



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

<http://www.puritansermons.com/>

The Coming of Christ Desired by Christians

By Thomas Manton

Sermon One of 18 Sermons on 2 Thess 2:1-3

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, that the day of Christ is at hand.” — 2 Thess. 2:1,2.

The former chapter was spent in a consolation against troubles, this in a caution against error, or to rectify their judgments concerning the time of Christ’s second coming. In these two first verses, we have the manner of proposal, ver. 1; the matter proposed, ver. 2.

1. The manner of proposal is very emotionally stirring, by way of a solemn charge and call upon God as a witness.

2. The matter. An error had crept in among the Thessalonians concerning the speedy and immediate coming of Christ to judgment, while they were yet alive; which error the devil set on foot to subvert their faith and expose the whole Christian doctrine to contempt.

First, The manner or calling on God as a witness falleth first under our consideration, in which two things are mentioned: —

1. The coming of Christ.

2. Their gathering together unto him. Calls for heavenly witnesses are charges by those things which have great reverence and respect with us, as most likely to prevail. Now the two things are mentioned: —

[1.] As weighty: 2 Tim. 4:1, ‘I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearance and his kingdom.’

[2.] This was the article mistaken and perverted as to one circumstance, the time; but the thing is taken for granted as an unquestionable truth, and the support of all their hopes: 2 Thes. 1:10, ‘When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.’

[3.] This was a famous Christian doctrine with which the apostles usually began, in planting religion in any place: 1 Thes. 5:1-3, 'But of the times and the seasons ye have no reason that I write unto you, for ye yourselves know *perfectly* that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,' &c.

[4.] It was of precious account with them: 2 Tim. 4:8, 'Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing.' So that the call for Christ to witness implieth both the certainty of their belief, and also their dear account of this article of faith; and therefore the sense is: As you do assuredly expect him, and love, and look, and long for this day, that it may go well with you, and Christ appear to your glory, so be not troubled.

Doct. 1. That the coming of Christ to the judgment is a truth well known, firmly believed, and earnestly desired by all true Christians.

Doct. 2. That when Christ shall come, all the saints shall be gathered together unto him.

Doct. 1. That the coming of Christ to the judgment is a truth well known, firmly believed, and earnestly desired by all the saints.

1. That it is well known, the apostle produceth the testimony of Enoch: Jude 14, 'Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.' David often mentioneth it as a thing delighted in by believers; therefore, in a poetical, or rather prophetical strain, he calleth upon the heavens, earth, sea, and fields to rejoice 'before the Lord, for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth,' Ps. 96:13; and again, Ps. 98:9, he calleth upon the creatures to rejoice 'before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity;' passages which relate, not only to the kingdom of the Messiah, as it is exercised now in the world, but also to his final act of judging, till which time they are not fully verified. Solomon bindeth the whole duty of man upon him by this consideration: Eccles. 12:13, 14, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;' for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. And the apostles, when they went abroad to proselytise the world, usually began with this point.

2. That this is firmly believed by all true Christians. This must needs be so, because it is the grand inducement to all piety and godliness, and none ever disbelieved it but those the interest of whose lusts engaged them to question it: 2 Peter 3:3-5, 'Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of,' &c. *Willingly ignorant*; their self-interest puts them upon it, rather than their conscience, because this doctrine filleth them with unquiet thoughts, that they cannot so securely follow their sinful practices till they blot out the fear of it, or banish the thoughts of it out of their hearts. But all that obey the teachings of grace (take it for objective or subjective grace), they firmly believe it: Titus 2:11-13, 'For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' The sound belief of it is not so much encountered with the doubts of the mind, as the inclinations of their perverse hearts. Now, the seeming reasons of partial men are not to be heard, especially as delivered in a scoffing, malicious way; and on the other side, godliness and mortification standeth upon such evident reason as man's unquestionable duty, that it needeth not to be maintained by a lie and manifest falsehood. Certainly, they that deny it do not so much reason against this article of our Christian faith as scoff at it; and it is to be imputed to the malignity of their tempers, rather than the acuteness or sharpness of their reason that they do not believe it. Many things which they urge are a manifest token of the contrary; as the calamities of the good: 2 Thes. 1:4, 5, 'So that we glory in you for your faith and patience in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God.' The perversion of justice: Eccles. 3:16, 17, 'And moreover, I saw under the Sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there; I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. Things must be reviewed and judged over again. A state-engine to serve order and government. Doth the benefit of mankind need a lie to promote it? Doth carnal interest govern the world, or virtue? If mere carnal interest, what a confusion would there be of all things? Then men might commit all villainy, take away men's lives and goods when it is their interest, or they could do it safely and secretly, without infringement of their interest; servants poison their masters, if they could do it without discovery, and there were no sin in it; men prey upon others, if it be in the power of their hands;

and ‘catch he that catch can,’ without impunity, would be the truest wisdom. Clear it is, virtue cannot be supported without the thoughts of a world to come; and it is unreasonable to imagine that God would make a world which cannot be governed without falsehood and deceit.

3. That it is earnestly desired by all true Christians. That is of chief respect here; for the apostle implores them by all that is dear and sacred in their most holy faith; and upon this I will mainly spend the first part of this discourse. I shall prove it by these two choice pieces of scripture, which describe the communion of the church with Christ, or the dispensations of Christ to the church; the one concerneth God’s internal, the other his external government — the Canticles and Revelations. The book of Canticles is ended with this desire, aspiration, and wish: Cant. 8:14, ‘Make haste my beloved, and be like a young hart or roe upon the mountains of spices.’ The bride’s last and great suit to the bridegroom is ‘make haste,’ as to his coming in glory to judge the world; not that Christ is slack, but the church’s affections are strong. They that go a-whoring after the world neither desire his coming, nor love his appearing; but the spouse would have all things hastened that he might return. He cannot come soon enough to set the world to rights and complete their happiness; it is that only that will perfect their consolation, and therefore would have the blessed and longed-for meeting hastened. In the other book, of the Revelations, see how it is closed: Rev. 22:20, Christ saith, ‘Surely I come quickly;’ and the church, like a quick echo, saith ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly. It taketh the word out of Christ’s mouth, and presently improveth the promise into a prayer, and so Christ’s voice and the church’s voice are unisons. The acclamation of the saints answereth to his proclamation. Christ saith, ‘I come,’ as desiring to meet with us. The church answereth, ‘Even so, come,’ as desiring his fellowship and company. When once faith apprehendeth the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus to judgment, love presently desireth it, as the most comfortable thing which we can ask of him; that is the farewell suit of the church to Christ. If he will grant this, all complaints, and sorrow, and sighing will be no more.

Now I shall give you reasons why this is desired by all true Christians.

1. In respect of him who is to come: his person, that we may see him who is our great Lord and Saviour. All that believed anything of Christ desired to see him; those that lived before his coming in the flesh: John 8:56, ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad;’ and the same affection possesseth us that live after his coming in the flesh. We know him by hearsay, we have heard much of him; he wooeth us by a proxy, as Eliezer, Abraham’s servant, did Rebekah. Now, Christians desire to see him of whom they

have heard, and whom they loved, and in whom they have believed: 1 Peter 1:8, 'Whom having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' They do not see Christ, but they have a taste of his goodness: 1 Peter 2:3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' They have felt his comforts and live by his life; all that is lacking is but physical vision, that they may see him face to face; therefore they long for his coming.

The excellency of Christ their Head shall then be fully revealed; therefore it is comfortable to his saints to think of his second coming. It is called, 'the revelation of Christ,' 1 Peter 1:13. Christ is now under a veil, retired within the curtain of the heavens. The wicked often ask, Where is now your God? And our own unbelieving hearts are apt to question the glory of his person and the truth of his promises, when his most faithful servants are under disgrace. Christ is a glorious king, but little of his glory is seen in the world; therefore they desire that he may appear in glory and royalty; we pray that his kingdom may come.

2. The persons desiring; there is somewhat in them to move them to it.

[1.] The Spirit of Christ: Rev. 22:17, 'The Spirit in the bride saith, Come;' the Holy Ghost breedeth this desire in the church. Nature saith, It is good to be here; but this is a disposition above nature. The flesh saith, Depart; but the Spirit saith, Come. The great work of the Spirit is to bring us and Christ together; he cometh from the Father and the Son to bring us to the Father by the Son; his business is to marry us to Christ; the promise being passed, the spouse longeth to see her beloved. It is the Spirit kindleth a desire in us of his second coming, when the marriage that is now contracted shall be consummated; when the queen shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework, and shall enter into the palace with him, there to abide for ever. Well, then, though guilty sinners would have Christ stay away still, and if it might go by voices, the carnal world would never give their voice this way, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;' no, they are of the devils' mind, 'Why art thou come to torment us before the time?' Mat. 8:29. Thieves and malefactors, if they might have the liberty to choose, they would never look nor long for the day of court-session; but the Spirit in the bride is another thing, it giveth us other inclinations: the sooner Christ cometh the better; they can never be soon enough taken up to him, nor he come to them.

[2.] There are graces planted in us, faith, hope, and love, to move us earnestly to desire his coming.

(1.) Faith believeth Christ will be as good as his word: 'I will come again; if it were not so, I would have told you,' John 14:2. And if Christ saith in a way of

promise, 'I come,' the church saith, 'Amen,' in a way of faith, 'even so, come.' If Christ had gone away in discontent, and with a threat in his mouth, 'Ye shall never see my face more, we should altogether despair of seeing him again; but he parted in love, and left a promise with us, which upholdeth the hearts of believers during his absence. Would Christ deceive us, and flatter us into a fools' paradise? What need that? He can strike us dead in an instant if we do not please him, and we have hitherto found him true in all things, and will he fail us at last?

