

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Release

2 Thes 2:1-12 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, in order that he can sit in the sanctuary of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains him will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Clearly, Jesus will not come until the rebellion comes first, and the lawless one is revealed. He has not yet been revealed. And his revealing will not be according to the simple minded fundamentalist Christian scenario.

Obviously, no salvation by Rapture will bless those simple minded Christians. They must suffer the revealing, along with the rest of the world.

This passage is the most crucial in the Bible for our understanding of events as they are unfolding today, yet the most confusing. That blinding confusion rests on the powerful fundamentalist tradition that a *man of lawlessness* will *take his seat* in the *Temple of God*, proclaiming himself to be God.

In popular notion there must be a man, there must be a seat, there must be a Temple, and there must be such intense megalomania this man believes himself to be God.

1. The Temple of God can find no easy location, although most expositors assume modern Jerusalem. Some expect the construction of a new temple, since the sectarian and ecumenical temples presently in Jerusalem do not seem appropriate to the tenor of these remarks.

2. Examination of the attributes of this man of lawlessness suggests components of character which place him above ordinary human capacities; i.e. he seems almost as a god.

3. We all have difficulty conceiving how a human being would somehow get it into his head that he is God. An ordinary mortal, reaching to such megalomania, would not have the sanity to function as a world leader, regardless of how depraved the world would become.

4. Of course, if a human mortal were driven by the power of an evil spirit within his head, he might aspire to believe he was God. But then the human mortal would be merely a robotic agent, and not the personality assuming the Godship.

Many Christians entertain these notions out of their mythical mental framework; they do not take time to examine reality. If this being is truly a man he must be born of a woman; he must grow up in some geographical location in some identifiable country; he must have social training; he must have been educated in some earthly school; he must have been reared in some political environment; he must have had association with scores or hundreds of fellow human mortals. Given the mundane nature of ordinary human life how would he arrive at such extraordinary presumption?

We might argue that Jesus was the incarnation of God, yet his human nature and physical appearance prevented many from believing in him. Even the apostles had trouble coming to grips with his divine nature, for all the miracles they witnessed, until he appeared to them after his resurrection. If another fantastic personality were to appear we might not, at first, notice him. But the extraordinary role described by Paul would require our elevating a supposedly human mortal to godlike status.

The supposition almost requires another incarnation, one of a diabolical personality.

Does such a man exist somewhere on this planet? If so, and if events are imminent, we should expect that he already has indicated his wild propensities to comrades and compatriots. This would mean he is a "sleeper." He has not yet asserted himself in such blistering megalomania. Regardless of how we view such plausibility, it is time to replace mythical notions with reality. We must get our feet on the ground. We must evaporate mysticism and replace it with down-to-earth hard criteria. It is easy to create boogie men out of our imaginations. It is time for us to exercise discipline in our thinking.

This is not to deny the fearsome tone of this revelation. It carries portent which demands the utmost care. Is Christian tradition correct? What was Paul really trying to say? Did he confuse different elements in a destiny episode for this planet?

Much of the difficulty is linguistic. How did Paul use the Greek words? What did he intend in his statements? Another part of the difficulty is in his private revelations. He was not one to expound at length on those things which had been revealed to him; he made only passing remarks. Yet those aside comments provide us with important clues to God's plans for this world. A third difficulty is the limitation of Paul's understanding; depending on how information was given to him, his human mind may have tied the wrong two-and-two together, or otherwise confused planetary events.

All of these elements condition our understanding of this passage.

### Part 1: The Temple of God

The New Testament uses two Greek words which are translated as "Temple." The first is *heiron*; it meant a sacred place. In Mark 11:11 the word denoted the entire Jerusalem building with its precincts. This word was never used figuratively.

The second word is *naos*. It meant a *shrine or sanctuary*. It was used both figuratively and metaphorically. The *naos* of the Jerusalem temple was the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies, where only the priests could enter. The word was used among Greeks and Romans as the *shrine* containing the idol of worship. The word was used figuratively by Jesus of his own physical body, John 2:19,21. In apostolic teaching it was used metaphorically for the church, the mystical body of Christ, Eph 2:21. It was also used by John, both literally and figuratively, in Rev 3:12, 7:15, 11:19, 14:15,17, 15:5,6,8 16:1,17 for the new and heavenly Jerusalem, Rev 21:22.

