
The heavenly sanctuary motif in the Thessalonian “Apocalypse”

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Abstract

The heavenly sanctuary as a motif and doctrine is not relegated to parts of Scripture and unbeknown to others. A careful survey of the Scripture, particularly the Epistles, reveal(s) the ubiquity of the sanctuary motif in Scripture. 2 Thess 2:1-12 presents a vivid attestation of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary in its prototypical sense existing in a dynamic relationship to the earthly, as a metaphorical reality, a place of divine activities, and as the sphere of cosmic conflict. These all receive their efficacy in as much as they stand in direct correspondence to the heavenly reality. The sanctuary is shown as the apocalyptic barometer which signals both the dawn of the Parousia, and also the judgment of God against Satan, his emissaries and their followers.

Key Words:

Heavenly Sanctuary, Man of Lawlessness, Temple of God, Restrainer

1. Introduction

A cursory reading of the New Testament (NT) can lead one to conclude that the heavenly sanctuary doctrine is relegated primarily to Revelation and Hebrews.¹ For those who dispute the Pauline authorship of Hebrews² the

- 1 The motif of the heavenly sanctuary is evident in the NT. The sanctuary motifs in the books of Hebrews and Revelation have been well researched and attested. Many have found its clearest expositions in Heb 8, 9, and Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1-2, 19; 14:15, 17; 16:1, 17; 21; 22. This study therefore assumes the existence of the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews and Revelation. For some of the works pertinent to the sanctuary motif in the book of Hebrews, see William G. Johnsson, "The Heavenly Sanctuary—Figurative or Real?" in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 35-52; William G. Johnsson, "Day of Atonement Allusions", in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 105-120; William G. Johnsson, *Hebrews, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994), 143-188; William G. Johnsson, "The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews," *JBL* 97 (1978): 239-251; Alwyn P. Salom, "Sanctuary Theology", in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 199-218; Annang Asumang and Bill Domeris, "Ministering in the Tabernacle: Spatiality and the Christology of Hebrews", *Conspectus* 1 (2006): 1-25; Annang Asumang, "The Sanctuary as a Heuristic Device in the Interpretation of the Christology to the Hebrews" (MTh thesis, South African Theological Seminary, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2005), 101-121; Brenda B. Colijn, "'Let Us Approach': Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews", *JETS* 39 (1996):571-586; Gareth L. Cockerill, "Structure and Interpretation in Hebrews 8:1-10:18: A Symphony in Three Movements", *Bulletin for Biblical Research (BBR)* 11 (2001):179-201; Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The High-Priestly Sacrifice of Christ", *Bibliotheca Sacra (BSac)* 130 (1973):205-211; Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The Significance of the Blood of Jesus", *BSac* 130 (1973):99-109; Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The Meaning of the 'True Tent' and 'The Greater and More Perfect Tent'", *BSac* 130 (1973):305-314; Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews: The Present Work of Christ in Heaven", *BSac* 130 (1973):26-33;
- 2 For those who see Barnabas, or even Apollos as likely authors, see Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 19-29; V. Bartlet, "Barnabas and His Genuine Epistle". *Exp* 6th ser. 6 (1902):28-30. V. Bartlet, "The Epistle to the Hebrews as the Work of Barnabas". *Exp* 6th ser. 8 (1903):381-386; L. D. Hurst, "Apollos, Hebrews, and Corinth: Bishop Montefiore's Theory Examined". *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985):505-513. ² Pauline authorship is supported by John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, Carl Bernhard Moll and A. C. Kendrick, *A Commentary on the Inc.*, 2008), 3-10; C. P. Anderson, "Hebrews among the Letters of Paul". *SR* 5 (1975-76) 258-66. C. P. Anderson, "Who Wrote 'The Epistle From Laodicea'?" *JBL* 85 (1966) 436-40. Even among moderate scholarship today the authorship of Hebrews is held indeterminate, see D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 394-397; Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 386-390; Donald

inevitable conclusion is to see a total absence of the heavenly sanctuary motif in the Pauline corpus. While some shared the view that Paul took a minimalistic approach with his apparent scant treatment of the heavenly sanctuary motif,³ others contend that he has altogether abandoned the idea, replacing it with new categories.⁴ While the central theological construct of Paul revolved around soteriological matters, it will be surprising if being the devout Jew that he was that an absolute ignorance persisted of the sanctuary.⁵ This study thus endeavours to show that notwithstanding the indeterminacy over the authorship of Hebrews, the heavenly sanctuary doctrine permeated the Epistle in more ways than are perceived. The apocalypse of 2 Thess 2:1-12 presents an unambiguous apology of the heavenly sanctuary motif in the Pauline corpus.⁶

Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 685-698. For a summary of the discussion on the authorship of Hebrews see G.W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 21-22.

- 3 James Sweeney, "Jesus, Paul, and the Temple: An Exploration of Some Patterns of Continuity", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* 46 (2003):608.
- 4 James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 721.
- 5 William R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus: An Inquiry Into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1956), 84-124; Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations Into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period From Herod 1 Until 70 AD*, trans. David Smith (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 146-228.
- 6 While traditionally the works bearing the insignia "apocalypse has determined the genre of apocalypse", the growing consensus today is that the presence or absence of the term does not necessarily denote a literature as belonging to the apocalyptic genre. Rather, apocalyptic literature adheres to certain morphological features; consequently, any literature that possesses these features can be duly called apocalyptic. John J. Collins, "Introduction: The Morphology of a Genre", *Semeia* 14 (1979):2, 3, 5, 9. Generally there is agreement (though with minor trepidations) with J.J. Collins' classic definition that an "apocalypse is a genre of *revelatory literature* with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both *temporal*, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and *spatial* insofar as it involves another, supernatural world". *Ibid.*, 9. Apocalyptic literature involves "historical and eschatological events on a *temporal axis* and otherworldly beings and places on a *spatial axis*". *Ibid.*, 5. Italics mine. Apocalypticism attests to a transcendent reality that is both "temporal" and "spatial", the divine realm and judgment are also prominent. See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 5, 13.

While the focus of Paul's letters revolved for the most part on soteriological and christological matters,⁷ his familiarity with the voluminous literature wherein the heavenly sanctuary doctrine is pervasive beckons the reader to consider the adeptness of his sanctuary motifs throughout his writings.⁸ In Jewish reckoning there existed an inseparable and interdependent corollary between the heavenly sanctuary and its corresponding realities, and their dynamic correspondences.⁹

The sanctuary in the ANE was often regarded as the "link between heaven and earth".¹⁰ Also, in Hebrew tradition, Jerusalem was seen as the navel or center of the earth from where everything else emanated and conjoined.¹¹ Furthermore, the sanctuary was seen as "heaven's antechamber"¹² equally belonging to the heavenly and earthly spheres,¹³ and whatever happened in one sphere necessarily affected the other. According to Hebrew worldview in the earthly temple "the lines between the earthly and heavenly were blurred"¹⁴ in that the sacrality ascribed to the latter was of equal profundity to the former. This last assertion is pivotal in understanding the ubiquity of the heavenly sanctuary motif in Scripture. The heavenly sanctuary exists in Scripture both as a prototypical unitary reality and also as a conglomeration of realities that are mutually interdependent.

7 Alistair E. McGrath, "Justification", *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 517-523; Leon Morris, "Salvation", *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 858-862; Stanley E. Porter, "Holiness, Sanctification", *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 397-401; Ben Witherington III, "Christology", *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 100-115.

8 A cursory analysis of Paul's ministry would reveal that the OT was the primary source from which he drew many of his theological conceptions. Of course, that was the primary Scripture available to him then (cf. Acts 13:17-41; 17:2, 11; 18:28; 28:23). Thus, his awareness of the sanctuary and its significance would have been contiguous to the contemporary literature. Even after the Jews rejected Paul's message, he continued to make the OT the foundation upon which his theology sprung. See Thomas, "2 Thessalonians", 302-303.

9 The Midrash Rabbah on Numbers 1:13; Midrash on Psalm 30.

10 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, 1961), 41.

11 *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

12 Andrea Spatafora, *From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple: A Biblical Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Rome, Italy: Gregorian University Press, 1997), 33, 34.

13 *Ibid.*, 33.

14 *Ibid.*, 33, 34.

After extensive parousal of the literature on the heavenly sanctuary this study proposes that the sanctuary motif in Scripture exist as one reality which replicates itself in several dimensions namely: heavenly/earthly reality, eschatological reality, metaphorical reality, as a sphere of divine activities, and as the center of cosmic activities. These varied aspects of the sanctuary does not infer that the sanctuary is to be understood as many isolated entities but rather as a singular reality replicated in many aspects. Essentially the sanctuary motif in the Epistle fits within a typological construct,¹⁵ where dynamic correspondencies are seen between vertical and horizontal realities in so much so that whatever happens in one sphere necessarily affect the other.

2. Background and Context

Second Thessalonians is said to have been occasioned by an intensification of persecution, continued eschatological misunderstanding as it relates to the manner and timing of the Parousia, and an apparent spiritual lassitude incited by the imminent Parousia.¹⁶ The real problem addressed by 2 Thessalonians pertained to the basis of the believer's salvation. Since the Parousia had come and "left them behind", the logical conclusion was that "they had lost their salvation" and the hope of deliverance from their persecutions, because they anticipated the Parousia as the *ultimum finem* of faith and trials—ushering in vindication from their persecutors.¹⁷ Therefore the audience of 2 Thessalonians was living with a heightened expectancy of imminent reprieve.