(2.) Hope, which is faith's handmaid; it looketh for that which we do believe, it is the immediate effect of the new creature: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Begotten to a lively hope;' as soon as grace is infused, it discovereth itself by its tendency to its end and rest; it came from heaven, and carrieth the soul thither.

(3.) Love is an affection of union; it desireth to be with the party loved: Phil. 1:23, 'I desire to depart, and to be with Christ;' therefore its voice is, 'Come, come.' He hath communion with us in our houses of clay; therefore we desire presence with him in his palace of glory. His voice now is very sweet when he saith, 'Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden,' but much more will it be so when he saith, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit a kingdom prepared for you before the foundations of the world were laid.' Reconciliation with God is comfortable, but what will fruition be!

[3.] Look upon a Christian's privileges; believers then find the fruit of their interest in him, and have their reward adjudged to them: Rev. 22:12, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.' Christ doth not come empty-handed: it is but maintenance we have from him now, but then wages; earnest now, but then the full sum; it is our pay-day, yea, rather, it is our crowning-day: 2 Tim. 4:8, 'Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will give me in that day;' I Peter 5:4, 'When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.' Those that have been faithful and diligent in their duty shall not need to seek another paymaster; that which Christ giveth us in hand is worth all the pains that we lay out in his service; grace and inward peace: but then we shall have glory and honour; he will honour us in the sight of those that have opposed, contradicted, and despised us: our comfort is hidden, but our glory is sensible, and visible, and public before all the world.

Object. But how can true Christians earnestly desire it, when so many tremble at the thought of it, for lack of assurance of God's love?

Ans. We suppose a Christian in a right frame, and one that doth prepare for his coming; but —

1. The lowliest saint hath some inclination this way. It was one of the points of the apostolical catechism: Heb. 6:2, ‘The doctrine of resurrection from the dead, and of eternal judgment:’ and the apostolical catechism was for the initiating or entering of Christians into the faith and profession of the gospel: when they laid the foundation, this was one truth which was never omitted, the coming of Christ to judgment. Now faith is a believing, not with the mind only, but the heart; they were to be affected with what they did believe — *sapida scientia* (a relishing knowledge) was the qualification — and not with trembling only, for that would deter them from Christianity; but with rejoicing of hope, which did invite them to the practice of it: Heb. 3:6, ‘Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;’ and indeed what other affection can become the thought of Christ’s rewards which he will bring with him?

2. Sometimes there may be a drowsiness and indisposition in the children of God when their lamps are not kept burning: Luke 12:37, ‘Blessed are those servants whom, when the Lord cometh, he shall find watching;’ but the wise virgins slumbered as well as the foolish; and so for a season they may be unprepared for his coming by carelessness or remission of their watchfulness and neglect of preparation, yet the spirit and inclination this way beginneth with the new birth. A wife desireth her husband’s coming home after a long journey, but it may be all things are not ready and in so good order: all good Christians desire the coming of Christ, but sometimes they are not so exact and accurate in their walkings, and therefore their affections are not so lively; security breedeth deadness, and God is willing to rouse us up by sharp afflictions.

3. The church doth really and heartily desire Christ’s coming, though they tremble at some circumstances of his coming: there is a degree of bondage that hindereth much of our confidence and boldness: I John 4:17, 18, ‘Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love.’ While we are imperfect there may be some fears how it shall go with us in the judgment. The day of judgment may be considered in *esse rei*, or *in esse cognito*, — the success of the day itself, that we may stand before Christ in the judgment, or in our apprehension of it, that we may think of it with boldness, confidence, and desire. All sincere persons shall speed well in the judgment; but while we are thus weak and imperfect, we have little confidence of our sincerity. Certainly the more holy we are, the more we are emboldened against judgment to come; therefore we

must every day get a conscience soundly established against the fears of hell and damnation.

4. To be of such a temper as not at all to value, and prize, and delight in it, quencheth all sense of godliness and religion. Surely they are not touched with any fear of God who wish it would never come, who would be glad in their heart to hear such news; they have the spirit of the devil in them who count his coming their burden and torment; they cannot say the Lord's Prayer without a fear to be heard, and pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' when they desire it may never be; the thought of it casts a damp on their carnal rejoicing; and he that is afraid lest his prayers prove true, can never pray heartily; no, not with a moral sincerity.

Use. To press us to keep up a firm belief and an earnest desire of Christ's coming; this will make you heavenly-minded: Phil. 3:20, 21, 'For our conversation is in heaven, where we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' It will engage you to fidelity in your duty; for every one of us must give an account of himself to God: 1 John 2:28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' To watchfulness as well as faithfulness: Luke 21:36, 'Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.' Yea, to diligence, that you may make clear your title and interest: Heb. 9:28, 'And to them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation;' 2 Peter 3:14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' Oh, therefore, let this be a precious truth to you, which you would not forego for all the world; if others tremble at the mention of it, still carry it so that it may be your comfort and solace. In short, believe it strongly, think of it frequently, prepare for it diligently, make good use of it fruitfully, to all holy conversation and godliness, yea, to get oil not into your lamps only, but vessels, — grace in your hearts, as well as profess yourselves to be Christians.

Doct. 2. That when Christ shall come, all the saints shall be gathered together unto him.

For evidencing this, let me clear to you, that at the day of judgment there shall be: — 1. A congregation. 2. A segregation. 3. An aggregation.

They are all intended, but principally the last.

1. A congregation: Mat. 25:32, 'Before him shall be gathered all nations;' and not only all nations, but all persons: 2 Cor. 5:10, 'We must all (*collectively*) appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one (*distributively*) may receive according to the things done in his body,' &c. All that have lived from the beginning of the world unto that day shall, without exception of any one single person, from the least unto the greatest, appear before the tribunal of Christ; no age, no sex, or nation, or dignity, or greatness, can excuse us. In the world some are too high to be questioned, others too low to be taken notice of, but there all are brought forth to undergo their trial; there is no escaping or avoiding this day of appearance: Adam will there meet with all his descendents at once. Take all the distinctions of mankind, infants, and grown persons; I mean infants who die before they are in an ordinary way capable of the doctrine of life (the scriptures are written for grown persons, the case of infants is more obscure), those of them who are born within the church, God is their God: Gen. 17:7, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Good and bad is the next distinction, — both sorts come to receive their sentence; only the one come to the judgment of condemnation, the other to the judgment of absolution: John 5:28, 29, 'Those that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation;' Acts 24:15, 'There shall be a resurrection of the dead; both of the just and unjust.' The next distinction is men of all callings, — apostles, ministers, private Christians. Apostles: Paul expected to be judged: 1 Cor. 4:4, 'I know nothing of myself, yet am I not thereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord;' he speaketh with respect to the execution of the apostolical office. Ordinary ministers: Heb. 13:17, 'They watch for your souls, as those that must give an account.' If souls miscarry through their negligence, they are answerable to God for it. Ordinary Christians: Rom. 14:12, 'Every one must give an account of himself to God.' Men of all conditions, poor or rich, weak or powerful, high and low: Rev. 20:12, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;' I mean those that are so distinguished now; these distinctions do not outlive time, there all stand on the same level; the haughty men of the world shall then be afraid, and 'call upon the mountains to cover them from the wrath of him that sitteth upon the throne,' Rev. 6:16. The poor are not forgotten; they are God's creatures, and must undergo his judgment. Thus shall all people that live scattered up and down in the world, how much soever they differ from one another in rites, tongues, customs of living, be brought together in one place.

2. There is a segregation: Mat. 25:32, 33, 'He shall separate the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the

sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left.’ There may be now a confusion and mixture of the godly and the wicked, as sheep and goats feed in the same pasture; and they may be all raised together according to the places where they lived and died; but then a perfect separation: good and bad are first gathered together, but the good are drawn into a company by themselves, but no pure company, till the great Shepherd will ‘judge between cattle and cattle,’ Ezek. 34:17; ‘He will gather his saints together, Ps. 50:5; Ps. 1:5, The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.’ So Mat. 13:49, ‘At the end of the world the angels shall come, and sever the wicked from among the just.’

3. An aggregation: believers are gathered together to him for several ends:—

[1.] To make up the number of Christ’s train and attendants to wait on him: Jude 14, *eí ì òñéúóéí Qǎéáò* ‘with his holy ten thousands;’ Zech. 14:5, ‘And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with him;’ I Thes. 4:17, ‘The dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive shall be caught up together in the clouds with them, to meet the Lord in the air.’

[2.] That after judgment we may be solemnly presented to God each and every one. We were given to Christ to be preserved unto the glory we were designed for: John 17:6, ‘I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me;’ not by way of alienation, but oppignoration, recompense, and charge. Christ is to give an account: John 6:40, ‘And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’ The form of presentation is, Heb. 2:13, ‘Behold I and the children which God hath given me.’

[3.] That in one troop we may be brought into his heavenly kingdom: John 14:3, ‘And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.’ The whole flock shall then follow the great Shepherd of the sheep into the everlasting fold.

Use 1. Believe this gathering together to him. We are joined to the church of God’s elect now by faith only: Heb. 12:22,23, ‘Ye are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven,’ &c.