As an illustration of the confusion which tradition and modern translation have placed upon the word *naos*, consider Paul's remarks in 2 Cor 6:14-16. There he draws out the contrasting parallels between the children of God and the children of darkness:

Righteousness with lawlessness.

Fellowship in light with darkness.

Christ with Beliar.

Believer with unbeliever.

A shrine of God with idols.

Or, we could use sanctuary, the alternate word:

"You are the sanctuary of the living God, as God has said, 'I shall dwell in them, and walk with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'"

This passage is universally translated as the “temple of God.” But consider the difference between *sanctuary* and *temple*. Although temple denotes a place of dedicated worship, perhaps even sacred, it carries with it the idea of physical structure. Shrine, or sanctuary, denotes a hallowed or holy place, not necessarily physical. By translating *naos* as temple we reduce the significance the term carried in the original writing. The two words were not directly synonymous for the ancient writers.

Temple can mean only that which is physical; it has no figurative application. Sanctuary, on the other hand, can mean any place that is hallowed or holy, physical or spiritual, figurative or metaphorical.

If we are the sanctuary of God he can dwell in our minds and our souls; the physical body then carries little significance, although Paul specified the physical body in 1 Cor 6:19. A living God does not occupy a physical structure; he dwells in a spiritual edifice. We must make our sanctuary holy for his indwelling; he would not indwell an unholy place.

When this rebel personality takes his place it is not in the Temple of God, but in the Sanctuary of God. That is what Paul wrote, and that is what Paul meant.

Therefore, Paul did not necessarily intend a physical location; he easily could have meant a spiritual place, or occupation of a spirit position. Such possibility would throw away interpretation which would identify Jerusalem or any other earthly location.

## Part 2: Lawlessness

The Greek words *anomos* denotes *lawless, without law, not subject to law*. *Anomias* means *lawlessness, violation of law*. If the framework is the rules of creation set forth by God it would mean sin and iniquity, open and conscious defiance of God’s laws, beyond simple blundering acts which are unlawful. Divine beings or human mortals who do not obey the will of their Creator, but substitute their own will in purposeful defiance, are in rebellion.

*Lawlessness* is not limited to human mortals; it can be practiced by divine beings. The statement strongly implies a celestial personality who is in defiance against his Creator.

(This Greek word finds parallel in Latin *inimicus* and modern English *inimical, enemy, and enmity*.)

## Part 3: The Man

The Greek word is *anthropos*. We get such English words as *anthropology*, the study of man, and *anthropomorphic*, ascribing human attributes.

This one word throws understanding completely awry. Many interpreters believe the reference can only be to a human mortal.

The *International Critical Commentary* engages in discussion of the various scholars who have viewed this word as a reference to a divine personality, not a human mortal. The use by Paul could be metaphorical; he may have used the word in a derogatory sense. For example, I have often referred to the Devil as the “Old Man.” A difference in view comes about because the ancient manuscripts are not in agreement on use of the word describing this lawlessness. Some use the Greek word *amartias*, denoting error or offense, an act of the unaware human mortal, in contrast to *anomias*, an open defiance.

ICC offers these remarks about 2 Thes 2:

Instead of *anomias* (found in some ancient manuscripts) the majority of uncials read *amartias*. Occasionally (the opposite is true). As these variants and the parallelism in Job 7:21, Ps 31:5, and Isa 53:5 show, the two words are similar in meaning, *amartia* being the more general. Though common in LXX (the Septuagint), both *anomia* (Rom 4:7, 6:19, 2Cor 6:14) and *anomos* (1 Cor 9:21) are rare in Paul. Unless (the more ancient manuscripts were) revised in the light of verses 7-8, or substituted *anomias* for *amartias* in light of an exegesis which understood “the man of sin” to be Belial, the more specific *anomias* is the preferable reading. It is tempting to identify the figure described in the four phrases with Belial (Beliar), though we cannot be sure that Paul would assent to this identification.

ICC goes on with a very important remark:

(R. H.) Charles notably identifies “the man of lawlessness” with Belial but elaborates an hypothesis to account for the Antichrist as he appears in Paul and in later N. T. literature. The *Anomos* of Paul, a god-opposing man, a human sovereign armed with miraculous power, is the resultant of a fusion of two separate and originally independent traditions, that of the Antichrist and that of Beliar. The Antichrist is not, as Bousset supposes, originally the incarnate Devil but a god-opposing being of human origin. The first historical person to be identified with Antichrist is Antiochus Ephiphanes; and the language applied to him “recalls, though it may be unconsciously, the old Babylonian saga of the Dragon’s assault on the gods of heaven.” Beliar, on the other hand is a purely Satanic being. “It is through the Beliar constituent of the developed Antichrist myth that the old Dragon saga from Babylon gained entrance into the eschatologies of Judaism and Christianity. This fusion of Antichrist with Beliar “appears to have been affected on Christian soil before 50 A. D.,” and is attested by 2 Thes 2:1-12.

