

*“Looking for that Blessed Hope.” Titus 2.13.*

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# **“Taken out of the Way.”**

Is this the True Rendering of the Words  
of the Holy Spirit in 2 Thessalonians 2. 7?

**A PRAYERFUL ENQUIRY FOR THOUGHTFUL  
BELIEVERS WHO LOOK FOR THE COMING OF  
THE LORD.**

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*“Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He  
is pure.” 1 John 3.3.*

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# **“Taken out of the Way.”**

## **Is this the True Rendering of 2 Thessa- lonians 2. 7 ?**

THE general excellence of the usual English translation is not only a fact, it is a call to thanksgiving. But God has never promised an inspired translation, and though we rejoice that He has prevented any error that would obscure the way of salvation for the unsaved, He has permitted reminders of man's imperfection in a way that should lead believers to pray thoughtfully for translators, and to study more and more prayerfully, and more and more humbly. Some of the errors veil the beautiful accuracy of the Holy Spirit, in the use of a different word, with definite emphasis, as “child” and “son.” Others test loving obedience, for example 1 Corinthians 11. 15 may be made a ground, (through the ren-

dering "for"), against simple obedience by sisters to their Lord's will, in the use of a covering in prayer, as set forth in verses 5 and 6. And it seems to us that the mistranslation of 2 Thessalonians 2. 7 has been used to hinder some beloved children of God in the understanding of the near Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since translators are largely influenced by one another, the influence of an error becomes worldwide,<sup>1</sup> and when we realize that the purpose of the enemy is to take believers off what God has revealed concerning His beloved Son, and true preparation for His Coming, we feel concerned that everything should be prayerfully examined, that we may not unconsciously add to God's words, or misrepresent His will. It is a joy to realize that a large number of children of God in many lands, are looking for "that Blessed Hope," and desire to look intelligently and lovingly. They rightly mourn over differences of interpretation, but these do not

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<sup>1</sup> However, the Dutch translation, so frequently exact, needs only the omission of one word, which it marks as added, by italics.

make the heart-hope of secondary importance. Love to Christ must ever be first, and it is a delight to own that believers, who have, alas, differed much as to the order of prophetic fulfilment, have shown a concern to "love His Appearing." If we thought that these notes on translation would occupy the mind with anything instead of with Him, we would gladly set them aside, for mere accuracy of wording, without a heart toward the Lord, will accomplish nothing. But when we find so many ideas, which obscure, it seems, what God has set forth, seek their chief foundation on words which are not in the original Scriptures one feels the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be seen in this. Loyalty to Christ leads to sorrow over the tares intruding among the wheat, and over the leaven PUT INTO the fine flour, and the same loyalty is concerned not to add to the words of Scripture. To call this mere literalism or legalism would be to deny verbal inspiration. When any beloved child of God, who knows nothing of Greek or Hebrew, clings to the ordinary rendering, any loving explana-

tion should be wise and gracious: sometimes it should be unmentioned till it can be borne (cf. John 16. 12). But when teachers and those who are acquainted with the facts use prominently, and persistently, words that are not suggested by the original, it is deeply important that we should urge upon them, and upon one another, tenderly yet earnestly, a fuller reverence for "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Verbal inspiration must never become a theory, nor a catch-word against critics, it must abide as a power in our lives.

Beloved fellow believers, I am troubled that many build so much on the words "Until he be taken out of the way." Can you find the word "taken" used by the Holy Spirit there? Can you find the word "way"? Possibly you say, "I do not know Greek." Yet you may wish to test what is set forth, for the glory of God. You have access to Young's Concordance. The verb is a common one, very common, but this seems the ONLY place where it has been rendered "be taken." The other word is the usual one for the "midst,"

yet here and in Colossians 2. 14 alone is it rendered, "way." In Colossians it is associated with a different verb, which does signify "to take" (as in John 1. 29), and thus the error is not so resultful. Yet even there it obscures the thought of "the veil" in "THE MIDST," removed by the death of Christ Who fulfilled all law's demands (Heb. 10. 20), so that believers have access into the very holiest of all, and Christ is now in "THE MIDST"! O that we may realize Him more. We do not feel that attempts should be made to find support in other literature, when the language of the Holy Spirit is simple, and needs nothing but a usual rendering to fit both the context and other Scriptures. Let us therefore take the words as they stand:—"Until he has become out of the midst." Is the verb "become" used with "out of" elsewhere? Let us look at the passages:—

Matthew 21. 19,—“No more let fruit become out of thee for ever.”