Ḑáíxǎòñéò is a meeting made up of many different persons gathered together from several countries into one body and one place; as the meeting of all sorts of

persons from all the corners of Greece to see the Olympic Games was called the *ᾄχαιῶν* (festal gathering); people of all countries came to behold their *Πάσις* (contests); so the mystical state of the church of the gospel is a general assembly, because it is not confined to one nation, but extended to believers of all nations and ages; they are drawn into a body, or heavenly society, into one fold, under one Shepherd; but they never meet in an actual assembly until the last day, which is the great congregation or rendezvous of the saints, so that for now it is a matter of faith.

2. See you be of the number. When some are admitted, others are thrust out: Luke 13:28, 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out;' the wicked shall not stand in this congregation. Oh, it is a blessed and a comfortable thing when we are made members of the mystical body of Christ, and have hopes that we shall be in the number of those that shall meet together in the great assembly and congregation of the righteous; that we are trained up in the church of Christ, which is the seminary of heaven; that we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints.

3. Let us make good use of it many ways.

[1.] To comfort us against the paucity of serious walkers and real Christians. Alas! now they are but like two or three berries upon the top of the uppermost bough; here one, and there another; in some places thinner, in others thicker, as God hath service for them; in appearance, *ἡ ἐκείνη ἡ οἴκη τῆς ἐκείνης*, 'a little flock,' Luke 12:32. But take all together, they are a general assembly, that are 'redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, and nation,' Rev. 5:9; yea, Rev. 7:9, 'a great multitude, which none can number, of all kindreds, tongues, peoples, and nations.' As few as we are, and as despised as the interest of the godly is, we shall not want company in heaven; we see few going to heaven, but when we are gathered together we shall see that our everlasting companions are many.

[2.] To comfort us against the distance of Christian friends. We are often separated from the society of good Christians whom we love dearly, but we shall be gathered together in one congregation. The saints are now scattered by Providence; they live in various countries, towns, houses, have little comfort of one another. They live where they may be most useful; as stars do not shine in a cluster, but are dispersed throughout the heaven; and as they are the light of the earth, so they are the salt of the earth, which is sprinkled here and there, not laid in a heap; sometimes by violence of men, persecution, and banishment; sometimes by death, which parts friends, *perfectus est quem putas mortuum* (that is finished

which is lopped off by death), like people in a wreck, got to shore before us. Now what a comfort is it to be united to all God's people, which have been, are, or shall be, to the end of the world, and to meet in one assembly: Mat. 24:31, 'They shall gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another.' The saints shall be gathered from all quarters of the earth; though they live in several places, several times, many we never saw in the flesh, Christ will assemble them all, bring them in unto one place.

[3.] To comfort them under the degenerated and collapsed state of Christianity. (1.) The mixture of the wicked; the good and bad are here mixed, they live together in the same kingdoms, cities, societies, visible church, family, bed (perhaps), but then a perfect separation: Zech. 14:21, 'There shall no more be the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts;' Rev. 21:27, 'Nothing that defileth shall enter there:' such a difference shall there be between the state of God's church in this world, and the world to come: here tares are mingled with wheat, good fish with bad in the drag-net; it is hard by discipline to keep the sound from the infected. (2.) Discord; the saints are divided in affection, but then perfect harmony; they are all gathered together to Christ, and have no signs and badges of distinction to herd apart. (3.) It is universal with *all* the saints. (4.) Perpetual, never to part more.

Be Not Soon Shaken in Mind

By Thomas Manton

Sermon Two of 18 on 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

“That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”— 2 Thes. 2:2.

We come now to the matter of the apostle’s caution, which is in the second verse: ‘That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.’ In which words take notice: —

Of the error disproved: that the day of Christ is at hand.

The effect which this error might produce; trouble and unsettledness of mind: that ye be not soon shaken in mind or troubled.

A removal of all the supposed foundations of this error, or the means which these impostors used to entice them to embrace it. Three are mentioned— spirit, word, and letter.

Nor by spirit; that is, pretence of spiritual revelation; be not soon shaken in mind by it.

Nor by word; some word of the apostle, which they pretended to have heard — and that is another sleight of deceivers; some tradition or doctrine delivered by the apostle by word of mouth.

Nor by letter as from us. This may be understood — (1.) Either of some passage in the former epistle; for the apostle saith there, I Thes. 4:17, ‘Then we

which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air;’ and because he joins himself with them, they thought he should survive until that day. Or else those warnings which the apostle gives them: 1 Thes. 5:1-3, ‘Of the times and seasons I need not write unto them, for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night,’ &c. Now these warnings they might abuse; and this is one way by which men may be unsettled and unshaken, i.e., by false glosses and interpretations of scripture. (2.) Or rather the sense may be, some spurious and counterfeit writings, which was one means of deceit used in the primitive times; supposititious or apocryphal legends, wherein the apostle might be said to write something, as if Christ should come in that age wherein they lived. Now, to obviate this, the apostle is supposed to insert that passage, chap. 3:17, ‘The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.’

First, From the error disproved, observe:—

Doct. That the time of Christ’s coming to judgment must be patiently expected, not rashly defined or determined; for this is the error which the apostle with such earnestness opposeth here.

But you will say, Is this such an error? Do not the holy apostles themselves say, in effect, the same, as the apostle James, chap. 5:8, ‘The coming of the Lord draweth nigh;’ and the apostle Peter, 1 Peter 4:7; ‘The end of all things is at hand.’ Yea, Paul himself, 1 Cor. 10:11, ‘These are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come;’ and Rom. 13:12, ‘The night is far spent, and the day is at hand;’ where by night is meant the state of Ignorance, sin, and paganism before conversion; and by the day is meant the state of our full regeneration and illumination in eternal glory, when the corrupt world shall come to an end, and all shadows shall fly away. As if he had said, The morning of the resurrection is at hand, the night is far spent — not quite past — and the day is at hand; the night is not thoroughly gone, nor the day wholly come, yet, he saith, it is at hand. What evil was in this opinion, that the apostle should with such vehemency argue and reason against it? Ans. There is some difference in the words, for *ἤγγισται* signifies, it draweth near; *ἤρξαται* it is begun already. But the sense is vastly different; for by these and such like expressions the apostle only did intend that the last dispensation was then on foot—no other change of dispensation or worship was to be expected till the coming of Christ. But I shall more clearly and distinctly show —

What reason the apostle had to speak in this manner.

What little reason these seducers had to pervert this speech to countenance their hypothesis or supposition.

1. For the first, the apostle had reason to say the day of the Lord was at hand.

With respect of faith; for faith gives a kind of presence to things: Heb. 11:1, 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;' that is, it gives a being, a kind of existence, to things future and afar off, and sets them before the eyes of our mind, and gives us some sight of them, as if they were already come. And therein it agrees with the light of prophecy. Look, as by the light of prophecy John saith, Rev. 20:12, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened,' &c., so faith doth in effect see what it believes. Well, then, faith looking upon things distant and absent as near at hand, the apostle had reason to use this language to believers, as if the judge were at the door: Phil. 4:5, 'Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand,' not only in regard of his present providence, but also with respect to his second coming to judgment; it is as certain to faith as if he were already come.

With respect of love: love will not account it long to endure the hardships of this present world until Christ come to set all things at rights. Jacob served seven years for Rachel 'for the love he bare to her, and it seemed to him but a little while,' Gen. 29:20. If we had any love for Christ, we should be contented to suffer a while for his sake. The time is coming when the wicked shall persecute no more, when the mouth of iniquity shall be stopped, when the desire and hope of all believers shall be satisfied, when the Redeemer's work shall be consummated, when the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, when those that made a jest of this day shall be fully confuted. Faith sees the certainty of it, and love makes us hold out till the time come about.

The apostle might speak so, as comparing time with eternity: Ps. 90:4, 'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night;' 2 Peter 3:8, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' The longest time to eternity is but as a drop lost and spilt in the ocean; and all the tediousness of the present life is but like one rainy day to an everlasting sunshine: 2 Cor. 4:17, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Though troubles are lengthened as long as our lives are, yet they are but a moment in respect of eternity; we reckon by time, and not by eternity, and therefore these expressions may seem strange to us.

The apostle speaks this to particular men, whose abode in the world is not very long. Eternity and the judgment is at hand, though Christ tarry long till the church be completed, and the elect be gathered: 2 Peter 3:9, 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.' Now, what is long, and what is afar off to the whole church, considered in several successions of ages, it is short to particular persons. Death soon puts an end to their conflict, and then their triumph ensues. And so Christ is ready to judge at all times, though the world be not ready to be judged. The coming of Christ is uncertain, and hidden for this very purpose, that men in all ages might be quickened to faithfulness and watchfulness, and make that preparation which is necessary. Now, therefore, it concerns the messengers of God to bind men's duty upon them, by showing the nearness of it in all the fore-mentioned considerations, that they might be always ready; for so we find our Lord himself pressing it: Luke 12:40, 'Be ye therefore ready, for the Son cometh at an hour when ye think not;' Mat. 24:42, 'Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh.' He may come in a moment; our duty is unquestionable, but the time of his coming is uncertain. And to please ourselves with the thoughts of a delay, is a mighty deadening thing, and queneth our duty; yea, it is an enticement to all evil; Mat. 24:48, the wicked servant took liberty to beat his fellow-servants because of his lord's delay. We are bid to be sober and watchful, and always to be looking for the coming of the Lord.