Second Thessalonians endeavours to combat the eschatological dissonance experienced by the believers in lieu of an apparent discontent with regard to the day of the Lord. The author does this by giving his audience a microcosmic look at a macrocosmic phenomenon, that is, he carries the reader to view the imperceptible in order that the perceptible may be better understood. The writer probably in assessing the maturity of the early believers may have thought it necessary to withhold certain minutiae relative to the end-time events in the first letter, however, the current circumstance warranted that the full picture be unfolded—hence the content of 2 Thess 2:1-12.

15 Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 128-151.

16 Warren Woolsey, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan, 1997), 16-19.

17 C. Powell, "The Identity of the 'Restrainer'", 325. Italics mine.

Due to the compelling similarities existing between the man of lawlessness of 2 Thess 2:4 and the anti-God power of Dan 7, 8, 11, scholars often denote Dan 8-11 as providing the background to 2 Thess 2:1-12.¹⁸ In Both 2 Thess 2 and Dan 8-11 there is an anti-God personage, which share a similar character, disposition, and function, and also follows a similar trajectory in their activities.¹⁹ This personage exalts itself above God, blasphemes God's name and His sanctuary, is characterized by actions that target the heavenly realm, usurps divine prerogative, deceives through miraculous activities, and summarily destroyed at the Parousia.

Scholars have wrestled with several pertinent elements emanating from 2 Thess 2:1-12,²⁰ namely its historical antecedent, the possible meanings of ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, the man of lawlessness (2:3),²¹ τὸ κατέχον, the

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- 18 Several scholars agree today that Paul is using an eclectic antecedent. R. Thomas believe that it is a conglomeration of the Old Testament (OT) apocalypse of Daniel with the NT apocalypses [Dan 9:26, 27; 11:31, 36, 37; 12:11; Matt 24:5-24; Mark 13:3-23; Lk 8:13] (*2 Thessalonians*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC)), vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 321-22); F.F. Bruce considers Dan 11:36, 37 and Jubilee 23:14-23 as the best antecedent (*1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), vol. 45 (Texas: Word, 1982), 167-68); see also E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 154. Barnhouse supports Dan 9:27 and Matt 24, *Thessalonians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 99; Grayston sees Isa 14 and Eze 28 as possible referents, *The Letters of Paul to the Philippians and to the Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967), 99-100. Hans Larondelle "Paul's Prophetic Outline in 2 Thessalonians", *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21/1 (1983): 61, Larondelle posits Dan 7,8,11; Eze 28:2 and Isa 11:4 as possible antecedents. R.D. Aus sees many parallels with Isa 66, for example he compares שָׁטוּת "shut up" Isa 66:7-9 with κατέχων "restrainer" 2 Thess 2:7 "God's Plan and God's Power: Isa 66 and the Restraining Factors of 2 Thess 2:6-7", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96/4 (1977):544, 546, 552).
- 19 For more on the comparison between Dan 7, 8, 11 see Carlos E. Mora, *Dios Defiende A Su Pueblo: Comentario Exégetico de Daniel 10 al 12* (Universidad de Morelia, Mexico: Adventus, 2012), 11-16.
- 20 According to Vincent Paul this passage possesses three essential traits of apocalyptic genre: historical dualism, universal cosmic expectation, and the imminent end of the world, "Apocalyptic Paul?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47/4 (1985):665; see also L. Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1972), 32-70; W. Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movements: Introduction and Interpretation* (NY: Abingdon, 1975), 29-49; J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre: Introduction", *Semeia* 14 (1979):2-19.
- 21 Some scholars see the man of lawlessness in 2 Thess 2:3 as referring to Antiochus Epiphanies, see David Ewert, "1 and 2 Thessalonians", *The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, Ed. A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 1090-91. Others believe that it can be referring to Pompey who desecrated the most holy place, or even of Gaius Caligula who erected an image of himself in the temple of God (E. Richard, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1995), 327, 350; Grayston, *The Letters of Paul*

restrainer (neuter), ὁ κατέχων, the restrainer (masc.) (2:6,7);²² and τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, the temple of God (2.4). While all these are important, this paper will primarily aim to identify “the temple of God”.

101; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 168; J. Weima, “The Slaying of Satan’s Superman and the Sure Salvation of the Saints”, *Catholic Theological Journal* 41 (2006):81; John Stott, *The Gospel and the End of Time: The Message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Illinois: Intervarsity, 1991), 162-63; Thomas, 322 (he includes Nero and Diocletian); Peerbolte believes several figures qualify for the designation of man of sin, in addition to Antiochus he sites Pompey, Caligula and Titus, see *The Antecedent of the Antichrist: A Tradition-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1996), 78; Peters and Giblin advocates that the man of lawlessness is an eschatological figure/false prophet (“A Difficult Passage in St Paul: 2 Thess 2:1-12” *AFER* 7/3 (1965):202, and C. Giblin, *A Threat to Faith* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 66. In the reckoning of Lenski the man of lawlessness is worse than any pagan (Pharaoh, Roman emperors, Antiochus Epiphanes) since he exalts himself above God, he suggest that only the papacy fits this garb (*The interpretation of St. Paul’s epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon*. Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1946), 409. According to Best it can refer to a dreadful futuristic opponent of Christ (*The 1 and 2 Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1972), 285)).

- 22 The interpretation of τὸ κατέχοι ὁ κατέχων (2:6, 7) has been one of the most contentious in the understanding of this passage. Peters believe that τὸ κατέχων in vs 6 refers to the second coming and the participle in vs 7 to the revelation of Jesus Christ (Peters, 203-204); Lenski thinks it’s a certain power exercised by an individual-the papacy (Lenski, 415). Holland sees the neuter as a present seizing power, whilst the participle denotes a future seizer (*The Tradition that You Received from us: 2 Thessalonians in Pauline Tradition*) (Tubingen: J C B Mohr, 1988), 112; Giblin thinks it refers to the Thessalonian’s cults of Serpapis and Dionysis which Paul used metaphorically to refer to pagan practices (Giblin, 201); Hiebert postulates that only the power of God can hold back the reins of Satan thus the restrainer in vv 6, 7 is God (*1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody, 1992), 337-38)). The predominant views held today on τὸ κατέχοι ὁ κατέχων are: Roman Empire and Roman Emperor, principle of law and order, proclamation of the gospel, power of God Himself, the Jewish state, the presence of the church and the Holy Spirit, the force of evils and Satan, the false prophecy and the false prophet ((Weima, 82; see also Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 250-52)); L. Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commemary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 224-33; see also Aus, 550-51; Dixon, *The Evil Restraint*, 446-48; Powell, *The Identity of the Restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7*, 328-32; Peerbolte, 244-49; Krodell, *The “Religious Power of Lawlessness” as the Precursor of the “Lawless one” 2 Thess 2:6, 7*, 244-46; Nicholl, *Michael the Restrainer Removed (2 Thess 2:6-7)*, 35-40.

In general, it is believed that the appellation τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ can refer to the Christian church,²³ a literal temple in Jerusalem,²⁴ a future Jewish

23 Larondelle, Hans K., *How to Understand the End-time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical Contextual Approach* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 68; also Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 223-24. Morris sees the temple as a material building where apostasy will be epitomized. It also points to the "innermost" precinct and not the entirety of the structure. See, Leon Morris, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 127-28. Here he infers a somewhat eschatological dimension of the church. So also does J.F. Walvoord, *The Thessalonian Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 124-26; John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle to the Thessalonians* (Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1977), 270-74; John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972; reprint, 1973), 402. Calvin infers that although the temple represents the church it is only the church under the domain of the papacy; cf., Giblin, *A Threat to Faith*, 76-80, on the contrary thinks it is a spiritual Church. John Stott, *The Gospel and the End of Time: The Message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Illinois: Intervarsity, 1991), 160, thinks while no specific temple is in mind, the language of sitting in the temple expresses the opposition of evil to God. R. J. Mckelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969), 43-45, spiritualizes the temple to represent Christ and the Christian church; cf., Kim Riddlebarger, *The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth About the Antichrist* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 127-8.

24 Herschel Hobbs, "1-2 Thessalonians", *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman, 1969), 292; J. Forestell, "The Letters to the Thessalonians", *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Ed. Raymond E. Brown (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 234; Charles Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 247-49. George Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians*, Minneapolis, MN: Klock and Klock, 1980), 99, believes it refers to the first century Jerusalem temple in the time of Paul. F.F. Bruce, "1 and 2 Thessalonians", *The New Bible Commentary*, Ed. D. Guthrie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1163. Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 218; Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, *The Anchor Bible*. Vol. 32B NY: Doubleday, 2000), 420; James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning From Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making*, vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 71; Grayston, *Thessalonians*, 101-2; Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1968), 472. Some understood the language of the temple to be pointing to the Jerusalem temple but with an emphasis of Nero's usurpation of divine prerogatives, such as, Gary Demarest, *1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, *The Communicator Commentary* (Texas: Word, 1984), 120J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the NT Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1887; reprint, 1983), 181-84.

temple,²⁵ a metaphorical temple with no specificity,²⁶ a spiritual temple,²⁷ the 'holies of holies' in an earthly temple,²⁸ an apocalyptic temple that is neither metaphorical nor material,²⁹ site of God's throne,³⁰ and unfulfilled first-century rhetoric,³¹ or even any locality where the plenitude lawlessness will be exemplified.³²

Although some alluded to the fact that the phrase 'temple of God' in 2 Thess 2:4 refers to God's temple in heaven,³³ it is often within the purview of the