Mark 1. 11,—“A voice became out of the heavens” so Luke 3. 22.

Luke 9. 35,—“A voice became out of the cloud.”

Romans 1. 3,—“Concerning His Son, having become out of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

Galatians 4. 4,—“Having become out from a woman, having become under the law.”

1 Timothy 6. 4,—“Out from which becomes envy, strife, etc.”

Hebrews 11. 3,—“That which is beheld has become not out of things which appear.”

The idea is thus simple and common, why should we alter it here? There is no thought of “taking” and why should we introduce the idea of “going”? The word denotes origin ‘and source. Indeed, “to be born” is from the same root, and has the same preposition (John 3. 6). When we have usual language, and an explanation that suits the context, prayerful reverence for God’s inspiration should hinder a varying translation, as soon as the fact is brought before us.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The English version by cutting off verse 8 and by the full stop at the end of verse 7 hinders clear perception of the sequence.

Let us see the context. It concerns the self-exaltation of the man of sin, who will arise out of the midst. Undoubtedly “the mystery of lawlessness inworks” (a system), till “the man” comes forth.<sup>3</sup> This seems quite appropriate: why should we bring in other subjects, which the Holy Spirit has not mentioned?

Moreover, in verse 6 we have the holding down “with a view to his having been UNVEILED in his own time.” Here we have the holding down, “TILL there shall have become out of the midst, and then he shall be UNVEILED—the lawless one.” In both cases this is in full view.

The Holy Spirit’s word “inwork” in verse 7 is more impressive than “work,” as a background for the arising out from the inside. The revealed character of the present age is appropriately before us. In the parable of the tares the devil

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<sup>3</sup> It is also suggestive that the word “until” prepares for the same verb in Matt. 5. 18, 24. 34, Luke 21. 32, where the idea is plainly “becoming.”



having done his work GOES AWAY, and the woman HIDES the leaven. There is a concealment, until the future casting off of the mask in the evil "parousia" of the man of sin. We have mentioned the parable of the leaven. Is not the context closely associated? Have we not there a woman with three measures (an ephah), and the corruption of God's sound doctrine, till there is a complete change? The woman, as Eve, "takes," and is thus independent. She is not subject to Christ. The result is that the nominal "church" daringly takes the place of Christ, Whose rightful position is ever "in the midst" (e.g. John 20. 19, 26, Heb. 2. 12, Rev. 1. 13, 5. 6). Thus the words, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him" are lost. In unholy contrast the woman is in the midst, leading up to Antichrist himself as the devil's centre. The early failure to continue applying the command of 1 Corinthians 5, that the leaven might be taken out of the midst (see verses 1 and 5 in Greek), was followed by the development of a system in which lawlessness has inworked. The setting aside

of the Lord's commandments (John 14. 15), illustrated so solemnly in the complete alteration of baptism and the Lord's supper, shows how definitely the enemy has aimed at "lawlessness," and has mocked love's simple adherence as "legalism." And now we realize that a woman and an ephah (3 measures) are found even before Matthew 13, in Zechariah 5, where there is the contrast with Sarah, who afforded a beautiful type of the church recognising the Lordship of Christ (1 Pet. 3. 6), and thus provided exactly what Abraham wished (Gen. 18. 6).<sup>4</sup> The woman of Zechariah has no master to obey: she herself is in the midst, and seems to be ready to spring out, but when the house is built in Shinar (Zech. 5. 11) we know that the man of sin will develop from the system, and thus he arises out of the midst in "his time" (2 Thess. 2. 6). The ephah is a contrast with the ark of God and shows an entire opposition in its contents: instead of the tables we find wicked-

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<sup>4</sup> The speed of preparation (cf. verse 7) indicates absence of leaven (cf. Ex. 12. 39) and thus the symbolism becomes more impressive.

ness and lawlessness; instead of the incorruptible manna there is no food, but a woman, to be eaten in judgment by evil ones (Rev. 17. 16); instead of Aaron's rod that budded,—betokening Christ's rule as Priest-King in resurrection,—Anti-christ arises out of the midst and acts as priest-king, showing himself in the temple as God (2 Thess. 2. 4).