These remarks well describe the situation facing us. Indeed, two episodes are fused together, one now unfolding in our day, and the other to come at the end of the millennium. We need not resort to Babylonian myth or obscure early Christian eschatology to show this confusion. Suffice it here to say that several revelations show rebel celestial personalities in human incarnation: Isa 14:12-20, Ezek 28:18-19, Psalm 82:6-7, and Ezek 38-39 with Rev 20:7-10.

Returning to verse four we can examine the attributes of arrogant character which lead us to assign these actions to a celestial personality, not an incarnate personality. He is not an incarnate Devil in our own day, keeping in mind that the designation *man* is part of the fusion from two different revelations.

1. He is impious: *“the one who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship.”* Here Paul is telling us that he is a rebel; he says to all the loyal spirit personalities, all those so-called gods, that he will no longer obey the laws of God. Although the translated word *object* does not capture the sense of divine personality, the *object of worship* must be only those who may be worshiped, the Father and Jesus.

2. He has a spirit of self-exaltation: *“so that he sits in the sanctuary of God.”* That is, he takes his spirit place along with all the other celestial personalities who are loyal to God, and they must suffer his insolence.

3. He is blasphemous: *proclaiming himself to be God.”* He pretends to be a god of superior power and might. Refer to later discussions on the “Christ” channeled by so many people.

Paul gave us precedent for the phrase *so-called god* in 1 Cor 8:5 where he used the same word. He meant all those loyal gods and lords of the heavenly realms. The personality of this passage opposes those gods and exalts himself above them. He ranks himself with them but thinks he is better than they. He will not accept his divinely assigned role in creation. A human mortal would not rank himself with the gods of the heavenly realms. Only a celestial personality would presume to such cosmic arrogance.

We might believe that Paul made reference to pagan gods, not only from use of the word *so-called*, but also when he uses the phrase *object of worship*. For the true son and daughter of God there is only one place for our worship, the Father and the Son. Paul meant that the so-called gods were objects of worship to pagan people; again, they readily understood his reference. He was writing to people who believed in and were surrounded by pagan gods. Paul’s remarks may reflect a struggle with their habit of mind which understood lesser beings of the heavenly realms as worthy of worship.

## Part 4: The Seat

As a further example of how we have been falsely influenced by early Christian attitudes, (and misunderstanding), and how Christian tradition has become chained to those early attitudes, consider the translation *“so that he takes his seat in the Temple of God.”* This phrase has a subject “he”, a verb “takes,” and an object “seat.”

The verb and the object do not exist in the Greek text. They are inferred from the form of the Greek phrase, and our view of Paul’s intent.

Literally, from Greek to English:

ooste = so as  
auton = him  
eis = in  
ton = the  
naon = sanctuary  
tou = ---  
Theou = of God  
kathesai = to sit

The verb “kathesai,” *to sit* is an aorist infinitive. An aorist verb expresses action without further limitation or implication.

An infinitive is a verbal substantive, which means it is not a verb in the full sense; it is a verbal noun. The infinitive then led to the idea of a seat.

Consider how the identical word “kathesai” is translated in Acts 8:31.

“And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.”

Again, the identical word “kathesai” is translated in Rev 3:21.

“He who overcomes, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne . . .”

Simply, the word means “to sit.” The Greek says nothing about taking a seat. The translation of verse 4 is properly rendered as *“Who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god and object of worship, in order to sit in the sanctuary of God . . .”*

Now we can understand how the sanctuary and the sitting take on a different meaning.

The sanctuary need not be a physical structure in a geographical location upon earth. Rather, it is a spirit center. That spirit center is the *naos*, the sanctuary of God. He presumes against God in order to sit there. He was cast down but does not respect his judgment.

The idea of God’s sanctuary carries several possible implications.

1. The sanctuary offers protection from other spirit beings. Those other beings respect the sanctuary, just as the Jew respects the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the holy of holies. This being is using this sanctuary as a means of shelter, in rebellion against God, and against the laws of the universe. The sanctuary may be nothing more than God's command to "leave him be."