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- 25 Thomas, *2 Thessalonians*, 322; D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody, 1992), 337-39. See also, Gerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1986), 113. Purports that the temple referred to is that of a universal Jewish temple established by a pseudo-messiah who will overthrow the Roman Empire.
- 26 I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, *The New Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 190-192, 246-48, although saying that no specific temple is in mind, he sees it covering the broad sweep of Christian history. Bruce in some ways reflects this view, although he didn't go as far as Marshall in implying a historicist understanding of the expression. While he advances the possibility of the church being meant, he favors the material Jerusalem temple being referred to in a metaphorical sense with either Antiochus or Caligula in view, see Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 169.
- 27 Harold Ockenga, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962). 116. He sees the antichrist as proclaiming himself as having the vicar of God and having rights of God within the sanctuary.
- 28 Richard H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1946), 410-11. Lord Bishop, *2 Thessalonians*, *The Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, *Romans to Philemon*, Ed. F.C. Cook (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 736, advocates that though it refers to the 'holies of holies', it only refers metaphorically to Christians (both singly and corporately).
- 29 Dom Bernard Orchard, "1 and 2 Thessalonians", *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, Ed. Reginald C. Fuller (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 1208, cautions that this prophecy must be understood apocalyptically and not literally, according to Paul is definitely alluding to Matt 24, Dan 7:25 and 11:36.
- 30 Earl J. Richard, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, *Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1995), 328-29, believes that the 'temple of God' should be viewed as referring to God's power, and the work of the lawless man as symbolic of human aspirations to divinity.
- 31 According to Holmes Rolston, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, the First and Second Letters of Paul to Timothy, the Letters of Paul to Titus, the Letter of Paul to Philemon*, *Layman's Bible Commentary*, vol. 23 (Georgia: John Knox, 1963), 45-46, the phrase 'temple of God' and 'man of sin' are burrowed unfulfilled first century rhetoric that Paul used to convey the message of a delayed parousia. He thus postulates that Christians should not look for a future fulfilment of these, but rather, to the consummation of this age.
- 32 Eadie, *Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 367.
- 33 William Neil, *The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians*, *The Moffat New Testament*
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heavenly realm in its symbolic sense.³⁴ There are ruminations, however, that the appellation "temple of God" in 2 Thess 2:4 can point to "some other place" other than a symbolic entity.³⁵

Earl Richard has also intimated the need for an alternative rendering of the widely held view on "temple of God", which he sees the temple and the divine throne functioning as "heavenly realities".³⁶ Although he advances that the language of the temple is symbolic of the locality of "God's power", implicitly he inferred to the heavenly sphere where God's throne exists. G.K. Beale too has opened up the possibility of a heavenly referent to the "temple of God". While he holds that the primary referent of the temple is the worldwide Christian church, he concedes that the "identification of the temple [2 Thess 2:4] as God's holy temple in heaven is secondarily right ... [with respect to the temple] the cultic eschatological center of gravity as shifted to heaven ... and the heavenly temple extends to earth wherever God's spirit indwells people."³⁷ Even among those who are inconclusive as to the precise referent of "temple of God", the church is still seen as the most probable.³⁸

3. Literary Context

Second Thess 2:1-12 must be understood contextually in light of 1 Thess 4:13 - 5:11.³⁹ Apart from the strong thematic coherence between the two

Commentary (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 164. William Neil although explicitly stating that the referent of the temple in 2 Thess 2:4 points to heaven, he has not shown through either an exegetical or theological study the basis for his position.

- 34 George E. Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 67; James E. Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 256.
- 35 John C. Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 2 Thessalonians* (Dallas, TX: SIL, 2000), 60.
- 36 Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 329.
- 37 G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 278.
- 38 "Temple" [2 Thess 2:4], *Seventh-day Adventist Commentary* (SDABC), Ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978), 7:271.
- 39 Although most scholars including both USB⁴ and NA²⁷ support the present delimitation of the pericope, J. Weima has some interesting counter-arguments that are worthy of notification. He purports that the passage unit should include 2:1-17, he sees verbal and thematic inclusion in verses 2 and 15; he sees verses 3-12 contrasting the unbelievers with the Thessalonian believers in 13-17; 2:1-17 parallels the structure of 2:17-3:10. According to him the emphasis of Paul is on comforting the believers who receive the salvation of God as opposed to his [wrath] (Weima, 71-72); Giblyn provides some support for Weima with respect to the extension of the pericope, (Giblyn, 46-48).

passages, there are also strong semantic and structural parallels. In 1 Thess 4:13 the phrase οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων (“we do not want you brother to be ignorant concerning those who have fallen asleep”) introduces the parousia pericope;⁴⁰ likewise in 2 Thess 2:1-12, the phrase ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας (“now concerning the coming ... we ask you, brothers”) introduces a similar eschatological pericope.⁴¹ This infers that there is an invariable and concomitant link between the two epistles.

The central axiom of 2 Thess 2:1-12 stems from an apparent eschatological misunderstanding arising from a letter written presumably by Paul’s opponents, as if purportedly written by Paul, to the effect that the day of the Lord had dawned and these believers had missed the eschaton, or were leaving in a state of over-realized eschatology (2:1-2).⁴² 2 Thess 2 thus militates against the being shaken with regards to the current eschatological distortions. The pericope outlines some eschatological signs that must precede the Parousia, which include:

1. The apostasy (falling away) (vs 3)
2. The revelation of the man of lawlessness (vs 4)
3. The blasphemous work of the man of lawlessness the temple of God (vs 4)
4. The miracles and signs that will be performed (vs 9)
5. The removing of the restrainer (vv 6,7)
6. The strong delusion that will cause mass deception (vs 11)

In 2 Thess 1:4 Paul commends the Thessalonians for their steadfastness in persecution and tribulation; he reminds them about the eschatological righteous judgment of God on both the righteous and unrighteous which reckons them worthy or unworthy of the kingdom (1:5-12). The present sufferings are posited as evidence of their eschatological righteous judgment (1:5). He then goes on to describe the judgment, its subject, and the consequence

40 Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 95.

41 Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27d., (Stuttgart: Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 539.

42 There are those who argue today that the letter referred to in 2 Thess 2:2 is 1 Thessalonians since sections of it might have caused some misunderstanding (see Frame, 247; Marshall, 187; Trilling, 77. Wannamaker believes that 2 Thessalonians stemmed from the reports Timothy brought back upon his first visit concerning the believers, their deceased and the relation of both to the parousia (Wannamaker, 240-41).

(1:6-12).⁴³ On the one hand in 1:6 he uses the verb ἀνταποδοῦναι to refer to God's compensation to the ungodly;⁴⁴ on the other hand, he uses ἐνδοξασθῆναι to refer to Christ being glorified in his saints. This apocalyptic pericope concludes with a prayer admonishing the Thessalonians to stand firm in light of their destiny (2:13-15), and a benediction invoking God to encourage their hearts to so stand firm (2:16-17). The letter concludes with exhortation to evangelism (3:1-5); rebuke of the ἄτακτοι (3:6-15);⁴⁵ and an apparent built-in authenticating mechanism that is bracketed by two benedictory prayers (3:16-18).⁴⁶ The phrase τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ in 2 Thess 2:4 is surrounded by two eschatological judgment motifs, 1:5-12 and 2:11-12.⁴⁷ The central themes highlighted are, deliverance of the saints, the vindication of God's name, and the punishment of the wicked. The association of judgment, vindication, and deliverance with the temple of God motif is in consonance with the OT prophets who saw these as constitutive functions of God within the heavenly sanctuary.⁴⁸ The pericope of the 2 Thess 2:1-12 must therefore by all means be interpreted in the context of God's judgment, and its relation to the temple of God and its functions. 2 Thessalonians 1 provides the framework from upon which 2 Thess 2:1-12 should be understood, that is, Christ's cataclysmic return (1:7-8a); punishment of non-believers (1:6, 8b-9); vindication of believers (1:7a); glorification of God in the midst of the believers (1:10, 12).⁴⁹

The heavenly sanctuary motif can be discerned in 2 Thess 1:10. In commenting on the final reward of the wicked, the apostle stated, οἵτινες δίκην τίσουσιν ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ "who will pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from His glory and His power". Of

43 Hiebert, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 309-16; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 148-57.

44 The verb is also used in ἀνταποδοῦναι Lk 14:14, Rom 12:19 and Heb 10:30 referring to God's eschatological recompense.

45 See R. Jewett, *The Thessalonians Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 104-05. This group was also addressed in 1 Thess 5:14, thus it seems that issues at stake in both epistles were related to them in one way or another. More will be said about this group in the background study.

46 See Bruce, "1 and 2 Thessalonians", 1163; Hiebert, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 383-87.

47 Mark Powell, *Introduction to the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 387-93. He sees the judgment motif present in 1 Thess 1:10; 2:16; and also in Rom 1:18; 2:5-8; 12:19.

48 See Is 6:1-13; 66:1-6; Jer. 25:30; Micah 1:2-3; Jonah 2:7; Hab 2:20; Zech 2:13.

49 Ernest W. Saunders, *1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 43; see also, Peerbolte, 71.

interest here is the phrase προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου which is used extensively throughout scripture, particularly in reference to the wrath emanating from God's presence (Num 16:46), the earthly sanctuary (Num 17:8, 9), the heavenly sanctuary (Zech 2:17; 3:1), the ark (Josh 4:5, 7; 7:6), assemblage of the people (Josh 20:2), beseeching the Lord in prayer (1 Kgs 13:6),⁵⁰ judgment (Psa 33:16),⁵¹ God's directive (Jonah 1:3, 10), and forgiveness (Acts 3:20). The alternate rendering τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ is used in Gen 3:8 to depict the holiness of God, and in Heb 9:24 with reference to Christ entering the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The activities associated with the προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου are evidently sanctuary related functions. It seems logical to infer that the usage of the προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου points to an explicit allusion of the heavenly sanctuary and its functions that are deemed pertinent to the administration of the cosmos.

