawlessness," one who denies both true Christian worship and all heathen worship: "he opposes . . . everything

[12] Wordsworth, *Papacy* 15.

that is called God or is worshiped" (2 Thess 2:4 *NIV*).[13] He will exalt himself to the point of self-deification within the NT temple of God "so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2:4 *NASB*). This specific cultic characterization of the antichrist Paul derived apparently from Daniel's predicted anti-Messiah (see Dan 7:25; 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11). In the prophecies of Daniel the eschatological "little horn," or self-deifying king, invades the holy land, intrudes the sanctuary of God and of his Messiah, and desecrates the divine cultus of the sanctuary worship by replacing the divine law and cultus that was regulated by its sacred times (e.g. the Sabbath, 7:25)[14] by his own disastrous "abomination," the horrifying worship of himself as the "god of fortresses," unknown to the covenant people (11:31, 36-38).

The predicted apostasy and rebellion against the Messiah in Daniel's apocalypse Paul condenses and sums up in his description of the religious antichrist who will seize control of the sanctuary of God on earth (2 Thess 2:4). He seems particularly interested to cast the antichrist into the image of a false Christ, because he describes him in need of being "revealed" in his "coming" (2:3, 8-9), terms that he applies equally to Christ (both have an *apokalypsis* and a *parousia*; cf. 1:7; 2:8). This may suggest that Paul viewed the antichrist theologically as a rival messiah[15] whose "coming" is a parody of the coming of Christ.[16]

As R. H. Charles expressed it: "Thus as the revelation of God culminated in Christ, so the manifestation of evil will culminate in Antichrist, whose parousia (2 Thess 2:9) is the Satanic counterfeit of the true Messiah."[17] This astute observation indicates that Paul did not think of the antichrist as an atheistic power but as a staunchly religious one, who will claim to speak instead of and on behalf of Christ. Already Irenaeus had declared that the antichrist of 2 Thessalonians 2 would be a religious "apostate" who would lead astray those worshiping him "as if he were Christ."[18]

F. F. Bruce judges that Paul must have meant by "temple" here the "material shrine" of the temple in Jerusalem, because the idea that antichrist will establish his power base in the Christian Church "is inapplicable at this early stage, when there was no united church organization which could provide such a power base."[19] This assessment fails

[13] W. Foerster concludes from Paul's description that the antichrist will exalt himself also above all pagan gods of the Roman empire and therefore could come only after the fall of Rome; *TSK* 104 (1932) 301.

[14] L. F. Hartman, in *JBC* (on Dan 7:25), refers to the efforts of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to do away with the Sabbath and the whole Mosaic law (see 1 Macc 1:41-64). But Daniel 7 and 8 refer to the eschatological antichrist, who shall rise after the fall of pagan Rome.

[15] So F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Waco: Word, 1982) 167.

[16] So W. von Meding in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 3. 784; cf. also Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* 173.

[17] Charles, *Eschatology* 439.

[18] *Against Heresies* 25 (ANF, 1. 554).

[19] Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* 169.

not only to consider the sacred calendar of Daniel's prophecies as the indispensable background of 2 Thessalonians 2 but also suffers from underestimating the value of the repeated use of "temple" (*naos*) within the total corpus of Paul's writings (to the Corinthians and the Ephesians).

The careful evaluation of the various interpretations of *naos* in 2 Thess 2:4 by Roman Catholic scholar Charles H. Giblin concludes that the Pauline texts 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21 "solidly base the view that the Church is meant." He stresses: "An ecclesial interpretation is supported by the wider context of Paul's use of cult-imagery."[20]

Specifically significant is Paul's designation that the apostate one will "take his seat" in the NT temple of God. This bold image reminds us of Daniel's vision in which the Ancient of Days "took his seat" to judge the arrogant, self-deifying powers on earth. In the light of this Danielic background of the judgment seat, Paul's typecasting of the arch-adversary becomes even bolder: "The Rebel would set himself up as teacher or judge in the Church."[21]

Paul is offering here, however, more than pastoral admonition concerning what might happen. Paul's apocalyptic forecast is based on Daniel's inspired and determined outline of salvation history. He applies this Danielic outline according to the apostolic principle of the gospel hermeneutic: as being fulfilled in Christ and in the institutional Church of Christ.

The horrifying apostasy predicted in Daniel 7; 8; 11 will arise within the new-covenant people or the messianic community, as the scheme of a false dogmatic teacher, and as the deception of a false Christ and the religious-cultic worship of himself. On the other hand, full recognition is due to Christ's promise that the gates of hell never can totally overcome his Church (Matt 16:18) and that his elect will not be deceived if they remain on their guard (Mark 13:22-23).[22] This apparent tension in NT ecclesiology is reflected already in Paul's catechetical warning in 1 Cor 11:19 and in his prophetic forecast to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31. It became indeed a serious threat in some apostolic churches in Roman Asia (Rev 2:19-29; cf. 1 John 2:18-27). It was made, however, the central theme in John's Apocalypse: in the symbolic portrayal of the two separate women in Revelation 12 and 17. Here the true Christian Church and the apostate Church are portrayed not only in terms of dogmatic-cultic divergences but also as institutional divisions.