The more we realize this the more we see the link between 2 Thessalonians 2 and Zechariah 5, and the simple and straightforward translation is confirmed. We are impressed with the work of evil in the midst of the "system" here set forth, and of its goal. As the climax of civilization is "the man of sin," so the end of lawlessness is the lawless one. O that our hearts may be characterized by loving obedience, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The way in which wickedness springs up as soon as the covering talent of lead is removed, shows that evil is preparing for a *coup d'état*: there will be a striking change, and coming events cast their shadows before them, showing how the future dictator will win his way. The

signs of the times are like fig trees in the very path; we cannot but see them. Yet signs are not to fill our heart: the Lord Jesus will not come one day late. Blessed indeed are they that love His Appearing (2 Tim. 4. 8).

As soon as we realize that the Holy Spirit unites the earlier and later Scriptures, and that we dare not alter the rendering of the words He has chosen, we are conscious that there is no thought or suggestion here of the church being taken away, but the evil budding and blossoming out of "the midst" of the systems of this age. Indeed the Holy Spirit Himself never suggests that He will be taken away, or that a transgressor cannot come to the full till this takes place. And if He has not suggested it, why should we? The very glory of Christ made manifest the iniquity of men, and so it is with the Holy Spirit's working. Iniquity has been man's answer to God's glorious display of God's grace. But, thanks be to God, another thought is precious, He continues His unwidrawn work and the close of man's day will be marked by

a very definite work of the Holy Spirit, both in the unity of believers and the salvation of souls. The enemy would seek to shut the eyes of God's people to this fact. All the misinterpretations built on a MISTRANSLATION must be prayerfully removed, because of a reverence for the words of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus has revealed that He returns to a ready company. Is there any Scripture which suggests that He will come to a spiritually disorderly, scattered and unready people? This is deeply important. When the Lord's redeemed were more awakened to "that Blessed Hope," and the enemy could no longer hinder this preparation, he sought the obscuring of the fact that a revival, by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, is appointed to welcome the Lord Jesus. The thought of "no intervening event," and "nothing to take place first," though often expressed in the language of sincere and refreshing love, has been made a hindrance in the Divine emphasis on getting ready. O that we may hold the whole truth in its holy pro-

portion, and in dependence on the Lord, and not on lists of human names, however honoured.

Returning to 2 Thessalonians 2 with Matthew 13 we can at once see that the restraining of that which is in the midst is by the talent.<sup>5</sup> But "lead" is by no means pictorial of the Holy Spirit. The golden cherubim, of one piece with the mercy seat, show, contrastedly, the saints of God in living union with their Lord. The mercy seat of gold was God's throne; the lead, as a metal, is governmental (cf. Dan. 2), but not in union with Christ (cf. Dan. 7). The powers of nominally "christian" Europe have their ark with the "woman" instead of the Lord's law within, but, when there is the great upheaval, Antichrist will arise in a time of crisis, and rearrange the

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<sup>5</sup> Observe the talent of LEAD contrasted with the golden mercy seat, the two women with wings of the unclean stork (though the NAME suggests "piety" in Hebrew) contrasted with the cherubim, and the building of a house in opposition to God's house at Jerusalem (2 Chron. 5. 1-7).

powers of earth (Dan. 7. 8). "He who now letteth," (2 Thess. 2. 7 "withholdeth" is the same word in verse 6), is thus before us. The talent (neuter) of lead (masculine) is "holding down," but it is not intrinsically "against" the system, any more than the mercy seat was against God's tables of stone. The present plan of the enemy is to conceal his object, but the unseen "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6. 12) are not without an aim. The climax is not today, but the climax must come. The believer is to know beforehand. The Scriptures are given with this object. The glory of Christ, realized more and more among God's children, is to be our standpoint against the coming exaltation and sinful glory of Antichrist. Thus 2 Thessalonians is graciously granted that we may be on our guard, for those who make light of the will of the Lord Jesus and His commands are helping the lawless system, of which the man of sin is the fruit. May it be ours, in the Holy Spirit's instruction, to remember the emphasis on the truth (verses 10, 12, 13), that

we may not be led astray by leagues and conferences or movements of men, nor by signs and wonders, however plausible, but hold fast the words of Scripture in a simple pilgrim path, and realize the blessedness of the declaration, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verses 13, 14). Then shall we enjoy the added prayer for one another, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, Which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (verses 16, 17).

P. W. H.