4. Syntactical Analysis

4.1 2 Thess 2:3-4

Μή τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον. ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός.

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2Th 2:3,4 NKJV)

The articular phrase ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας attests to a figure par excellence.⁵² Paul's lawless figure although it stands as the arch anti-God apogee it has counterparts which share its character and disposition. Therefore it seems prudent to see the antichrist as a system that exhibits certain anti-God attitudes and tendencies through human agents. It is best therefore to see the man of lawlessness as a system exemplified through historical personages that stretched from the biblical world to the end of time. Moreover, from a cosmic perspective, Satan can be attributed as the

50 Cf. 2 Kgs 13:4; 22:19; 2 Chron 33:12; Dan 9:3,13

51 Cf. Psa 20:10; 96: 5,13; 1 Pet 3:12

52 Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 222.

prototypical lawless figure from which all subsequent similar personages are emulated.

There is an overwhelming consonance among scholars that the man of lawlessness of 2 Thess 2:3; the little horn of Dan 7 and 8; the blasphemous king of Dan 11:36; and the sea beast of Rev 13:1-10 all refer to the same person. According to 2 Thess 2:4-9, the following are the characteristics of the man of lawlessness: it is blasphemous in that it endeavours to usurp divine prerogatives in the temple of God (2:4), it is kept in checked (2:6, 7), it will be destroyed by the coming of Jesus (2:8), its work is energized by Satan (2:9), and it deceives and leads others away from the truth resulting in their ultimate destruction (2:10-12). The characteristics of the lawless figure conjure the imagery of a hostile pseudo-Messiah,⁵³ one of a predominantly religious character.⁵⁴

The anti-God figure is described as ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, "one who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or worshipped". The placement of these participles in the clause attests to the significance that the author attaches them.⁵⁵ As compound verbs they highlight the intensity of the action described,⁵⁶ while simultaneously adding colour to the manner in which the actions are done.⁵⁷ Whether the participles are understood predicatively or substantively,⁵⁸ the point remains that this figure is opposed to God, and attempts to assume the place of God. The anarthrous nature of the second participle attests to

53 Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 143.

54 The use of the construction article + noun + ἀνομίας is found only once in the NT—2 Thess 2:3. However, in the LXX it is found in 1 Esd 8:67, οἱ μεγιστάνες τῆς ἀνομίας, "great men of iniquity"; 1 Macc. 3:6, οἱ ἐργάται τῆς ἀνομίας, "workers of iniquity"; Ezek 7:23, ἡ πόλις πλήρης ἀνομίας, "the city full of iniquity"; and Ezek 16:36, τὰ ἐνθυμήματα τῶν ἀνομιῶν, "inventions of lawlessness". The articular usage of the noun makes a conspicuous and definitive entity the focus.

55 On the importance of word order the Greek NT see Iver Larson, "Word Order and Relative Prominence in New Testament Greek", *Notes on Translation* 5/1 (1991): 29-34. According to Iver Larson the more to the left any element is projected the greater the prominence is assumed in the phrase.

56 Robert E. Smith, "Recognizing Prominent Features in the Greek New Testament", in *Selected Technical Articles Relating to Translation* 14, Ed. Bruce Moore (Dallas, TX, 1985), 16.

57 *Ibid.*, 150.

58 A. T. Robertson, *A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament, for Students Familiar With the Elements of Greek* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 198; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1108, 1109.

its appositional and thus synonymous function.⁵⁹ It is also evident that both participles refer to one and the same being (Matt 5:6; 11:28; 21:12; Mark 5:15; 8:33; 14:47; 16:16; John 3:29; 5:35; 8; 1 Cor 11:29; 16:16; Heb 8:13; Rev 16:15; 22:8).⁶⁰

The semantic range which ἀντικείμενος covers include: opposing (Exo 23:22; Luke 13:17; 1 Cor 16:9; Gal 5:17; Phil 1:28;), waging war (2 Sam 8:10), to assault or attack (Esth 8:11), to accuse (Zech 3:1), to resist (Luke 21:15; 1 Macc 14:7; 2 Macc 10:26; 3 Macc 7:9), and adversary (Isa 66:6).⁶¹ When the preposition ἀντί the verb κείμαι is combined the participle indicates a horizontal action within the human sphere, targeted at God. The message conveyed is of someone on a horizontal level positioning himself to supplant God. The second participle, ὑπεραιρόμενος primarily carries the sense of exalting oneself above another (2 Chron 32:23), going beyond (Psa 37:5 [38:4]), reaching pinnacle (Psa 71:16 [72:16]), to surpass/excel (Prov 31:29), overcoming (Sir 48:13), exercising an authoritative hand (2 Macc 5:23).⁶² The vertical ascent of the lawless figure is here depicted by the preposition ὑπερ in its spatial and comparative nuances—meaning above and beyond, and the verb αἴρω “to take over or conquer”. The idea emanating from combining these two is that of one who vies to rise above God and assume His prerogative.

The action of the “man of lawlessness” mirrors the self-aggrandizing claims of the anti-God figure of Isa 14:13-14, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” This action clearly depicts the vertical ascendancy of one in heavenly realms with God’s target at the ultimate goal. Even more daring is the claim of the king of Tyre in Ezek 28:2, “... I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods”. The man of lawlessness no doubt possesses a similar egoistic taunt as the anti-God figure of Isaiah and Ezekiel, which is evidence that all three are driven by the same ambition— usurping God’s sovereignty.

59 Blass, Debrunner and Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 144.

60 Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 764.

61 Cf. Apoc. Ezra 3:15; 4:15, 43; Let. Arist. 1:266; Liv. Pro. 3:20; 3 Macc 7:9. Another semantic nuance can be found in the cognate ἀντικρίνομαι “to contend or rebuke” (Job 9:32; 11:3).

62 Other semantic nuances from cognates include ὑπεραγόντος and ὑπεράγαν “exceedingly” (2 Macc 7:20; 10:34), ὑπεράγω “pre-eminent,” (1 Macc 6:43), ὑπερανετος “to be praised exceedingly” [Dan 3:52], ὑπεράλλομαι “to leap into prominence” (Sir 38:33).

The sanctuary motif becomes apparent by Paul's choice of the word *σέβασμα* as opposed to *προσκυνέω*. The latter is used profusely in the NT (especially by John and Matthew) with reference to worship of Jesus.⁶³ The noun *σέβασμα* on the contrary apart from 2 Thess 2:4 it is used in Acts 17:23,⁶⁴ and is virtually absent from the LXX.⁶⁵ While the most attested meaning attributed to *σέβασμα* is "object of worship",⁶⁶ it also translate as "devotional activity",⁶⁷ and as "sanctuary".⁶⁸ In Acts 17:23 *σέβασμα* is used in connection with *βωμός* "altar", which is only used here in the NT.⁶⁹ Unlike *θυσιαστήριον* (which is widely used in reference to altars that God instructed to build), *βωμός* attest to altars of human initiatives that are often though not always associated with abominable practices.⁷⁰ *Σέβασμα* serves therefore a cultic terminology denoting objects of worship (inclusive of places),⁷¹ and by implication worship (activities associated with human worship). Further, it points to a horizontal progression from opposing divinely constituted order of allegiance to claiming the worship that is associated with this divine order.

Intrinsic in the usage of *σέβασμα* and its cognates in scripture is the idea of worship directed to God (Josh 4:24; 22:25; 24:35; Job 1:9; Jonah 1:9; Isa 29:13; 18:14; Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7; Acts 16:14; 18:7, 13), worshipping other gods (Josh 24:33; Acts 19:27), and of worshippers of God (Acts 13:43; 13:50; 17:4, 17). Using Acts 17:23 and the Athenian's worship of a man-

63 Apart from Hebrews 1:6; 11:21 Paul uses *προσκυνέω* only in 1 Cor 14:25 in reference to the worship of God.

64 The adjective *σεβαστος* is used in Acts 25:21, 25; 27:1 to denote the emperor as one worthy of reverence.

65 A few scattered extra-biblical references can be found in Wis 14:20; 15:20; Bel 1:27.

66 Bauer, BAGD, s.v. "*σέβασμα*".

67 Ibid.

68 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: United Bible societies, 1996), s.v. "*σέβασμα*". Also, James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. "*σέβασμα*", and Horst R. Balz and Gerhard Schneider, Eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), s.v. "*σέβασμα*".

69 The more common word used for altar in the NT is *βῆμα* (Matt 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 7:5; 12:21; 18:16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17; Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10).

70 Exo 34:13; Num 23:1, 2, 14, 29, 30; Jos 22:10, 11, 16, 19, 23, 26; 2 Chron 31:1; Hos 10:8; Amos 7:9; Isa 15:2; 16:12; Jer 7:31; 48:35. One exception is in Num 3:10 where *βωμός* is used in connection with the earthly tabernacle and the Most Holy Place.

71 J. Gwyn Griffiths, "2 Thess 2:4", *Expository Times* 52 (1940-41):38.

made construct Paul in using σέβασμα in 2 Thess 2:4 endeavours to depict the horizontal trajectory of the lawless figure within human realm. Σέβασμα in this case speaks of any object associated with forms of worship in the human or divine sphere, systems and structures that seeks to transcend the limits of its creatureliness. I believe that σέβασμα is used here as inclusive terminology to include horizontal dimensions of worship in the earthly sphere, while at the same time encompassing worship that is vertically oriented to God. In opposing and exalting himself over the divine order, and vying for its worship,⁷² the man of lawlessness has basically set himself on a vertical ascendancy to supplant God in his heavenly domain.

