

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 in the Navajo Bible

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Bee nahaz'áanii doo yik'ehgo át'éii doo bééhózin da yéé t'áá ídáá' naalnish, k'ad t'áá' ábósinii t'áá nahjì' kóbi'diilyaaíjì' yilnish doo. ⁸ Áko índa ɓahági át'éii yee sizíinii yit'íní ádoolnííł, áádóó Bóhólníihii Jesus nádzáago bits'ádi'nííidii yee yit'íní ályaago, bizéé'déé' biyol yee ɓahági át'éii yee sizíinii yidiyoołhéelgo íidooljìł. (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8) ¹

For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8) ²

Introduction

This passage was written 2000 years ago, so by now we should be able to look back and review as history what Paul was giving us as prophecy. He says the power of lawlessness was already at work in his day and that it was being restrained then. When did this stop, or is it still being restrained today? Will it be restrained all the way up until antichrist appears and then be unleashed? Careful students of history would not be included to say so.

Relevant Terms

Antichrist

The teaching that antichrist appears for the first time at the very end of history does not bear scrutiny. The fact that this "power" (vs. 7) is destroyed when Jesus comes doesn't mean he first arises then. Ending is not the same as beginning. In any event, antichrist is with us now and has been for a very long time. Antichrist is not an individual, but a system – an institution. Individuals can't survive for the better part of 2000 years, but institutions can.

The word "antichrist" doesn't mean "against Christ" so much as "in the place of Christ." A few verses earlier Paul says "he [antichrist] sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). One who appears in the place of Christ, in God's temple or church where one would expect to find Christ, could give every appearance of being not hostile to Christ but entirely on His side.

Antichrist is deceptive, so when he proclaims himself to be God, it isn't true. But because antichrist is deceptive, people believe him. If antichrist claims to be God and establishes himself

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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in the church and if people believe him when he says and does these things, he's not going to look bad. He's going to look like the ultimate Christian, like a leader everyone should follow. And they do. Multitudes of people follow him, and have for centuries.

Lawless one

But Paul doesn't use the word "antichrist" in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8. Instead, what he says is "lawlessness" (Greek *anomia*) in vs. 7 and "lawless one" (Greek *anomos*) in vs. 8. These terms are virtually identical in the original. Unfortunately *Diyin God Bizaad* uses terms to translate them that are linguistically unrelated. In vs. 7 it has *bee nahaz'áanii doo yik'ehgo át'éii* ("opposition to law," or alternatively, "one opposed to law") and in vs. 8 *baqhági át'éii yee sizíinii* ("one who stands by means of sin"). These translations might seem to be close to each other in meaning, but there are important differences.

In Navajo the idea of sin (*baqhági át'éii*) is closely related to that of guilt. The idea is that something is on one – presumably a sense of wrongdoing. But if there is no law, why would anyone feel a sense of guilt? Without law one is free to feel that whatever he or she does is right – even important from a moral point of view, not something to be avoided.

Once God's law has been set aside, it can no longer guide us concerning what is right or wrong. So right can seem wrong, and wrong can seem right. Antichrist does not openly admit he's setting the law aside. (He's deceptive. Remember?) It better serves his purposes to make people break the law while thinking they obey it. In this way the wrong they do appears right and they have no defense against it.

If the power Paul warns against were merely sinful, people would be able to tell. They could compare what they see it do against the standard of the law and determine that its actions and teachings are wrong. But if the power Paul has in mind is actually lawless – not only in what it does but in what it teaches others to do – then the standard is gone. One can only break a law if there is a law. If there's no law, or if it has been emptied of force by twisting its intent to mean something it doesn't say, then in such a system no one would be able to tell right from wrong. This is part of antichrist's deception.

Discussion

Those who support abortion rights don't generally pretend that the sixth commandment says to kill, instead of not killing. They don't do what God says, but for the most part they don't try to change what He says. They simply ignore it.

There is one commandment, however, that people have tried to change. This is the fourth commandment – the one that commands us to work six days and rest on the seventh. The pattern for this six plus one day cycle of work and rest was set in Eden when God created the world in six days and then commemorated His work by resting afterward. God then "blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11), asking us to rest as He rested.

When people say that "seventh" really means "first" – openly challenging God's intent – that's not just disobedient; it's lawless. Historically this change came gradually and did not start until about the second century. By now, however, almost all Christians accept the change and

fervently believe it was the right thing to do. Thus, black becomes white, wrong becomes right, and no one knows the difference.

Who did this? The church did it. The guardian of God's law led the way in setting the law aside. This is one reason why the change was successful, i.e., because the one perpetrating it appeared to have authority over such things. There were no denominations then, so it would be anachronistic to say this or that denomination changed the Sabbath to Sunday. Denominations came later. But now that they're here, almost all of them agree with this ancient decision.

There is an interesting point to notice here. We'll use your hand as an illustration. Hold out your right hand, palm up. The thumb is on the right. Now turn it over. The thumb is on the left. When we change the day of rest and worship from the seventh day (or last day) to the first, we're not just moving something forward twenty-four hours. We're reversing the pattern. If we rest on the seventh day, the six working days come before. If we rest on the first day, the six working days come after. This is a fundamental change and it has vast significance.

Conclusion

Reversing God's intent is not a reliable way to please Him. Don't go there. Do what God says because He says it. Work Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. All these are common days. Then rest on Saturday. That day is the Sabbath – from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Here's what God says about it.

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." (Exodus 20:8-11)

Anyone who says the Sabbath (Saturday) is common, and that a common day put in its place is holy, is either simply wrong or they're being deceptive. In either case, what they say is not true. What God says, on the other hand, *is* true. Relying on His words might take faith, because a majority of people think differently, but when we obey what He tells us to do we can know that we please Him.