2. The sanctuary may carry a functional advantage. By sitting in it he may be able to contact the minds of human mortals more directly. He is using God's spirit environment to prosecute his wicked purpose. He is a rebel; he has no respect for holiness.

3. "Sanctuary" may be used metaphorically, as often in the New Testament. Although he was "cast down" he presumes to his former status, equal to that of loyal beings.

4. Or, he pretends to a status equal to loyal beings, that human mortals may believe he operates from the same holy estate.

From that sanctuary he openly blasphemes against God. He proclaims himself to be God.

We must get a tight grip on our attitudes. We must recognize that all loyal divine beings know he is not God. Only susceptible human mortals are not able to discriminate. His proclamation as God therefore can only be to foolhardy human kind.

If this personality is divine, and not human, the proclamation as God now takes on more sense. We need not postulate a human scenario to interpret the passage. He is not now a deluded human mortal; he is a spirit being who is trying to delude mankind. Perhaps he is trying to reclaim the respect he possessed as our former planetary ruler, our planetary god, but which he lost when he rebelled. Held up against the reality of Creation his actions are truly insane.

His pretense that he is God makes human beings susceptible to belief that he is God. Through this mechanism he will direct the mass slaughter about to burgeon forth on our world.

In a preceding chapter I quoted a statement made by this rebel personality to Mark Farley. There he pretended to be Michael, as God. Current spiritist communications, now rampant around this planet, are rife with these pretenses and impersonations as God. A good example is the "Christ" of *A Course in Miracles*. Little did we recognize how this prediction by Paul would be fulfilled. Our mythological images prevent us, even now, at the last hour, from understanding the deadly transactions being prosecuted before our very eyes, by neighbors, friends and relatives. The current development of spiritist groups in all corners of the land is the practical fulfillment of Paul's prediction. This rebel does not appear as some mystical figure, taking his seat in some mythical temple, shouting to the world that he is God. He appears in the minds of human mortals proclaiming that he is God. And they believe him.

## Part 5: The Restraint

Return now to verses six-eight. These may be the most cryptic in the Bible, simply because Paul refers to conversations he had with the Thessalonians in which he provided details and a context, but which he does not relay to us. The Thessalonians may have known what was restraining or withholding "him"; we do not.

Speculation has soared around this passage. Many and diverse suggestions have been proffered for the identity of the lawless one, who or what is restraining him, when he will be revealed, and the context of the actions. Much of that speculation uses political scenarios, either of early Christian days, or others down through the centuries. Some interpreters believe it was Nero who was doing the restraining; others suggest other Roman emperors. Persons in later centuries suggested a Pope, or political leaders, or national dictators, and so on. All are in error. The context is religious, not political. These are divine transactions; not human earthly activities. The context is heavenly; the environment is not geophysical, political, or commercial. These are cosmic transactions.

Through heavenly processes unknown to us, God held the Devil in check. God limited his ability to function. God placed restraints upon him. Now those restraints have been removed. The statement "*He who restrains him will do so until he comes out of the midst*" is so confusing because Paul was limited in his vocabulary. The "midst" may be the sanctuary. Or it may be a spirit environment not discernible to human kind. Or it may be a spirit restraint which God has now lifted.

The mystery of lawlessness is the permission by God that the Devil remain on this world to prosecute his evil designs. We do not have a clear perception why God would allow this; hence it is a mystery. As Jesus stated, it was not his wish that this rebel remain, but he would do the will of the Father.

When Paul said the mystery of lawlessness was already at work he meant the methods employed by this rebel to destroy the world.

Prior to the present release those methods were of two kinds:

a) the antagonistic and deceptive spiritual environment the Devil created, the one spoken of by the apostles and Christians down through the centuries, and

b) phenomena displayed under the general designation of spiritualism.

We were immune to the environmental influence as long as we remained righteous, as long as our hearts were centered to God. But when the world became godless we opened the way to an ever more powerful influence which now pervades our current social order. We became increasingly subject to his sly suggestions.

Furthermore, spiritualism was limited in cultural power, although it was pursued increasingly at many levels during the past 150 years. For example, Mary Todd Lincoln, the wife of Abraham Lincoln, sought out spiritualist phenomena, as did many reputable scientists.