The “man of lawlessness” attempts and evidently succeeds in sitting in τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ “temple of God”, a reference either to the earthly, heavenly sanctuaries, or both. The primary connotation in the NT associated with the inner sanctum of the sanctuary either in part or as a whole are ναὸς⁷³ and σκηνή.⁷⁴ In the NT ναὸς it refers to the physical structure of the earthly temple (Matt 23:16-17, 21, 35; 26:61; 27:5, 40, 51; Luke 1:9, 21, 22; 23:45); the body of Jesus (John 2:19-21), dwelling place of earthly idols (Acts 17:24), the dwelling place of God (Acts 19:24) the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 2, 19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17; 21:22), and the community of believers/church (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:19, Eph 2:21).⁷⁵

72 John A. Bengel, *New Testament Word Studies*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), 497.

73 Bauer, BAGD, s.v. “ναὸς”. In other works such as Philo ναὸς is often used to refer to the temple in general, the wilderness temple, blasphemous temples and the Jerusalem temple (*Ebr.* 1:85; *Somn.* 2:246; *Mos.* 2:72, 89, 138, 178, 276; *Decal.* 1:7; *Spec.* 1:21, 66, 71, 268; *Legat.* 1:139, 151, 191, 278, 292, 295, 319). In Josephus the appellation “temple of God” is used mostly in relation to the general temple precincts (see *Ant.* 8:131; 9:5, 161, 254; 10:37; 11:6; 15:380; 18:8; 20:49), and a few possibly instances to the inner sanctum (*Ant.* 16:261; *J.W.* 4:388). In Philo, it denotes primarily metaphysical reality of the temple (*Somn.* 2:232; *Spec.* 1:66). Another word that is used to denote the idea of the temple is ἱερόν—used 67 times in the NT to refer to the general precincts of the temple excluding the inner sanctuary. In the LXX it carries a similar connotation, only that in some cases it is used in relation to the Jerusalem temple, and other and pagan cultic sites (Eze 27:6; 28:18).

74 The noun σκηνή occurs particularly in Hebrews it speaks of an earthly replica of a heavenly reality, as well as the heavenly transcendental reality (Heb 8:2, 5; 9:2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 21; 11:9; 13:10); also in Revelation undoubtedly to the heavenly temple (Rev 13:6; 15:6; 21:3), and of earthly tabernacles (Acts 7:43, 44; 15:16).

75 H. Preisker, “ναὸς” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:882-83. The LXX uses the phrases ναὸν θεοῦ (1 Sam 1:9; 2 Kgs 18:16; 23:4) τῷ ναῷ κυρίου (2 Kgs 24:13; Hag 2:15; Wis 3:14); τὸν ναὸν κυρίου (2 Chron 26:16; 27:2; 29:17; 1 Es 5:57, 64; 6:18; ὁ ναὸς τοῦ κυρίου (1 Es 5:52;

Syntactically *ναός* can either be a definite, indefinite, or qualitative noun.⁷⁶ Apart from 2 Thess 2:4 and 1 Cor 3:17 whenever Paul uses *ναός* in his corpus it is often anarthrous. While certain substantives are by their nature definite whether or not prefaced by the article, whenever the article is used it is intended to add prominence and definiteness to that which it precedes. Thus, the articular use of *ναός* in 2 Thess 2:4 is in all likelihood identifying a definite reality—the existence of an actual temple.⁷⁷ Even in its anarthrous form *nao.j* can still be rendered as a definiteneric noun, especially since nouns that carry a generic idea do not need an article for the concept of definiteness to be implied.⁷⁸ This can be interpreted to mean that even if *ναός* is understood as a definite it can also be emblematic of a broader reality or class of temples belonging to God. Even if one is tempted to see this reality as the church, the church then becomes a microcosm pointing towards a greater macrocosmic reality. I believe that Paul’s primary focus as will be shown is not so much the horizontal scope of the “man of lawlessness” but

5:18); ὁ ναός κυρίου (Hag 2:18); ὁ ναός τοῦ θεοῦ (Jdt 5:18); ναός κυρίου (Jer 7:4) του ναου κυρίου (Eze 8:16); and ναου κυρίου (Jdt 4:22). These refer primarily to the physical structure of the earthly temple, in some instances to the sphere within the temple where God’s presence is manifested. According to BADG *nao.j* in general can be understood to mean a place or structure specifically associated with or set apart for deity. However there are several strains of meaning that has been accrued to the word *ναός* over time. Firstly, it can denote temples in the general sense (Acts 17:24). Used in Eph 19:24 to refer to the replicas of the temples of Artemis at Ephesus. The phrase *ἱερά καὶ ναός* was used by Josephus, Philo, and in 3 Maccabees 1:10 referring to the temple and the altar. It is used by Diodorus Siculus and Herodotus to mean a shrine where the images of the goddess stood. Secondly, it can denote the temple at Jerusalem as attested by Justin Martyr, sibylline Oracles. Sometimes it is denoted as Herod’s temple. In some instances it referred to the entire temple precincts, in other places it is associated with Jesus and his relation to the temple. In Matt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45 it is used in reference to the curtain separating the most holy place from the holy place; other times for the paneled ceiling of the temple. Thirdly, it is used in reference to the heavenly sanctuary. Extra biblical writings such as Phil Spec Leg., Testament of Levi attest to the same. Fourthly, it can denote the human body or part thereof (a usage popularized by the apostle Paul). Finally, it can mean the body of Christ.⁷⁵ As to what the meaning of Paul was in 2 Thess 2:4 it is important to bear in mind how he generally uses the term, however due to the genre of writing being uncharacteristic of the author, the context will have to be made the final determiner.

76 Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 244-45.

77 Smith, “Recognizing Prominent Features in the Greek,” 19. In 1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:16; 2 Cor 6:19; and Eph 2:21 Paul uses *ναός* to refer presumably to the community of believers (God’s church), this usage while most understand it as qualitative, however contextually it fits best as qualitatively definite. Thus, the believers are God’s temple in the sense that they emulate in their lives the fruit of the spirit made possible by His indwelling.

78 *Ibid.*, 253.

his vertical ascent into heavenly realm. With that being said, the sanctuary in focus must by implication be one that is associated to the heavenly realms resident in the place of activity.

In 2 Thess 2:1-12 Paul uses a series of monadic articles: τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου (v.1), ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου (v.2), ἡ ἀποστασία⁷⁹ (v.3) ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας...ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας (v.3),⁸⁰ τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (v.4), τὸ κατέχον... (v.6), τὸ μυστήριον... ὁ κατέχων (vs.7), τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας (vs.8). These monadic substantives denote that the given designations are unique in themselves—the only of their kind. It implies that there is a certain degree of certainty and literality that can be accrued to them. In light of this, τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ in 2 Thess 2:4 should be understood as the only one of its kind. Since the earthly sanctuary is a pattern of an original (Exo 25:9; Heb 9:24) it cannot be designated as the only one of its kind, this therefore leaves the heavenly sanctuary as that prototypical reality referred to. This is confirmed in Hebrew 8:1, 2 the only true tabernacle is the heavenly tabernacle which God himself built.

The ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ constitutes the central idea of 2 Thess 2:4 and 2 Thess 2:1-12 as illustrated by the following chiasmic structures.

4.1.1 *Chiasmus of 2 Thessalonians 2:4*

- A. opposes and exalts
- B. over all that is called god
- C. worship/sanctuary**
- C' temple of God**
- B' sits
- A' displaying himself as God

4.1.2 *Chiasmus of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12*

- A. coming of Jesus and gathering of the saints (2:1)
- B. mental duress of the believers (2:2, 3a)
- C. rebellion and revelation of lawless one (2:3b)

⁷⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulations: A biblical Examination of Post-Tribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 117-18. He agrees that the article here delineates a special or well known apostasy which is led by the antichrist against God.

⁸⁰ Giblin, *The Threat to Faith*, 70. Giblin see ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας as denoting an anti-God figure par excellence.

***D. opposes and exalts over all called god or worship
(2:4a)***

D' seat in the temple of God (2:4b)

C' lawless one restrained by restrainer (2:6, 7b)

B' mystery of lawlessness at work (2:7a)

A' revealing the lawless one, his work and followers (2:8-12)

In the first chiasmic structure of 2 Thess 2:4 worship and the temple of God occupies the central focus of the verse 4 in the very same way that it does in Dan 7 and 8, and Rev 13. Thus it attests to the synonymity of the context and personages of 2 Thess 2, Dan 7 and 8 and Rev 13. In the second structure of 2 Thess 2:1-12, the action of the lawless one in the temple of God again occupies the focal point. All other elements of the pericope revolve around the action of the man of lawlessness. Although events that are stated sequentially, with regards to their fulfillment the latter events takes precedent over the former. Thus, the fulfillment of events indicated by D' C' B' A' precedes the events indicated by D C B A. The sitting of the lawless one in the sanctuary therefore serves as the starting point that spirals all other activities within the sanctuary, and ushers in the closing events culminating with the Parousia. This chiasmus shows that 2 Thess 2:1-12 is not intended to give a chronological timeline of the end of time, but rather to emphasize the work that must be done both by Christ and the lawless one prior to the Parousia.