2. The seducers had little reason to pervert this speech to the countenance of their hypothesis or supposition, and therefore the apostle had very good reason to be zealous in the confutation of this hypothesis of the seducers, who maintained that Christ would come in that age.

To inquire after the time is curiosity: Acts 1:7, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put into his own power.' Those things which God hath reserved to himself, for us to inquire after is sinful. It is a great evil to pry into our Master's secrets, when we have so many revealed truths to busy our minds about. We take it to be a piece of ill-manners to pry into that which is purposely concealed; as to break up a secret letter and the like. The practising of known duties would prevent this curiosity. These things tend not to our profit and edification.

Much more was it a sin to fix the time; it was an arrogant presumption: Mat. 24:36, 'For of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' The peremptory time of the day of judgment God keeps to himself, and it is arrogance for any to define it and set a time, when God has resolved to keep it secret. The fixing of that time did a great deal of hurt. For the present it drew away their minds from their calling, because they expected a

sudden coming of the Lord. Ill impressions either destroy or weaken necessary duties. The least error doth gratify Satan and the interest of his kingdom, for he is the father of lies. It might shake their faith in other things when their credulity was disproved by the event; the gospel might be brought into contempt when their error only was confuted; as many men, who have been peremptory in fixing times, afterwards have thrown off their religion.

It showed a diseased mind, that they were sick of questions; as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. 6:4, 'Doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy,' &c., when they had so much wholesome food to feed upon.

It did but engender strife among Christians, begat wranglings and disputes in the church: 1 Tim. 6:4, 'he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting (or sick) about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings.'

Use 1. Let us not fix times. Many of the ancients were too bold this way, and we are apt to it. Lactantius peremptorily said, the world would endure but two hundred years after his time. So many will fix the time of the calling of the Jews, and the destruction of Antichrist without evident grounds and reasons. What God hath revealed is enough to bear us out in our duty and suffering. In other things let us patiently wait; we see reason to do so, when we consider how many men have proved false prophets.

Use 2. Let us not put off the time, and set it at too great a distance. Distant things, though never so great, will hardly move us; that which men put off they do in effect put away; they put far off the evil day, they would not let it come near their minds to have any operation upon them. Look, as the stars, those vast globes of light, by reason of the distance between us and them, do seem but as so many spangles, so we have but a weak sight of what is set at a great distance, and their operation on us will be but small; the closer things are, the more they will work upon us. One that looks upon what God hath revealed of this as sure and near, is more affected with it than others are. Therefore set yourselves at the entrance of that world, where you: must everlastingly be, and watch and be ready. They that put it off are apt to loiter in their work. If Christ's coming be not near at hand, certainly the time of our departure is at hand, and it will not be long ere it come about. But this is but introductive to the doctrine of Antichrist. Therefore I come to the second thing.

Secondly, The effect that this error might produce, trouble and unsettledness of mind: 'That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled.' In the words there is a twofold metaphor; the one taken from a tempest, or sea-storm, as

the word plainly implies, that ye be not shaken in mind; and the other word is taken from the sudden alarm of a land-fight, which breeds trouble.

Doct. 1. That errors breed trouble of mind: they do not only trouble the church's peace: Gal. 5:12, I would they were even cut off which trouble you; but they hinder tranquillity of mind: Gal. 1:7, 'There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.'

How do errors hinder tranquillity of mind? Partly because it is an unsound foundation; it can never yield solid peace. We only find rest for the soul in a true religion, and there where it is purely professed others are left to great doubts and uncertainties. The Lord seems direct us in this course when we are upon consultation about the taking up of a religion: Jer. 6:16, 'Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' Soul-rest is only found in God's way, find where it is most clearly professed. Partly because whatever false peace is bred there, it will at last end in trouble. The apostle compares seducers, Jude 13, to 'raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame;' and we are told of the locusts that came out of the bottomless pit, Rev. 9:5, that they 'stung like scorpions.' Every erroneous way of religion is comfortless; yea, their doctrine breeds anxiety, and vexes the spirit; for they have no true way of quieting the conscience; let us therefore detest error, because it is so much our interest. It is the property of truth to beget a delectation of mind; it is 'sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.' *Verum est bonum intellectus* — truth is the good of the understanding. Now when we understand truth satisfyingly, it breeds an incredible delight; when we have been in some perplexities, and begin to find out a truth: Prov. 24:13, 14, 'My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet unto thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be when thou hast found it.' Honey is not so sweet to thy taste as this is to thy understanding. When a man hath found out any truth, though it be but a natural truth, it breeds its delight: much more spiritual truth; it is very pleasing to the understanding, and most of all when spiritual. Truth is obeyed and practised; for the understanding gives us but a sight of it, but obedience gives a taste thereof. Our Saviour saith, Mat. 11:28-30, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' If you will but come under Christ's blessed yoke and sceptre, and that way of religion he hath recommended to you, you will find an incredible peace, joy, and oblectation in your mind.

Doct. 2. That Christians should be so established, and have such constancy of mind, that they should not be easily shaken and moved from the faith.

Let us see how this is pressed. Sometimes it is pressed from the encouragement of your great hope: I Cor. 15:58, 'Be stedfast, and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' First, he would have them stedfast and unmoveable; these two words have their special signification, the one is a degree above the other. A man may be stedfast in a thing, though he be moved a little in some by-matters; but now, since your innocency will bear you out, be not only stedfast but immoveable, which is a higher degree; but take it thus, be stedfast in yourselves, and unmoveable by the storms of temptation from without: a man is stedfast in himself, settled upon his own foundation; and you are unmoved when you are strengthened against outward assaults: Acts 20:24, 'None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so I might finish my course with joy.' A man may be settled in the knowledge of the truth, but he is not unmoveable except he be fortified against all temptations that may draw him off from his profession. Such constancy of mind may be well enforced because of our great hope; thus it is pleaded for there. Then the absolute necessity of it is urged at other times, as Col. 1:23, 'If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.' The same condition is required to continue as to begin our right in the privileges of the gospel. There are some conditions required for the beginning, others for the continuing of our right, Now this is absolutely required for the continuing of our right, both for present reconciliation with God, and future glory; it is upon this condition, 'if ye continue in the faith.'

Let us inquire what is necessary to this constancy and establishment of mind, that we may not be soon troubled and shaken; partly that our minds may be enlightened to know the truth, and our hearts renewed to believe and love the truth; for without this there can never be any constancy of mind in religion.

A clear conviction of the truth, or certainty of knowledge, a rooted assent, or well-grounded persuasion; not some fluctuating opinion about it. A half light maketh us very uncertain in our course: James 1:8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways' — *äbøð÷ì ò PêáôÛóóáôì ò*; first 'try all things,' 1 Thes. 5:21, then 'hold fast that which is good.' When men resolve upon evidence, or after due examination, the truth sticketh the closer and faster by them; but when they take up things hand-over-head, they have no firm principles, and therefore waver hither and thither, as vessels without ballast are tossed with every wave: 2 Peter 3:16, 17, 'Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness' — *käbî ò óôçñéäì ì ò*, substantial grounds within themselves. They do not stand by the knowledge of others, or the faith of others,

and consent of others: light chaff is carried about with every wind, *ᾄᾶῆῆᾠᾶῆῆῆ ἄῆῆῆ*. Eph. 4:14, 'That ye henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.' They go through all parts of the compass; sometimes this wind of error taketh them up, sometimes that; sometimes taking up one opinion, then changing it for another: this is the fruit of half-convictions.

The other part of our basis is a resolution to adhere to the truth. What likelihood is there that we should continue, who are not so much as resolved so to do? The heart must be established by grace, as well as the mind soundly convinced: Heb. 13:9, 'Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace;' as the apostle speaketh of a purpose not to marry: 1 Cor. 7:37, 'He that standeth stedfast in his own heart,' &c. So here, Acts 21:13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' A firm, thorough resolution is requisite to fortify us against all changes in religion; otherwise we are but as trees without a root, or a house without a foundation. Now this resolution of the heart is by faith and love. Faith: Heb. 13:12, 'Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' Love: 2 Thes. 2:10, 'They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they shall believe a lie.' We are not only rooted and grounded in faith, but 'rooted and grounded in love.' Eph. 3:17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love,' &c.

The opposite to this is instablity and inconstancy of mind, that soon quitteth truth without difficulty, or without much hesitancy and resistance yields to the temptation. The scripture often taketh notice of this sudden embracing of error: Gal. 1:6, 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel;' and in the text, 'soon shaken in mind.' Credulity is a lightness in believing, when we are like reeds shaken with every wind, Mat. 11:7, and have a faulty easiness, ready to be carried away with every doctrine which pretendeth to truth: 'The simple believeth every word, Prov. 14:15. There is a readiness of mind which is good, but it goeth on sufficient evidence; so 'the wisdom that is from above is gentle, and easy to be entreated,' James 3:17; and the Bereans were *προθυμοι*: Acts 17:11, 'They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures, whether these things were so or no.' But a readiness of mind differs from a weakness of mind, or a lightness in believing upon slender and insufficient grounds: they never receive the truth with thorough efficacy, and are prone to error.

The causes of this instability and inconstancy of mind are these:—

Lack of solid rooting in the truth; they receive it hand-over-head, as the stony ground forthwith sprang up: Mat. 13:5, 20, ‘Anon they receive it with joy;’ they do not so soon receive the word, but they as soon quit it.

