

2013

## Proper 27 • 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8, 13–17 • November 10, 2013

David Lewis

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*, [lewisd@csl.edu](mailto:lewisd@csl.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj>

 Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Lewis, David (2013) "Proper 27 • 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8, 13–17 • November 10, 2013," *Concordia Journal*: Vol. 39: No. 4, Article 6.  
Available at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol39/iss4/6>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Journal by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

## Homiletical Helps on LSB Series C—Epistles to LSB Series A—First Lesson

**Proper 27 • 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8, 13–17 • November 10, 2013****Overview**

In 2 Thessalonians 2 the Apostle Paul discusses matters of eschatology as he exhorts the church in Thessalonica not to be disturbed by false teachings that said that the day of the Lord had already come. He quells these fears by pointing out what must take place first, namely the apostasy and revelation of the man of lawlessness. As these two events had not yet taken place as Paul writes, the day of the Lord had not yet come. These believers, therefore, are finally told to stand firm and hold onto the traditions which they were taught by Paul (2:15) instead of being unsettled and alarmed by this false teaching that supposedly came from him (2:2). (This pericope does not include Paul's description in 2:9–12 of how the man of lawlessness will come.)

Many interpreters agree that Paul's teaching about the Parousia contains the same interests as the teachings of Jesus as found in Matthew 24, in particular the warnings that believers not be alarmed by events or deceived by false teaching. There is great disagreement, however, about the timing of the events Paul foretells and the identity of the man of lawlessness. For instance, preterism argues that Paul foretold events that all took place in the first century while dispensationalism argues that these events will all take place in the future, and so that the return of Jesus is necessarily delayed. Such disagreement calls for us to be ever more cautious as we approach this text and ever more prepared to hold on to the traditions that we have received.

**Textual Considerations**

Verses 1–4: Paul addresses concerns about the coming (Parousia) of Jesus and our being gathered to him. Paul introduces this subject with the exhortation that these believers not be unsettled or alarmed by a spirit or a word or an epistle that appears to have come from him (v. 2) and not to let anyone deceive them by any means (v. 3). Before the day of the Lord comes there must first come the rebellion or falling away (ἀποστασία) and the revelation of the man of lawlessness (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας). The actions of this individual are further described as one who will lift himself up above all objects of worship and who will sit in the temple/sanctuary of God (τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ), setting himself forth as God.

Verses 5–8: Paul reminds these believers that this is what he taught them when he was with them. They know what is now restraining (νῦν τὸ κατέχον) the revelation of this individual and that only when he who restrains (ὁ κατέχων) is set aside will the man of lawlessness be revealed. Nevertheless, Jesus will destroy this man by his Parousia. It was apparently clear to Paul's original readers what is the referent of the two substantive participles τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων, and thus whether the neuter and the masculine participles have the same or different referents, but it is unclear to readers today.

Verses 13–15: Paul reminds these believers of what God has done for them in calling them by the gospel; that they are chosen by God as the first fruit for salvation. Paul therefore urges these believers to stand firm and hold onto the traditions that he taught them. Thus Paul sets up his *authentic* teaching given via word and epistle (v. 15) in opposition to the *false* teachings that were only said to come from him via word and epistle (v. 3). Paul concludes this section with a benediction in which he prays that God will give to these believers comfort and hope and to establish them in every good work and word.

### **Considerations for Preaching**

Paul's purpose is to quell fears that the day of the Lord has already come, to confirm these believers in their call to faith, and to urge them to hold onto true teachings about the coming of Jesus. The preacher should have a similar purpose as he preaches on this text today—to remind his hearers of their call to faith and salvation by the preaching of the gospel and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit and to urge them to hold onto what the church has received as now contained in Scripture, the ancient creeds, and the Confessions as they await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our present context we face different misconceptions about the second coming of Jesus, yet false teachings about the end still abound. Consider, for instance, the recent example of Harold Camping who urged believers to stop attending church and made failed predictions of the last day; teachings and predictions that deceived some. We are not to be deceived or alarmed by such false teachings, but to stand firm in what we have received.

Though Paul's purpose here appears to be quite plain, there is vast disagreement among interpreters today regarding the referents of the various things that Paul describes in vv. 3–12. The Reformers and the Lutheran Confessions identify the man of lawlessness with the Roman papacy and argued that the temple of God is meant to be understood nonliterally and refers to the church. From a classical Lutheran perspective (as well as a preterist perspective), the apostasy and the revelation of the man of lawlessness have already taken place. The last day has not yet come, but today there is nothing that necessitates that it be delayed.