The intent of the action of the lawless one is made further explicit by the phrase καθίσαι ἀποδεικνύντα "to sit displaying". The action of sitting is often denoted by the verbs κάθημαι and κάθιζω. Both these verbs are used in reference to Jesus sitting on the throne (Rev 4:2, 3; 4:9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 7:10, 15; 20:11; 21:15), twenty four elders sitting on their thrones (Rev 11:16), Son of Man sitting on the cloud (Rev 14:14, 15, 16), Harlot sitting on many waters (Rev 17:1), people sitting upon the earth (Rev 14:6), sitting at God's right hand (Col 3:1; Heb 1:13; Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Matt 26:64), sitting on thrones of judgment (Rev 20:4), or with God (Rev 3:21), seating in Moses' seat (Matt 23:2). Considering the above, it can be concluded that the act of sitting especially in an apocalyptic context denotes a figurative act of authority.⁸¹ The sitting in the temple thus can be understood as a metonym describing the function of the one who occupies that seat.⁸² In wanting to sit on God's

81 G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 209.

82 Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 2 Thessalonians*, 60, 61.

throne the man of lawlessness posited a disregard for God's sovereignty and a usurpation of His prerogative.

While the use of the participle ἀποδεικνύντα is often translated “displaying or showing”, other instances of its usage in the NT denote the nuance of “proving or attestation” (Acts 2:22; 25:7; 1 Cor 4:9). In the LXX there is the added sense of standing supreme over all (Dan 2:48; 4:47) to which most translations accede. Both senses of the word are applicable in this context, the lawless one by attempting to seat in God's place publicly attest himself as the rightful person deserving to be seated, and thus worthy to be called God. The implication of this is the projection of himself as lord above all—that is god.⁸³

The purpose clause ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός indicates the intent of the ‘man of lawlessness’ as indicated by the present participles ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος (the one that opposes and exalts). The word ὑπεραιρόμενος is especially important. It is a compound word made up of the preposition ὑπὲρ which can mean either “on behalf of” or “above” with the latter more suitable here, and the verb αἶρω “to remove” or “to raise”. The two components together give a compound word that highlights the man of lawlessness’ desire to rise as high as he can, higher even than God.

The most explicit allusion to the heavenly sanctuary motif in 2 Thess 2:4 is to be found in the subordinate clause ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός. This clause concludes a prolonged sentence which began in verse 3; its placement at this point is meant to highlight its prominence to the whole framework of 2 Thess 2:4. According to the principle of ordering constraints, clauses that are subordinate to the same construction are usually ordered from the least to the most specific. The cline of specificity on the other hand states that ideas most pertinent to the whole are often expressed with more prominence than others.⁸⁴ In this case, the clauses in v. 4a and also in v. 3 being subordinate to vv.1-2 are expressed in ambiguous language that anticipate clarification. The ὥστε clause in v. 4b is therefore intended to be more specific, pertinent, and clarificatory to the whole than the former clauses. In other words, the man of the lawlessness sitting in the temple of God displaying himself as God

83 Ibid.

84 Bruce E. Hollenbach, “Two Constraints on Subordination in New Testament Greek”, in *Selected Technical Articles Related to Translation*, Ed. Bruce Moore (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1985), 1-2.

explains his earlier actions in vv 3-4a—everything is summed up in wanting to seat in God’s temple.

This desire for exaltation has clear parallels in the little horn. In Dan 8:11 the Hebrew verb הִגְדִּיל (hiphil) is used of little horn. It means, “to make himself great” and denotes either a causative or a factitive usage.⁸⁵ Either usage is applicable. The LXX uses the word ὑψόω (Dan 8:10, 25; 11:12, 36, 37). This same verb is used in Matt 23:12 where Jesus denounces self-exaltation; in John 3:14 of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness; in John 8:28 and 12:32, 34 of the death of Jesus on the cross. The ‘man of lawlessness’ like the little horn power seeks to become a caricature of Christ and His activities. He seeks self-exaltation beyond his creatureliness, thus encroaching upon attributes restricted to deity.

Another interesting feature is the use of ὥστε with the infinitive καθίσαι (2 Thess 2:4b). While the primary usage of this construction denotes result, and in rare cases purpose, according to Brooks and Winbery this bifurcation is not always easy to discern.⁸⁶ Paul in 1 Thess 1:7, 8; 4:18 and 2 Thess 1:4 uses ὥστε with the infinite to imply a resulting action. Consequently, it seems that in 2 Thess 2:4 the ‘man of lawlessness’ may not have had the purpose of sitting in the temple of God, but it only resulted out of his actions. Admittedly, both ideas can also be combined with the infinitival usage to infer that the purpose of the man of lawlessness and the result of his actions, are not exclusive to each other, but are complimentary ideas. The emphasis of the apostle may thus be to highlight behavioural trends of the ‘man of lawlessness’. The present participles ἀντικείμενος and ὑπεραιρόμενος (2 Thess 2:4) can be understood to be modal, indicating the manner in which the actions of the man of lawlessness are taking place.⁸⁷

4.2 2 Thess 2:6, 7

⁶ καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ.

⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

⁷ τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας: μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.

85 John Dobson, *Learn Biblical Hebrew*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1999.

86 James Brooks and Carlton Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1978), 133-35.

87 *Ibid.*, 150.

Corroborating the supposition that the sanctuary referred to in 2 Thess 2:4 is of a heavenly nature are the use of the neuter and masculine participles *κατέχον* and *κατέχων* (2 Thess 2:6, 7). In the NT the neuter participle is used in reference to a personal entity (Matt 1:20; 3:16; Luke 1:35; Acts 2:29; Rom 4:14) as well to actions (1 Cor 12:7; 2 Cor 12:1; Rom 2:18; Phil 1:10). For instance in Matt 1:20 *γεννηθὲν* is used as a synonym for Jesus, in Luke 1:35 *το γεννώμενον* refers to Jesus, in Matt 3:16 *καταβαλινὸν ἔρχομενον* refers to the Holy Spirit, in John 3:6 *γεγεννημένον* refers to those born after the flesh, or the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:29 *ἐξὸν* refers to Peter, in Rom 4:19 *νεκρωμένον* refers to the body of Abraham, in 1 John 5:4 *το γεννημένον* refers to those born of God, and in 2 Tim 2:21 *ἡγιασμένον* and *ἡτοιμασμένον* refers to the transformed believer.⁸⁸ Furthermore, in Matt 1:18 *πνεύματος ἁγίου* is used synonymously in reference to the Holy Spirit, in Matt 2:8, 9, 11 *παιδίον* refers to Jesus, in Matt 9:2 *τέκνον* refers to the paralytic man, in Matt 9:25 *τὸ κοράσιον* refers to the ruler's daughter, in Luke 2:16 *τὸ βρέφος* refers to Jesus, in Luke 22:7 *τὸ πάσχα* refers to Jesus as Passover Lamb, in Rom 9:7 *σπέρμα* refers to the descendants of Abraham, in 1 Cor 4:9, 13 *θέατρον περίψημα* refers to the disciples, and in 1 Thess 2:17 *προσώπῳ* refers to being present in person.⁸⁹ It is thus evident that the neuter substantive—either in its participial and nominal forms—can denote as demanded by the context, a personal being, or an entity.

This further opens up the possibility that the neuter participle can refer either to a state or function of the masculine *κατέχων*. The articular use of the participles removes the obscuring of the distinctive aspect each participle encapsulates, while simultaneously maintaining their interrelation. Grammarians observed that the participle often takes the article when it is

88 For more examples, see Luke 22:19; John 6:63; Acts 8:16; 23:10; Rom 5:5; 8:11; 16:2; 1 Cor 12:11; Eph 2:2; Heb 12:1, 10; 1 Pet 1:11, 12; Rev 2:17; 5:6. Examples of the neuter plural participles denoting a personal figure can be found in Acts 13:48 *ακούοντα*, Acts 21:25 *πειστευκότων*, Rom 9:30 *διώκοντα*, and Rev 11:19 *συνηγμένα*.

89 For more examples, see Matt 7:22; 14:11; 18:5; 22:25; 24:7; 27:59; Mark 5:39; 5:40; 9:36; Luke 1:15; 18:17; Rom 10:19; 2 Cor 5:4; 11:22; Rev 17:6. Examples of the neuter plural noun denoting a personal figure can be seen in Matt 2:18; 3:7, 10; 7:11; 10:5, 18, 21; 11:16; 12:18, 21, 34; 15:26, 38; 19:14, 29; Mark 7:7; 10:29; 11:17; 13:10; Luke 1:17; 2:22; 3:7, 8; 7:35; 11:13; 12:30; 18:15, 32; John 13:33; Acts 2:39; 7:19, 45; 13:47; 14:5; 15:3, 7, 12, 14, 17; Rom 1:13; 2:14, 24; 4:18; 8:17, 21; 9:8; 1 Cor 6:15; 15:40; 2 Cor 1:11; 4:4, 7; 11:26; 12:14; Gal 2:2; Eph 3:8; 5:1; Rev 41:1. Cf. Gen 3:15, 16, 24; 6:3; 12:2, 7; 13:15, 16; 17:12, 16; 21:7, 8, 17, 18; 22:7; 24:60; Exod 13:2, 12, 13, 15; 22:18; 23:11; 1 Kgs 3:25; 2 Kgs 4:29-32, 35, 38; 17:26.

meant to distinguish a particular person or object by their qualities or actions.⁹⁰ Moreover, the article is repeated if the substantives refer to different persons (Rev 1:3), or even if the same person is meant where different aspects are presented.⁹¹ Also, the articular neuter singular and plural participles in some cases like the masculine may refer to an individual, or thing, or it may be used in a generalized manner.⁹² In the case of 2 Thess 2:6, 7 the articular participles establish that one entity is spoken of, but that different aspects of that entity are highlighted. In the one instance the function is given, while in the other the one performing the action is identified. The singularity of purpose and the identity of the figure denoted by the participles beckon its association with a divine being.⁹³

Grammarians further observed that the participle often takes the article when it is meant to distinguish a particular person or object by their qualities or actions.⁹⁴ Moreover, the article is repeated if the substantives refer to different persons (Rev 1:3), or even if the same person is meant, different aspects are presented.⁹⁵ Also, the articular neuter singular and plural participles in some cases like the masculine may refer to an individual, or thing, or it may be used in a generalize manner.⁹⁶ In the case of 2 Thess 2:6, 7 the articular participles establish that one entity is spoken of but that different aspects of that entity are highlighted; in the one instance the function is given, while in the other the one performing the action is identified. The singularity of purpose and the identity of the figure denoted by the participles beckon its association with a divine being.⁹⁷

According to BDAG the phrase ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται (2 Thess 2:7) should be translated "until he is removed from the scene" because it refers to a change of location. There is a twofold sense in which the phrase ἕως ἐκ μέσου can be understood. Some interpret it in an active sense, referring to the man of lawlessness coming out of a state of restraining. Others understand it as passive, denoting the removal of the restraint of the man of lawlessness.⁹⁸

90 Stuart, *A Treatise on the Syntax*, 47, 48.

91 Robertson, *Greek New Testament*, 764.

92 Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 213.