Lack of mortification: 2 Tim. 4:10, ‘Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.’ Lusts are uncertain; fear of men, favour of men, carnal hopes will easily prevail.

A certain readiness of mind which disposeth men to conform and comply with their company, as the looking-glass representeth every face that looketh on it; so they are very changeable, and unstable as water; as Zedekiah, Jer. 38:5, ‘The king is not he that can say you nay;’ soon turned this way and that way.

Lack of a thorough inclination to God, so that they are right for a while, or in some things, yet they are not universally true to his interest: I Kings 2:28, ‘Joab turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom;’ Hosea 7:8, ‘Ephraim is a cake not turned.’

Lack of holiness and living up to the truths we know: I Tim. 3:9, ‘Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.’ Choice liquors are best kept in a clean vessel; men provoke God to desert them and leave them to a giddy spirit.

Libertinism. Men think they may run from one sect of Christians to another, as the wind of interest bloweth. If they were to turn to Ethnicism, Turcism, or Judaism, they would die rather than change their religion; but they think the differences among Christians are not of such moment as to venture anything upon that account. Every truth is precious, and must be owned in its season, and it is damnable in itself to do anything against conscience, and he that giveth way to a small temptation will entertain a greater; as a man that hangeth over a precipice, when he lets go his hold, will sink further and further till he come to the bottom; therefore, it is good to be faithful in a little.

Use. Let us take heed of this evil credulity and lightness.

Till Christians get a settled and sound judgment they never have peace within themselves, for fears and scruples arise in the dark, and those that live in error are full of perplexities, and have not that tranquillity of spirit which they have who are fully persuaded in their own mind: Rom. 14:5, ‘Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’

If hardened in error, consider your opinions will ordinarily have an influence upon your whole religion, and will pervert your carriage towards God

and men; your prayers will smell of your opinions, and be like Balaam's sacrifice, offered to God to engage him against his own people; your love will be dispensed according to the interests of your faction: 1 Cor. 1:12, 13, 'Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?'

The danger of error to others. Vice is like a duel, error a war: 2 Tim. 2:17, 'Their word will eat as doth a canker;' 'All in Asia have turned from me,' 2 Tim. 1:15.

There is danger to yourselves, though the error be not damnable, 1 Cor. 3:13. You have not so full communion with God.

Thirdly, The third thing is the means which these impostors used to seduce them from the faith, — spirit, word, letter; by all which the apostle would not have them troubled and shaken in mind; none of these engines which the seducers used should draw them from the truth. What should poor Christians do thus assaulted? Ans. Stick to the apostolical doctrine. I shall observe:—

Doct. That a Christian should be so persuaded in religion that neither spirit, nor word, nor writing, should be able to shake or unsettle his mind. I shall show you:—

What ways or what means God hath appointed whereby a man may settle his choice as to opinions in religion.

That the word of God will sufficiently fortify him against all these false ways by which error is wont to be insinuated.

For the first, if a Christian would be established and guided aright in the choice of a religion, he must follow both the light of nature and scripture.

The light of nature, antecedently to any external revelation will sufficiently convince us of the being of God and our dependence upon him: Rom. 1:19, 20, 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it to them; for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' For I must know there is a God, or else I cannot be certain that he hath given us a rule or revelation of his mind. We begin with what is natural, and then go on to what is spiritual. Nature will tell us that there is one God, the first cause of all things, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; that it is reasonable he should be served by those whom he hath made; that he will reward and punish men as they disobey or serve and please him: but how God will be served, how they shall be rewarded or punished, or how they shall escape punishment, if after a

breach they are willing to return to their duty and obedience to him, this is revealed in the word of God.

The written word shows us the true way of worshipping and pleasing God, and being accepted with him; therefore it is a sufficient direction to us: there is enough to satisfy conscience, though not to please wanton curiosity; as that may quench the thirst of a sober man that will not satisfy the lust of a drunkard: there we are ‘made wise unto salvation,’ 2 Tim. 3:15 — ‘Thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation;’ and Ps. 119:105, ‘Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lantern to my paths.’ There we have the knowledge of many things evident by the light of nature discovered with more clearness and certainty; and that which could ‘not be found out by natural light, as salvation by a Redeemer, or the remedy of our lapsed estate, which, depending on the sole will and good pleasure of God, could not be known till it was manifested and revealed by him. When man sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, it was necessary that God should some way or other reveal his mind to him by word of mouth or by writing. By word of mouth, that is, either by oracles or extraordinary messengers. That sufficed while God saw fit to reveal but a few truths, or such as did not much burden the memory; and men were long-lived, and the church confined within a small compass of ground, and not liable to so many miseries and changes as now in the latter ages; and then he put it into writing, that men may not obtrude upon us their own conceits, but we might have a standard or rule of Faith and manners: Gal. 6:16, ‘As many as walk according to this rule,’ &c.

The natural truths contained in the word of God are evident by their own light. The supernatural truths, though they are above natural light, yet they are not against it, or contrary to it, and do fairly accord with those principles which are naturally known; and are confirmed, — partly by an antecedent testimony, which is prophecy; partly by an innate evidence in their own frame and contexture; partly by a subsequent evidence, which is valuable testimony as to matter of fact. The antecedent testimony: John 5:39, ‘Search the scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me;’ 2 Peter 1:19, ‘We have a more sure word of’ prophecy, to which we do well to give heed, as to a light shining in dark places.’ The innate and concomitant evidence: 2 Cor. 4:2-4, ‘We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of’ God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.’ The subsequent testimony, the

apostles: Acts 5:32, 'We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' They were eye and ear witnesses of great fidelity and credit; their religion forbiddeth them to lie for God, and they were accompanied with the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, not only in giving them success in the face of the learned world, hunting out the devil everywhere, but also by miracles, divers signs, and wonders; and they and their followers endured all manner of torments and death to witness to the truth of these things, and transmitted them to us with assurance of God's owning this doctrine.

The word being thus stated and put into a sure record, it is intelligible enough, in all necessary matters at least; for if God should speak or write darkly to his people, especially in necessary things, it is because he could not or would not speak otherwise. The former is direct blasphemy: Exod. 4:11, 'Who hath made man's mouth? have not I, the Lord?' The latter cannot be said, because that is contrary to his goodness: Ps. 25:8, 'Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners the way.' It is not to be imagined that the great and universal king should give a law to mankind, and speak so darkly that we should have no sure direction from thence, nor be able to know his mind in any of the duties God hath required of us, or expose us to great difficulties and hardships in the world. And if he had not plainly expressed his will to us, man would never leave writing and distinguishing himself out of his duty. Surely he that will venture his all for Christ's sake had need of a clear warrant to bear him out, for none will hazard all that is near and dear to him but for weighty reasons.

Besides, the illumination of the Holy Spirit doth accompany this word, and make it effectual to us, to show us God as revealed in Christ: 2 Cor. 4:6, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;' and for heaven, Eph. 1:17, 18, 'Praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' He sanctifieth and healeth our souls, and prepareth us for the entertainment of the truth, that as natural things are naturally discerned, so spiritual things are spiritually discerned: 1 Cor. 2:14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'

There are promises of direction made to humble and sincere minds: Ps. 25:9, 'The meek shall he guide in judgment, the meek shall he teach his way;' to the industrious: Prov. 2:4, 5, 'If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as

for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God;' to the godly and well-disposed: John 7:17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself;' so to them that pray much: James 1:5, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.' They that thus sincerely endeavour to know the will of God, will come to a sound, established judgment in the truth.

A Christian that is thus established, is fortified against spirit, word, or writing, or all suggestions that may perplex his mind.

Against pretended revelations, called here spirit.

Because having his mind thus settled, he may boldly defy all revelations pretended to the contrary: Gal. 1:8, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than we have preached, let him be accursed.' Any doctrine, if diverse, or different from, or besides the written word, much more contrary to it, a Christian may reject it, and account it cursed doctrine; therefore neither church, nor angel, nor spirit is to be heard against it.

Because a Christian is upon better terms, having the written word, than if God dealt with him by way of revelations: 2 Peter 1:19, 'We have βεβαιοτερον λογον, a more sure word of prophecy;' comparing it with the voice from heaven, of which he spake before; not as if there could be any uncertainty in the Lord's voice speaking from heaven, but because a transient voice is more easily mistaken or forgotten than an authentic standing record; as Samuel thought Eli called him, when it was the Lord. It is *quoad nos*; though God gave evidence of the truth of such revelations as he made, yet we have more accommodate means. Our Lord intimateth such a thing: Luke 16:31, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' This is the surest ground for faith to rest upon of any that ever hath been or can be given to sinners, subject to forgetfulness, jealousies, and mistakes.

Because it is not rational to expect new revelation, now the canon and rule of faith is closed up: Heb. 2:1, 2, 'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip,' &c.; Mat. 28:20, 'Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you;' John 17:29, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me through their word.'

Because if any such be pretended, it must be tried by the word: Isa. 8:20, 'To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is

because they have no light in them;’ so 1 John 4:1, ‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone abroad into the world.’

Because they that despise ordinary means, and pretend to vision, revelation, or inspiration, are usually such as are given up by God to a unstable spirit, and cast into the dungeon of error, for the punishment of other sins: Micah 2:11, ‘If a man walking in the spirit of falsehood do lie, he shall be the prophet of this people;’ God will permit those that are both deceivers and deceived themselves to come amongst them for a plague to them. Sleidan giveth sad instances of some given up to this fantastical frenzy, that killed their own relations on pretence of inspiration, and of others that murdered fifty thousand in one day.