[20] Giblin, *Threat* 78 (see 76-80).

[21] Ibid. 80. He interprets Paul's portrayal in 2 Thess 2:4 as indicating only "the gravity of the affront to what is God's," which will remain, however, an "unrealistic attempt" (pp. 79-80). He appeals dogmatically to Christ's promise that the elect will be deceived by false Christs and false prophets only "if that were possible" (Mark 13:22; Matt 24:24).

[22] I. H. Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (London: Epworth, 1969) 52-54, examines Mark 13:22 and concludes: "The possibility that the elect may be led astray cannot be ruled out" because "the saying is immediately followed by a warning to watch (Mark 13:23)" (54, 78 n. 90).

Significant is Paul's theological description that the "man of lawlessness" will come "according to Satan's activity"—that is, Satan will energize and authorize the antichrist by powerful "counterfeit miracles" (2 Thess 2:9).[23]

A similar theological description is given of the satanic energizing of the sea beast in Revelation 13: "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority" (Rev 13:2 *NIV*).

Paul refers further to the satanic activity of evil: "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work" (2 Thess 2:7 *NIV*). Here the apostle recognizes that an evil force was operating in a hidden way behind human activity, determined to gain the supremacy over the Church of Christ. This antichristian scheme was at first suppressed or held back from its realization by the restraining political power of Paul's time (v. 6). Nevertheless when the restrainer would be removed the forces of apostasy would emerge immediately and become publicly revealed in the Christian middle ages.

In Paul's writings the term "mystery" carries the basic concept of the truth of redemption, once kept secret by God but now disclosed to the saints in the gospel of Christ (see Rom 16:25-26; Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:26-27; 1 Cor 2:7). The content of this mystery is the redemptive plan of God to save humanity through union with Christ. The divine "mystery" was personified in Christ as the great "mystery of godliness": God revealed in human flesh (1 Tim 3:16). When Paul, however, speaks of "the mystery of lawlessness" he has apparently in mind the very opposite of the revealed truth of God in Christ: It is the mystery characterized by lawlessness, to be manifested in the coming "man of lawlessness." From Paul's teachings, then, may be derived the following points of instruction concerning the antichrist: (1) This "mystery" will never be inoperative since the apostolic age but will rather be "continuously operative from St. Paul's time down to the last days."[24] Consequently the incessant satanic activity does not permit us to locate "the mystery of lawlessness" exclusively in some isolated historical period in the past or in the future, as the theories of preterism or futurism postulate. The very opposite is taught by Paul: After the fall of Rome this mystery of rebellion will be active without restraint (2 Thess 2:7). (2) This satanic secret is, however, known to the true elect of Christ, because they "are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Cor 2:11 *NASB*). Enlightened by the divine wisdom coming from the book of Daniel (see Dan 11:33; 12:10) they know that Satan's attack is aimed at God's kingship and his plan of redemption, centered in the sanctuary with its sacred law and gospel. (3) By analogy with the "mystery of

[23] Bruce concludes perceptively from Paul's threefold phrase "miracles, signs and wonders" (2 Thess 2:9) that "here again the ministry of Jesus is parodied" to deceive the earth-dwellers (cf. Matt 24:24; Acts 2:22); *1 and 2 Thessalonians* 173.

[24] P. H. Furfey, "The Mystery of Lawlessness," *CBQ* 8 (1946) 188. He presents an instructive review of the basic interpretations of the Church fathers and of the later theologians regarding the "mystery of lawlessness."

godliness," as God's plan of disclosing his humility in Jesus and of his gospel of salvation through union with Christ, the "mystery of lawlessness" indicates Satan's malign plan to oppose and frustrate God's plan by means of a diabolical counterplan and countercultus that exalts the false priest-messiah. Paul H. Furfey defines the Pauline phrase with profound insight: "In a parallel fashion, the mystery of lawlessness, Satan's counterplan, is a fixed diabolical purpose, a continuing scheme, to oppose the realization of the divine decree [of redemption]."[25]

In short, the apostle alerts the Church to be on guard against the deception of a false teacher of Christendom who will claim to speak in Christ's stead. Paul warns against a coming counterfeit gospel and cultic worship. Above all, Paul points to the cosmic source of this master deception: It is Satan's scheme and achievement. In this perspective Paul further developed Daniel's apocalyptic outlook. More than any other prophet, Daniel had disclosed the cosmic battle between God and Satan as the energizing source of the ongoing religious conflicts on the terrestrial scene.

In summary, Paul's theological interpretation and historical application of Daniel's eschatological antichrist form an essential interpretative link between Daniel and Revelation.

Paul's prophetic revelation in 2 Thessalonians 2 provides the apostolic confirmation of the continuous-historical approach of Daniel's apocalyptic prophecies. The apostle characterizes the coming Christian apostasy as a counterfeit cultic worship, authorized by a rival Messiah, who will rise within the Christian temple of God soon after the fall of pagan Rome.

[25] Ibid. 190.