93 Aus, "God's Plan and God's Power", 549-553.

94 Stuart, *A Treatise on the Syntax*, 47, 48.

95 Robertson, *Greek New Testament*, 764.

96 Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 213.

97 Aus, "God's Plan and God's Power", 549-553.

98 Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 216.

Although the phrase ἕως⁹⁹ ἐκ μέσου is used only in 2 Thess 2:7, the shortened form ἐκ μέσου occurs 93 times in scripture (6 of which is in the NT).¹⁰⁰ An investigation into these 93 instances (with a few exceptions) reveals some striking parallels. The predominant motifs that undergird the majority of the usage pertain to some form of divine judgment (cf. Gen 19:29; Ex 31:14; Num 16:33; Deut 5:26; 1 Sam 15:5; Jer 12:14; 44:7; Eze 14:8; Matt 13:49; 1 Cor 5:2; 2 Cor 6:17) and that of separation, holiness or sanctification (Gen 35:2; Nu 8:14; 16:21; Jdg 10:16; Hos 2:2; Act 17:33; 23:10).¹⁰¹ Congruent with the prevalent sense of the phrase in scripture it seems correct to understand the restrainer's removal itself as an act of judgment initiated by the restrainer concomitant to the work He performs.

The full meaning of the expression ἐκ μέσου can be grasped when understood in relation to the phrase ἐν μέσῳ.¹⁰² In the NT the expression ἐν μέσῳ is used twenty-seven times, of these, twenty explicitly or implicitly involves either God, as the active subject, or the object of the action. In Rev 1:13 the expression is used in reference to the Son of Man standing among

99 Cf. Stanley Porter, *Idioms of the New Testament Greek* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Press, 1999), 240. According to Porter the preposition ἕως denotes temporality, that is time up to which a certain event may occur (to a given point until supplanted by another event). It does not mean the same as time at which or when some event occurred (generally the prepositions which convey this meaning are ὅταν and ὅτε). This is significant for understanding this phrase in reference to the removal of the restrainer. The removal of the restrainer signals the time up until which the man of lawlessness will be elusive, however, once the restrainer is removed the full ramifications of his purpose will be made known. It is not that the man of lawlessness was not working before and begins upon the removal of the restrainer; rather, his purpose becomes more evident than it was before. [For more information see BDF, *Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 215, 216, 383, 455; LEH, *A Greek Lexicon of the LXX*, “ἕως”].

100 For the usage of the phrase among the classical authors, cf. Plutarch, *Timoleon* 5.3, “he decided to live by himself, having moved away (ἐκ μέσου γενόμενος) out of public view”; Achilles Tattius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 2.27, “when Clio has been removed” (τῆς κλειοῦς ἐκ μέσου γενομένης), Ps.-Aeschines, *Ep* 12.6, “what they formerly covered up is clearly revealed, now that they have been removed (ἐκ μέσου γενομένων)” i.e. by death or exile.

101 The classical authors used to express separation or distinctiveness as well as position, cf. *Hdt.* 5.87; *Il.* 18.431, *S. Ant.* 1137; *Hdt.* 5.87; *Pl. Grg.* 525e; *Pi. O.* 6.25 *LXX Jd.* 15.2; with regards to position, cf. *Il.* 14.130, *Od.* 19.7; *S. OC* 113.

102 The phrase ἐν μέσῳ is used approximately 320 times in scripture. In the LXX it is used mostly in a cultic sense (cf. Lev 16:16; 22:32; Num 5:21; Dt 29:11; Isa 6:5) to denote judgment/warnings ([both human and divine] cf. Gen 3:3, 8; 23:10; Dt 11:6; Jdg 1:29, 30, 32, 33; Mic 5:6, 7; Hab 3:2; Jer 12:16; 27:37; Eze 2:6; 5:2, 5, 8, 10, 12; 12:10-12; 14:16-20), and God's favour upon His people (cf. Josh 17:4, 6; 19:6; 21:4; Joel 2:27; Zech 2:14, 15; Isa 12:6).

the candlesticks. In Rev 2:1 the message to the church at Ephesus came from one among the candlestick. Rev 4:6 describes the four living creatures as being in the midst of the sanctuary. Rev 5:6 portrays the lamb standing among the elders. In Rev 6:6 a voice is heard from the midst of the four living creatures. Finally Rev 22:2 speaks of the river flowing from the throne of God through the New Jerusalem. Since ἐν μέσῳ is used consistently of Christ's ministration in the sanctuary, or of activities relating to the sanctuary, then it is possible that the corresponding phrase ἐκ μέσου is associated with sanctuary related activities. Therefore the removal of the restrainer is best understood as a voluntary cessation of His function of restraint in a time that is divinely appointed (2 Thess 2:6, 7).

4.3 2 Thess 2:8-12

⁸ καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος [Ἰησοῦς] ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ, ⁹ οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους ¹⁰ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ' ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς. ¹¹ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει, ¹² ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.

⁸ And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness

The reference to ὁ ἄνομος in 2 Thess 2:8 invariably points back to the ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας of 2 Thess 2:3, and the τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας of 2 Thess 2:7, all referring to the same entity. The verb ἀποκαλύπτω is used three times in 2 Thess 2:1-12 and in every case the referent is to the lawless one (see vv. 3, 7, 8). The author gives much emphasis to the revelation of the lawless one; it seems that the revealing of this anti-God personage is an integral aspect to the fruition of God's judgment especially in light of the staunch threat posed against the sovereignty of God. The fact that the Parousia of Christ destroys the lawless figure suggests that the events

surrounding his blasphemous actions in the sanctuary (v. 4), and the divine restraint imposed (vv. 6, 7) must be understood from the perspective of their significance to the Parousia.

The actions described in 2 Thess 2:9-12 constitute events that will precede the Parousia, which serves as the confirmation of the cessation of the restraining work of God, and the full revelation of the man of lawlessness. Thus, the phrase πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης points back to the restraining motif of 2 Thess 2:6, 7, particularly it clarifies the expression ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται, that is, the act of God sending can be equated with his removal of the restrainer, alias the cessation of His function in the sanctuary. As a result lawlessness is manifested in all its potency, in anticipation of God's wrath (Rev 16 and 17).

Therefore, the act of God sending a delusion is an idiomatic expression of His acquiescence to the advent of the lawless one and the promulgation of the deceptiveness of his works. Since the work of the lawless one in vv. 3, 4 pertain to the heavenly sanctuary and both verses are related to v. 11, then the action of God in v. 11 should be understood within the framework of the heavenly sanctuary. The action of God as restrainer in the heavenly sanctuary determines not only the fate of the lawless one, and Satan, but also the inhabitants upon the earth.

5. Aspects of the Sanctuary in 2 Thess 2:1-12

5.1 *The Sanctuary as a Heavenly/Earthly Reality*

In 2 Thess 2:4 the correspondence between the sanctuary's heavenly reality and its earthly counterpart is illustrated. The lawless one follows both a horizontal and vertical trajectory in that he opposes all that is Gods', or worshipped, both in the temporal and heavenly spheres (v. 4a). Drawing from the context of Dan 7, 8, where the vertical and horizontal action of the little horn targets the heavenly sanctuary and then extends to the saints of God (7:8, 25; 8:10, 11; cf. Rev 13:6, 7), the man of lawlessness likewise aims vertically at the heavenly sanctuary, and also horizontally through signs and miracles, as well as the persecution of God's people. In either case events occurring in heaven or upon earth have a reciprocal effect on the other, thus attesting to the dynamic and functional correspondence that is shared.

The opposition of the lawless one to worship, and the subsequent attempt to seat in God's temple and become like God demonstrate that these actions are targeted at God's character, sovereignty, and divine prerogatives. Considering that the action of the lawless one in 2 Thess 2:3, 4 mirrors that of the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:17-18), and the sea beast of Rev 13:6, 7, in both instances the heavenly sanctuary and what happens therein becomes the inevitable target. While the horizontal trajectory of the lawless one is enough to show the reprehensibility of his actions, the vertical scope of his actions attests to its blasphemous nature. Although the lawless one is attributed as a historical figure, his alliance with Satan gives his actions a cosmic perspective beyond the temporal sphere, hence the heavenly sanctuary becomes an apt target.