By word or unwritten tradition. This also should not shake the mind of settled Christian, for this hath no proof — no evidence of its certainty, and would lay us open to the deceits of men, blinded by their own interest and passions; and if such tradition could be produced as hath unquestionable authority, it must be tried by the scripture, which is everywhere commended as the public standard, and true measure and rule, both of faith and manners.

Not by epistle as from us.

Supposititious writings, which the church in all ages hath exploded, having received only those which are unquestionably theirs whose names they bear.

False expositions. These are confuted by inspection of the context, scope of the writer, comparing of obscure places with plain and clear.

Thus you see what certainty God hath provided for us to guide us in the way to eternal life.

The Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition

By Thomas Manton

Sermon Three of 18 on 2 Thess. 2:1-3

“Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”
— 2 Thess. 2:3.

In these words we have these two things: —

1. A caution against the error set afoot at that time concerning Christ’s sudden coming to judgment.

2. The refutation of it. It is disproved by two antecedents and forerunners of his coming: — (1.) A general apostasy, or a defection of the visible church from the true state of Christianity; (2.) The revelation of Antichrist, described here by his names and proper titles — 1st, That man of sin; and 2dly, Son of perdition.

I. Let us speak of the general apostasy that must be before Christ’s coming to judgment: *except there come a falling away first.*

Now concerning it take these propositions: —

1. That apostasy is any defection from him to whom we owe and have performed subjection, or a failing from that Lord to whom we owe fealty. I am sure, in religious matters, it importeth a defection from our right and proper Lord. Thus the devil is an apostate, because he abode not in his first estate: Jude 6, 'And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains,' &c.; 'abode not in the truth;' John 8:44, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth;' that is, forsook his obedience to God, and so became the ringleader of all rebellious creatures. So it is true of our first parents. They were apostates, they did revolt from God and their obedience to him. Therefore it is said, Rom. 5:19, 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' So of their posterity; their apostasy is described by 'turning back from following the Lord,' Zeph. 1:6, and 'departing from God,' that is, his worship and service; Isa. 59:13, 'In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God.' Let us then be agreed of this notion of apostasy, which is evident, that it is a falling off from the obedience which we owe to our rightful Lord.

2. The apostasy mentioned in the text was not civil, the falling away of many kingdoms from the Roman empire; but an apostasy of the visible church from him who is Lord of the church. I prove it partly from the persons to whom the apostle wrote, who did not intermingle themselves with state affairs, or were not concerned in the interests of the Roman empire further than that they lived within the bounds of it; and this apostasy must be understood as they would conceive of apostasy with respect to the main cause wherein they were concerned and engaged, which was the profession of Christianity. Partly from the use of the word in the Christian doctrine; falling away there is certainly falling away from the faith and purity of the gospel: Luke 8:13, 'Which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.' And partly because to them it was expressly foretold that *τινες αποστησονται*, 'Some shall fall away or depart from the faith,' I Tim. 4:1. Lastly, because those who are most concerned to maintain the notion of the civil apostasy from the Roman empire are most notorious in this defection. It is true the Roman empire lost Asia and the places adjacent by the invasion of Eastern nations, but it was thrust out of Rome by the rebellion of its subjects, and chiefly by the influence of the Pope there, as histories manifest. So that this interpretation will not help them a jot, but hurt them not a little. So that here is a defection from our proper Lord, and a spiritual defection, not a civil.

3. The proper Lord of the Christian church is Jesus Christ, who hath purchased it with his blood, and 'died, and rose again, and revived, that he might

be Lord of dead and living,' Rom. 14:9; and again, Eph. 5:23, 'Christ is the head of the church, and the Saviour of the body.' He that sayeth and recovereth the church out of the general apostasy of mankind, and restoreth them to their due obedience and proper happiness, he only is fit to be head of the church; and this only is Christ: we expect no opposition here.

4. The apostasy from the Lord will be determined chiefly by these two things: — (1.) By undermining his authority; (2.) Or destroying the interests of his kingdom. By these two we may understand the falling away, which is to come first.

[1.] By undermining his authority. Certainly his authority is undermined when others presume to usurp his place without his leave. Therefore, to introduce a new universal head of the visible church, which Christ never appointed, is manifestly to usurp his authority; though the party so intruding should pretend to hold his sovereignty from Christ, and under him, yet this is treason against Christ, for here is an authority set up without, and therefore against, his consent. Put the case in a temporal kingdom, and the thing will be clear. And thus the Pope is the usurping head of a rebellion against Christ. Where did Christ institute him to take this office? *Tu es Petrus* (you are Peter) is such a stale pretence, so often baffled and defeated, and pretended upon so small grounds; — as that Christ hereby conveyed singular authority to Peter above the rest of the disciples, that from Peter it descendeth to his successors, and to those of Rome (if ever he were at Rome), and not those of Antioch; — that it is endless to pursue the absurdities of this impertinent allegation. The argument holdeth the more strongly when the Pope condemneth all the churches that will not be his subjects, how holy, good, and obedient to the laws of Christ soever they be. Surely, if anything, this is an apostasy or a revolt from our rightful Lord; and to consent to this rebellion and usurpation is to be drawn into a conspiracy against Christ, to submit to the head of the most pernicious schism that did ever rend the church of Christ, and to betray the liberty of the people of our Lord to a tyrannical usurpation.

[2.] Or corrupting and destroying the interests of his kingdom. Certainly, wherever there is a degeneration from the purity and simplicity of the gospel, the interests of Christ's kingdom are destroyed. 'I fear,' saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 11:3, 'lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' The ancient, pure, apostolic Christianity doth only preserve the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world; there is no way of safety but by keeping there; for since godliness is a mystery, and we shall see afterwards the iniquity that is contrary is a mystery also — 2 Thes. 2:7, 'The mystery of iniquity doth already work' — we need to be

exactly careful to keep close to the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the first gospel church; for if these had remained pure, Antichrist had never risen. Christ's institutions would have preserved his interests in the world; but as these were corrupted, the apostasy prevailed. When the faith of the gospel was turned into dead opinions and curious questions, if not direct errors, and the worship of the gospel was corrupted by giving divine honour to saints and angels, and turned into a theatrical pomp and the pageantry of empty ceremonies, which eclipse the majesty and splendour of it; and the discipline of the church into a temporal domination, and all is carried in the world by sides and interests, that Christianity looketh like another thing, a design calculated for the present world rather than a serious preparation for the world to come; then certainly there is an apostasy and a defection from Christ; however the corrupt manners of the church be varnished over with the name of Christianity, there is a degeneration questionless; and that is apostasy, in a mystery, such as this is, though not in open revolt from Christ.

But to make this more evident to you, let us consider what the kingdom of Christ is. The gospel kingdom is a kingdom of light, life, and love. Opposite to light is ignorance and error; to life, a religion that consists of shows, dead rites, and empty ceremonies; to love, uncharitableness, malice, and especially hatred of the power of godliness. Now where these prevail eminently, there is an opposite kingdom set up to the kingdom of Christ; certainly a falling off from his kingdom: that is to say, where, in opposition to light, error is taught, and ignorance is counted the mother of devotion, and people are restrained from the means of knowledge, as if the height of Christian faith and obedience did consist in an implicit believing what the church believeth; and where, instead of life, men place their whole religion in superficial rites and ceremonies, and some trifling acts of seeming devotion and exterior mortifications; and instead of love to God and souls, all things are sacrificed to private ambition; and forcing consciences with the highest penalties and persecutions to submit to their corruptions — there is a manifest subversion of the interests of Christ's kingdom. In short, God's witnesses were 'slain in that city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, and where our Lord was crucified,' Rev. 11:8; that city which answereth to Sodom for impurity, to Egypt for idolatry, and to Jerusalem for persecution of the saints; there may you find the great apostasy.

5. This apostasy from our Lord's authority and the interests of his kingdom is some notable and discernible apostasy, and the head patron thereof is Antichrist. The defection is not of one, or a few, or many in divers churches; there have always been backsliders from the faith: 1 John 2:19, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us;' and the spirit of Antichrist wrought in the apostles' days:

1 John 2:18, ‘As you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists;’ and again, I John 4:3, we are told of the spirit of Antichrist: ‘And this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world;’ then described to be afterwards (ver. 5) a worldly spirit: ‘They are of the world, and speak of the world, and the world heareth them.’ Though they profess Christianity, carnal, worldly hypocrites, which never conquered the fleshly mind and interest, have the spirit of Antichrist; these obscure the light, and obstruct the life and love of the gospel — they that wholly affect a life of pomp and ease in the church. Now, this hath always been in all the ages. The false Christians forget their hopes are built upon a crucified Christ, and are to be derived to them from a glorified Christ in the other world — crucified in this world and glorified in the next, — which indeed are the two considerations that keep Christianity pure and lively; that all was purchased by a crucified Christ, and all is dispensed by a glorified Christ; and I wish you would oftener think of it. But the great apostasy is eminently found in some external visible church, where these corruptions are generally received and defended. For the head of that church is Antichrist, where doctrine is corrupted, and the worship mingled with idolatry, and the government a usurpation, and bent against the holy seed that desire to worship God in spirit and in truth; there is this manifest revolt from and rebellion against God and Christ, though they push with the horns of the lamb.