In the pericope of the anti-God figures in Scripture the horizontal sphere is often affected by their vertical ascendancy, through their activities such as miraculous signs (2 Thess 2:9, 10; cf. Rev 13:13, 14), the persecution of God's people (Dan 7:8, 21, 25; 8:10, 11; cf. Rev 13:6-8), and God's judgment against sin (Dan 7:9-11, 26-27; 8:14; Rev 14:8; 2 Thess 2:8, 11-12).¹⁰³ Therefore, the apostasy and revelation of the lawless one (2 Thess 2:3, 4), as well as the display of his supernatural acts (2 Thess 2:9) should be understood as the direct result of events that would have transpired in the heavenly sanctuary, and only resonated upon the earth. This all demonstrates how closely connected the heavenly sanctuary is to the earthly, serving as a paradigm of the interconnectedness between heaven and earth.

5.2 The Sanctuary as a Metaphorical Reality

The metaphorical connotation of the sanctuary is implied in the appellation τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ which corresponds to בַּיִת־אֱלֹהִים, "house of God" (Gen 28:19), wherein the deity is identified with the place where it is worshipped (cf. Exod 20:24; Gen 12:6; Deut 12:2, 5; Jer 7:12; Isa 18:7; Ezra 9:8). Since in many instances, the place associated with the deity is often equated to the deity itself,¹⁰⁴ the temple of God being the habitation of God can by implication be regarded as God Himself. Thus in attempting to sit in God's sanctuary under the pretext of God, the man of lawlessness is typically challenging the sovereignty of God, and by implication asserting himself as God, as indicated by the infinitival clause, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύοντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός (2 Thess 2:4b). Therefore the action of the lawless is not aimed at the sanctuary as a physical structure per se,

¹⁰³ Yves and Congar, "Eschatological Temple", 295-296.

¹⁰⁴ See James A. Montgomery, "The Place as an Appellation of Deity", *JBL* 24 (1905):17-26.

but rather at the functions within the sanctuary—God’s prerogative and His sovereignty within the sanctuary.

Taking into consideration the horizontal trajectory of the lawless one, his work is manifested in part within the construct of the redefined earthly temple—the community of believers. This includes the instigation of a spiritual rebellion (v. 3) as well as the attempt to mislead through signs and miracles (vv. 9, 10). The sanctuary is thus projected as the arena where cosmic events are at least played out in part. Furthermore, the believers as God’s temple also experience the repercussions of cosmic events (1 Cor 3:9, 16-17; Eph 2:19-22). The Thessalonians in their personal lives bore testimony of God’s sanctuary under attack by the emissaries of Satan. In fact understanding the attack against God’s heavenly sanctuary enables them to better place into perspective the persecution they were facing on the temporal level. Therefore in a metaphoric sense the believers at Thessalonica experienced through their persecutions that which the heavenly sanctuary encountered on a cosmic level. The man of lawlessness attacks all that belongs to God—God’s heavenly sanctuary, and also His people (His metaphorical sanctuaries).

5.3 The Sanctuary as the Center of Cosmic Conflict

In 2 Thess 2:4 the man of lawlessness’ primary aim in sitting in the temple of God is an attempt to dethrone God as the cosmic governor of the universe. This is made evident by the expression ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός, “proclaiming himself that God, he [alone] is” (emphasis mine). The placement of the sanctuary motif in 2 Thess 2:4 underscores not only the result or purpose of the man of lawlessness and his activities, it also presents the sanctuary as a place where the conflict over divine prerogatives ensues, and the right to sovereignty is challenged. Thus the assault on the sanctuary brings to light the motif of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

As a result of the man of lawlessness sitting in the temple of God and proclaiming himself as God, he essentially usurps the prerogative of the One who possesses or occupies the sanctuary, thus vying for the ownership of the temple. Although the lawless one does not literally sit in heaven, his actions though based on earth constitute an assault on the sovereignty and work of God in the heavenly sanctuary, and thus his actions are registered in the heavenly realm as blasphemy. The man of lawlessness’ physical presence in heaven is not as important as the nature and intent of his activities upon the earth. Just as in Mark 2:7 and Luke 5:12 the Pharisees and Scribes saw

Jesus’ claim of having the divine authority to forgive sin as blasphemous, in the same way the man of lawlessness by assuming divine prerogatives and functions within the construct of the sanctuary—he also commits blasphemy the heavenly sanctuary.

The temple that comes under attack in 2 Thess 2:4 is evidently the heavenly sanctuary—the place where Christ performs His divine functions. The actions of the anti-God personage in Daniel and Revelation were targeted at God and His prerogatives (Dan 7:8, 20, 25; 8:10a, 11a; 11:36; Rev 13:5, 6a), His people (Dan 7:21; 8:10b, 24, 25; Rev 13:7), and the heavenly sanctuary (Dan 8:11c; Rev 13:6b). This can equally be said of the man of lawlessness of 2 Thess 2:4 who targets God (2 Thess 2:4c), God’s people (2 Thess 2:2, 3, 9, 10), and the heavenly sanctuary (2 Thess 2:4b). To further corroborate the parallelism existing among these passages, in each case the anti-God figure is destroyed by God’s supernatural intervention (Dan 7:9-14, 26, 27; 8:25c; Rev 14:9-11; 2 Thess 2:8). The sanctuary in 2 Thess 2:4 therefore serves as the sphere where God’s sovereignty and jurisdiction are challenged; and where God answers this challenge through His judgment upon Satan, and those through whom he works.

The sanctuary as a center of cosmic conflict bears resemblance to the divine functions performed there, only that here the emphasis rests upon the arch-rivals in the cosmic debacle, and the implications of their actions on the cosmos, its governance, and its inhabitants. As was shown in 2 Thess 2:4, the man of lawlessness in vying to be God he reminisces the aspirations of the anti-God personages of Isa 14; Ezek 28; Dan 7, 8, 11, and of Satan (Rev 12:7-9)—resulting in his ultimate expulsion from heaven.

In the case of 2 Thess 2:6, 7, the cosmic war centers on the divine restraint in the heavenly sanctuary that prohibits the full manifestation of lawlessness. The cosmic tension can be seen in the partial working of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7a), yet it is only to be revealed in its fullest extent when the restrainer determines that the time is right (v. 7b). The fact that the revelation of the lawless one coincides with the Parousia, and the eventual judgment of God, attest to God’s sovereignty over the unfolding of the final events of earth’s history. It can be concluded that the sanctuary becomes the place where choices are settled, and cosmic balance restored to the universe, as well as God’s sovereignty reaffirmed.

5.4 The Sanctuary as a Sphere of Divine Activities

In 2 Thess 2:6-12 the heavenly sanctuary is portrayed as the place where God administrates the affairs of the universe. It is the place where the events

of earth are divinely controlled and mediated. In 2 Thess 2:6, God—as the restrainer—is posited as being in control of time since He determines when the lawless one will be revealed and his work made evident. Similarly in Daniel and Revelation the blasphemous little horn power and the beast were given a restricted time in which to carry out their work before judgment was meted out (Dan 7:25, 26; 8:13, 14; Rev 13:5). Although the time factor in Daniel and Revelation differs from 2 Thess 2 with regards to their apocalyptic scope, they nonetheless demonstrate the basic fundamental principle of God’s sovereign control over time and the unfolding of events. Therefore in 2 Thess 2:6, 7, the sanctuary is the place where human history is mediated and directed according to providence.

Secondly, the sanctuary is shown to be the place from where judgment ensues upon Satan, the man of lawlessness and their adherents. The manifestation of lawlessness in all its potency is determined by the *κατέχων* and His removal from the function of restraint. This act of removal is in itself a form of judgment in that it allows the true nature and work of the man of lawlessness, Satan, and their followers to be revealed. Of course by implication, if the lost is revealed by God’s judgment, it logically means that the followers of God will be vindicated and thus revealed. Since the next event that follows after the restrainer’s removal is that of the Parousia, it implies that the Parousia and the work of restraining although distinct are two closely related events set within the context of the heavenly sanctuary. The judgment unleashed upon Satan, the lawless one, and their followers in 2 Thess 2:6-12 emanates from the heavenly sanctuary.

6. Conclusion and Application

The heavenly sanctuary appears as an all-encompassing theme in 2 Thess 2:1-12. The Sanctuary was shown to exist as heavenly/earthly reality, a metaphorical reality, a place of divine activities, and the center of cosmic conflict. All of these aspects of the sanctuary are not to be understood as isolated entities in themselves, rather their facticity and efficacy are riveted in the reality of the heavenly prototypical sanctuary. It is the reality of the heavenly sanctuary that infuses life into its varied dimensions. Albeit, any reference to any dimension of the sanctuary instinctively alludes back to the prototypical reality from which its significance stems.

In 2 Thess 2:1-12 the nature and activities of the man of lawlessness are described in the same manner like the anti-God personage of Dan 7-8, 11, from the point of view of their implication in the heavenly sanctuary.

Paul continues the pattern of Daniel in that he endeavoured to depict the eschatological ramifications of current or temporal happenings. In Daniel blasphemy is closely associated with the little horn's usurpation of divinely constituted prerogatives or things associated with God and his sanctuary.

The existence of the ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας (man of lawlessness), his blasphemous work in the temple of God, his deceptive miracles, and eventual destruction by God has a rather profound scriptural precedent both in the OT and NT. Most scholars today believe that the man of lawlessness is similar if not identical to the antichrist of the NT. One can deduce the character of the lawless man by the name he bears, instinctively he will not have any regard for the law of God (no wonder he will try to change laws as stated in Dan 7:25).