That the Papists are a corrupt sect of Christians is beyond dispute to any that will try their religion by the Scriptures; and that they are far more corrupt than the Protestants or Reformed Churches, will also soon appear by the comparison, or a view of both churches. But whether they are so corrupt as to become the seat of Antichrist, is the matter under debate. Therefore, let any one consider where the eminent apostasy is to be found. Who are they that invade Christ’s authority by setting up a universal head over all Christians? Who are they that establish the doctrine of *demons*, or revive the worship of a middle sort of powers between God and mortal men? 1 Tim. 4:1. Who through hypocrisy invent so many lies to maintain it, and when Christians should keep themselves from idols, I John 5:21, yet, in defiance of this, worship angels and other creatures: Col. 2:18, ‘Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels,’ &c.; and erect the images of saints, commanding and compelling men to adore them, and pray to them? Who are they that are not contented with the one only Mediator: I Tim. 2:5, ‘For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ;’ I Cor. 8:5, ‘For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him,’ — but set up other

mediators of intercession? Who are they that plead for indulgences and the supererogatory satisfactions of the saints, as gathered into the treasury of the church, and so profitable for the remission of sins, and condemn them who think' the contrary? Who are they that keep believers from reading the Scriptures, when they are so expressly enjoined to do it? John 5:39, and Ps. 1:2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' That deny one part of the Lord's Supper to his disciples, notwithstanding his institution to the contrary? I Cor. 11:25, 26, 'After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me; for as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come.' It were endless to instance in all: I shall speak more of it in the following verses.

6. This apostasy is not only forbidden, but foretold as a thing that would certainly come to pass. This consideration is necessary for divers reasons.

[1.] Because the Papists ask how this can be consistent with Christ's care of his church, that there should be a universal apostasy and decay of Christian religion, who hath promised 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?'

Ans. That promise is made chiefly to the invisible church, or community of the elect, not to all the visible societies of the Christians, against whom the devil can and hath prevailed, and doth daily, to the destruction of many souls. And we say not that the whole visible church did apostatise, though all are faulty.

[2.] Because some require the time when this apostasy began to be particularly assigned and noted to them, and by what persons these corruptions were first introduced, or else deny that any such thing hath been. But the case is clear: it began to work betimes, only it wrought in a mystery. But cannot we prove a man to be old, unless we prove the first moment when his grey hairs began to appear, or his natural force to be abated? Who can tell every step of the progress of the corruption of the Jewish church? And why should the like be required of the Christian? This dunghill of corruption was not raised in one age: and suppose that in track of time authors be forgotten, matters of faith are not to be contradicted because of the defect of history. And yet histories are not altogether lacking in the case, only in things that came in by degrees they are not necessary. In the introducing of the general apostasy, some erred in the simplicity of their hearts, as the people followed Absalom, 2 Sam. 15:11. But shall we deny a thing to be done because we cannot speak the particular moments of time, and circumstances of them, when and how it was done? Shall we say the pointer in the dial passeth not, because we do not see its motion? Might not the priests judge of

a leprosy, though they knew not how it was contracted? Iniquity mystical did by degrees prevail.

[3.] Because some think, if we should grant such an apostasy, it would interrupt the whole course of visible Christianity, and so deprive the world of a ministry and ordinances, till Christ send some new nuncios from heaven, or by miracle, at least, authorise a new ministry, that may be owned by the world, and received by his people. A vain conceit! For though this apostasy is foretold that it should come to pass, yet it is also foretold that Christ will be with the apostles and their successors to the end of the world, Mat. 28:20; and prayed for all them that should believe in him through their word, John 17:20; and though the church was corrupted by degrees, yet all this while it ceased not to be a church, nor the *officers* thereof to be Christ's ministers. When the ten tribes fell away, yet God till their dissolution continued the spirit of prophecy amongst them; and in the Christian church a ministry, though many had their calling from such who consented to the encroachments of Antichrist. God had not so wholly cast off his people, but that there was a ministry and ordinances; their ministry was a true ministry, and the baptism a true baptism, to be owned *in foro externo* (to the very end): for these things remain whilst anything of Christianity remaineth. In a body mangled with wounds, or all overgrown with sores, there is life remaining; and so some functions and offices of life. God called idolatrous Israel his people, and was not angry with them for *circumcising* their children, but for offering them to Moloch, Ezek. 16:20, 21. But of this in the next verse, where Antichrist is said to sit in the church of God.

II. The revelation of Antichrist: *and that man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition*; where two things are notable: — (1.) His rise and appearing; (2.) The names and titles given to him.

1. His rise and appearing, expressed in the word *revealed*; that is, that great and chief Antichrist, upon that apostasy or falling away, shall be extant and show himself to the world. A thing is said to be revealed two ways — either when it is in being, or when it is discovered; both ways are proper here. He shall publicly appear, *exercising a* tyranny in the world, or cast off his veil, and show himself in his colours. God by his *providence* permitteth him to be, and by the doctrine of the gospel discovereth his impostures to all those who have no mind to be deceived.

2. The names or titles given to him; they are two: — (1.) ‘The man of sin,’ wherein he is compared and likened to Antiochus; (2.) ‘The son of perdition,’ wherein he is compared and likened to Judas.

[1.] For the first, the Jews called Antiochus ‘the man of sin:’ 1 Macch. 2:48, ‘They gave not the power to the sinner;’ in the Greek, *το κερας αμαρτωλω*, ‘They gave not the horn to the sinner.’ The Syriac version hath it, ‘They suffered not the horn of the sinner to be lifted up;’ and ver. 62, ‘Fear not the words of the man of sin,’ — *απο λογων ανδρος αμαρτολου μη φοβηθητε*, ‘From the words of the man the sinner be not afraid.’ Now why did they call Antiochus the man of sin? Because he sought to alter the religion of the people, and by cruelty to introduce a change of worship and idolatry, and such laws as he would set up. Now, according to this pattern, Antichrist is a man of sin; that is, either a man given up to all sin eminently, a sinner addicted unto sin, and a ringleader of others unto sin, either by fraud and violence; or as he giveth encouragements and excitements to sin; or as a special kind of sinner, a usurper and invader of the empire of the Son of God. So was Antiochus. So was Antichrist. Now, how much open sin is practised, allowed, and maintained in the Papacy, I do not wish to proceed into; their own stories speak enough; — the sodomy, blasphemy, incest, adulteries, sorceries, murders, treasons, parricides, which they have authorised and countenanced. Histories witness that hardly hath the world yielded a more abominable sort of men, than have sat in that chair of pestilence. This I am sure of, that a man can sin nowhere at so cheap a rate as in Popery, where, what by dividing their sins into mortal and venial, and these expiated by a little penance, accompanied with a single attrition, and bare grief and trouble, because of the punishment; what by faculties, pardons, licenses, dispensations, indulgences, sin is distinguished out of the conscience.

But because he is called the *man of sin*, here it cometh fitly to be inquired whether Antichrist be an individual person? for ‘that man of sin’ would seem to be some single person. No; he is put for a society and succession of men, that make up the head of the apostate state. As one lion figured the whole kingdom of the Babylonians, and one bear the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, and one leopard the kingdom of the Grecians, Dan. 7, — and there the fourth beast is the fourth kingdom, — so one person that succession of men that head the revolters from Christ. So Dan. 8, a goat figured a succession of kings; so the Assyrian, Isa. 10:5, several kings in that empire; so Isa. 14:9, the king of Babylon, meaning not one but many. So this man of sin doth not note a single man, but a succession of men, a body politic or corporate, under one opposite head to the kingdom of Christ: so the ‘man of God’ is put for all faithful ministers, 2 Tim. 3:17; so

‘honour the king,’ I Peter 2:17, *series regum*. So ἡ ἀρχιερεὺς, Heb. 9:25, ‘The high priest every year entereth into the holy place;’ meaning not one, but the succession of the order; and in reason it must needs be so here. Because Antichrist, from his beginning to his end, from his rise and revelation, till his ruin and destruction, will take up such a long track of time, as cannot fall within the age of any one man, even from the time of the apostles till the end of the world. Antichrist is the head of the apostasy; for here the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin are tied together; now the mysterious apostasy could not be perfected in a short time.

[2.] *The son of perdition*, wherein he is likened to Judas: John 17:12, ‘None of them is lost but the son of perdition.’ Him he resembleth in covetousness, treachery, and final destruction. The term may be explained either passively, or actively: — (1.) Passively, as one condemned to everlasting destruction; as the ‘son of death,’ is one condemned to die: 2 Sam. 12:5, ‘He shall be a son of death;’ we translate it, ‘He shall surely die.’ So ‘children of wrath,’ Eph. 2:3; so here, ‘son of perdition.’ (2.) Actively, bringing destruction upon himself and others; one that shall destroy others, and so he is called ‘Abaddon,’ and ‘Apollyon,’ Rev. 9:11, and is opposite to Christ, who is ‘the author of salvation,’ Heb. 5:9, but Antichrist of destruction. And let us see the parallel between him and Judas; for the person is a type, as well as the name hath a significancy. Antichrist then is like Judas — in profession, a disciple of Christ; in office, a governor of the church; but in practice, a traitor. As they said of the blind man, John 9:9, ‘Some said, This is he; others, He is very like him.’ The Pope boasteth that his seat is apostolical, his chair is Peter’s chair, and that he is the successor of the apostle. Grant it, but there is an error of the person — not of Peter, but of Judas. Let us see the parallel: —

(1.) Judas was not a stranger, but a pretended friend and apostle: Acts 1:17, ‘He was numbered with us, and obtained part of this ministry.’ Turks and infidels are enemies to Christ, but Antichrist seeketh to undermine him, under a pretence of friendship; ἀντιχριστος is one in show *for*, and in effect *against* Christ, and the beast in the Revelation is said to ‘push with the horns of the lamb,’ Rev. 13:11. If he were a professed enemy, what mystery were there in it? But mystery was written upon the woman’s forehead, Rev. 17:5; and here, ver. 7, ‘The mystery of iniquity.’ It is wisdom to discern the false prophet, Rev. 13:18, but there needeth no great wisdom to discover an open an professed adversary.

(2.) He sold Christ for a small matter. *Omnia Romæ venalitas* (In Rome everything is for sale): pardons, indulgences, freedom from purgatory, all to be

bought with money; and it is a small matter, considering the things put to sale, the pardon of sins, the souls of men redeemed with Christ's precious blood. The antichristian state maketh a market of religion; truth is made to yield to commerce and profit.

(3.) Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss, under a pretence of honouring him: Luke 22:48, 'Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?' Antichrist is a true adversary of Christ, though he pretend to adore him; as those that murdered the present prophets would by all means beautify the tombs of the prophets deceased, and bear a respect to their memories, Mat. 23:30. He pretendeth to be his servant, yea, a servant of servants, but is really his enemy. The apostle telleth us of some that were 'enemies to the cross of Christ,' Phil. 3:18. Who to appearance such friends to the cross as the rabble of nominal Christians? But they are opposers of his spiritual kingdom, the virtue and power of the cross. You have crucifixes everywhere, painted, carved, gilded; they are ready to worship the cross with a holy worship; they set it in their temples, altars, wear it in their bosoms, and wherever they meet it show it reverence, adorn it with gold, silver, and precious stones. Their popes and prelates have it carried before them; and are not these friends of the cross? No; they live a worldly, sensual life, and all their religion tendeth thereunto; therefore enemies of the cross of Christ, because they mind earthly things. This is right antichrist-like, to betray Christ under a show of adoration.

(4.) Judas was a guide to them that came to take Christ; and one main work of Antichrist is to be a ringleader in persecuting for religion. Christ is in heaven, death hath no more power over him; his natural body is above abuse, but his mystical body still suffereth: Acts 9:6, 'Why persecutest thou me?' Antichrist is the head of the persecuting state, others are his emissaries and agents, to take Christ in his members. It is a political religion, that must be carried on with worldly artifices, with power and cruelty.

(5.) Lastly, The covetousness of Judas is set forth. He was a thief, and one that carried the bag, John 12:6. England, to its bitter cost, knoweth the polling exactions of the Papacy; all its dealings with us were to fill the bag out of this *puteus inexhaustus* (bottomless pit). Now all these things should open our eyes; we may behold the man of sin, the son of perdition; one egg is not more like to another than Judas and Antichrist.

Use. Is to persuade us to a detestation of what is antichristian, and to that end let us mark the progress of the text. (1.) The apostasy made was for

Antichrist; (2.) Antichrist, rising upon the apostasy, becometh a man of sin; and (3.) The man of sin is also the son of perdition.

1. Let me begin first with the falling away. There is a twofold falling away — either from the power and practice of godliness, or from a true religion to a false, particularly to Popery.

[1.] I begin with the falling away from the power and practice of godliness, though the profession be not changed; and the rather, partly because this disposeth to the entertainment of error. When a people that are carried with great fervour and vigour of zeal for a while, lose their affections to good, and return to a worldly, sensual life, then the bias of their hearts doth easily prevail against the light of their understandings. And so unsanctified men may the sooner be drawn to apostasy; they never felt the quickening virtue of faith, and were never wrought by it to the true love of God, or an holy and heavenly mind and life. And partly, also, because if a lively Christianity had been kept up, Antichrist had never risen in the world; and it is the way to keep him out still: ‘When the servants slept, the enemy sowed tares,’ Mat. 13: A sleepy religion and corruption of manners made way for corruption of doctrine, worship, and order. It was with the church according to the spouse’s complaint: ‘I sleep, but my heart waketh,’ Cant. 5:2. Some care there was, but much drowsiness and deadness in religion; and that produced the great apostasy. Partly too, because there is such a compliance between the nature of antichristianism and the temper of a carnal heart; for superstition and profaneness grow both upon the same root. A lothness to displease the flesh, the sensual nature of man, is such, that it is loth to be crossed; and that breedeth profaneness. For wherefore do men ingulf themselves in all manner of sensualities, but because they are loth to deny their natural appetites and desires, and row against the stream of flesh and blood, but will ‘walk in the way of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes’? Eccles. 11:9. Again, if nature be to be crossed, it is only a little; it shall only be in some external actions, and observances, and dead rudiments, which never kill our lusts, nor promote the divine life. And this pleasing superstition shall make up a religion which is a fit pillow for a carnal heart to sleep upon. Popery is the easiest religion for the flesh that can be found out, for it never biteth nor disturbeth their lusts. The duties of it are like the pharisees’ fasting, which our Lord compareth to old wine, Mat. 9:17, fit for old, dried skin bottles. Well, take heed of falling away from a lively godliness. No man entereth seriously upon religion but with some tasting or rejoicing, Heb. 6; now as this decayeth, we fall off. The heavenly life is obstructed, if not choked and quite lost. Now, to prevent this, observe two things: — (1.) Your coldness in duties; (2.) Your boldness in sinning.

(1.) Coldness in duties, when the will and affections grow more remiss, and the worship of God, which keepeth up the remembrance of him, is either omitted or performed perfunctorily, and in a careless and stupid manner: Jer. 2:32, 'My people have forgotten me days without number;' Job 27:10, 'Will he always call upon God? will he delight himself in the Almighty?' God chargeth Israel with growing weary of him; and it began in not calling upon him, Isa. 43:22. Now, when you seldom think or speak of God, and do not keep up a delightful communion with him, there is a falling away.

(2.) Boldness in sinning. When men lose their tenderness and strictness, and the awe of God is lessened in their hearts, and they do not only sin freely in thought, but freely in act, have not that hatred of sin and watchfulness as formerly, but more abandon themselves to a carnal life, they are falling off from God apace: 2 Peter 2:20, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.' At first the heart checked you for sin, but you did not kindly come off, were not troubled about it, hoped God would pardon it; and then you are bold to venture again, and so by degrees are entangled in the sensual and worldly life. Now consider the causes of it: — 1. Lack of faith in God: Heb. 3:12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' You have not a sound belief of his being and presence. 2. Lack of love to God: Rev. 2:4, 5, 'Nevertheless I have (somewhat) against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.' Your hearts decline from that love you had to him and his ways, and then your work is intermitted. 3. Lack of a due sense of the world to come: Heb. 10:39, 'But we are not of them who draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.' 4. The love of the present world: 2 Tim. 4:10, 'For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' The more that is valued, the more your hearts are taken off from things to come, and the care about them; you have too great a liking, either to the profits of the world — 1 Tim. 6:10, 'The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith' — or else the pleasures of the world: 2 Tim. 3:4, 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' As the inclination of the heart groweth stronger to sensual pleasures, your thoughts of God are less serious and pleasing to you. Now look to these things, lest you grow quite weary of God and the holy life, which once you had an affection unto.

[2.] From a true religion to a false; which may be done two ways: — (1.) Out of corruption of mind; (2.) Out of vile affection.

(1.) Out of weakness of mind, as those do that were never well grounded in the truth: Eph. 4:14, 'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;' 2 Peter 3:16, 'In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.' Therefore we need to be established; but the forsaking of a truth we were bred in usually cometh from some falseness of heart. Some errors are so contrary to the new nature, that they discern them by the unction: I John 2:20, 'But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.'

(2.) Out of vile affection, when they forsake the truth for the advantages of a fleshly, worldly life, some places to be gotten by it, &c., and as the whore of Babylon hath a golden cup, riches, and preferments, wherewith it inviteth its proselytes. Now these are worse than the former, for they sell the birthright: Heb. 12:16, 'Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.' O Christians! Take heed to yourselves. Apostasy brought Antichrist into the church. Let it not be *jure postliminio* (a return to your former citizenship), to bring him back again into the land, or into your hearts.

2. The next step is *the man of sin*. As the first apostasy of Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, so this great apostasy brought in a deluge of sin into the church, and defiled the holy society which Christ had gathered out of the world. Idolatry is often called adultery or fornication; spiritual uncleanness disposeth to bodily, and bodily to spiritual. Usually a corrupt state of religion and corrupt manners go together; otherwise the dance and the fiddle would not suit. The world cannot lie quiet in a course of sin, if there be not some libertine, atheistical doctrine, and carnal worship to countenance it: Rev. 11:10, 'And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.'

3. The man of sin is also *the son of perdition* — (1.) Actively. False religions strangely bubble up the mind: Jude 11, 'These go in the way of Cain;' and Hosea 5:2, 'Revolters are profound to make slaughter.' Men think no cruelty nor dishonesty unlawful which serveth to promote the interests of their sect, and lose all charity to those that are not of their way. (2.) Passively, shall be destroyed.

Sometimes grievous judgments come in this world for the corruptions of religion; but in the world to come, dreadful is the end of apostates: 2 Peter 2:20, 21, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.'

Visit *Fire and Ice: Puritan and Reformed Sermons* at
<http://www.puritansermons.com/>