The coming of the lawless one is the same word as used for the coming of Jesus. The Greek *perousia* means “a presence.” His coming will be according to his celestial status, in power, with many signs and lying wonders. The demonstration of his power will reach beyond any traditional view, far beyond the current conceptual range of Jew or Christian. About to unfold upon this planet is an episode that escapes the most erudite religious theoretician, the most sophisticated theologian, the most perceptive Rabbi, and the most adamant fundamentalist Preacher.

In order to demonstrate how this release is understood by this rebel Prince, I quote statements he made to a spiritist group in Woods Cross, Utah. He made these remarks through the mind of Jan Messenger, a member of that group.

You are a small minority. Most would never accept or understand these transactions. Yet, they will change within. Our goal, mission is twofold. It consists, firstly, in transforming the individuals, individuals involved in, with these communications. Secondly, it consists of spreading, sharing, maintaining the spiritual progress momentum of the masses. This general spiritual level has not necessarily improved for many years, and now the time has come to correct this and begin to enlarge the spiritual capacity and receptivity of mankind in general. This is occurring due to spiritual forces of a more generalized nature. The Supreme Being is acting in an overall patterned manner about this area in time space.

. . . Therefore, this generalized spiritual force creates pressure upon humankind which humankind reacts to and will help to create the atmosphere or prepare the way for the reception, receiving of these teachings. And furthermore, all these forces will gently and carefully reveal God's love to humankind, but not only this fellow sharing and revealing love of God is the most supreme form of pleasure. This preparation will better your planet in many areas of life, in environment, in technology, in social culture and political structure. These refinements will gradually lead this world step-by-step towards light and life. Is this understood?

. . . The gravity of the Son, the Eternal Son that is, has tremendous power and weight. Your spiritual sensitivity and capacity for receptivity will increase noticeably. His drawing power is unmistakable to the spirit, to the soul, which will increasingly respond to this feeling. Communication such as this will increase worldwide spread. Many people will respond.

These statements are full of portent, but the human beings of today to whom they were given did not recognize the significance.

*Yet they will change within —*

His human agents have now been conditioned to his presence and to his power, but not that they are consciously aware. Thus he is *transforming the individuals involved in his spirit transformations — spreading, sharing, maintaining the spiritual progress momentum of the masses —*

By this he means his increasing influence upon the general mass of mankind through recruitment into his direct mental communication, which he styles as “progress momentum.”

*This general spiritual level has not necessarily improved for many years, and now the time has come to correct this and begin to enlarge the spiritual capacity and receptivity of mankind in general.*

By many years he means the many millennia of ages gone by, when he did not have such power. Now he has been released to such power.

*This is occurring due to spiritual forces of a more generalized nature. The Supreme Being is acting in an overall patterned manner about this area in time space.*

Here he explicitly states that God has opened the gates for him to exercise unprecedented power, now, on this world.

*. . . Therefore, this generalized spiritual force creates pressure upon humankind which humankind reacts to and will help to create the atmosphere or prepare the way for the reception, receiving of these teachings.*

Now, unless men and woman are extremely careful, they may fall into the persuasive power of this rebel. God has opened the spiritual gates.

*And furthermore, all these forces will gently and carefully reveal God's love to humankind, but not only this fellow sharing and revealing love of God is the most supreme form of pleasure.*

This is his great deception. He has conditioned his human agents to believe that he brings a renovated mankind, and that all is done out of love. He then propose to them where this will lead. But all in deception.

*This preparation will better your planet in many areas of life, in environment, in technology, in social culture and political structure. These refinements will gradually lead this world step-by-step towards light and life. Is this understood?*

He then goes on, justifying the manner in which his power is now being exercised in their minds.

*. . . The gravity of the Son, the Eternal Son that is, has tremendous power and weight. Your spiritual sensitivity and capacity for receptivity will increase noticeably. His drawing power is unmistakable to the spirit, to the soul, which will increasingly respond to this feeling. Communication such as this will increase worldwide spread. Many people will respond.*

With due regard to the caution that his purpose is to deceive, this statement probably well captures the nature of the spiritual transactions transpiring on our world today. He is not afraid to discuss these elements because he needs justification for those individuals who are now following him. They may wonder how this is now coming about, why the exact form of this phenomena was not known in prior historical times.

The reason is simple; a spiritual release has now come. Since this view of new spiritual transactions is totally outside the purview of Jews and Christians, not included in their theologies or popular notions of God's control of this planet, it could not have come out of the unconscious mind of Jan Messenger. These concepts are foreign to any historical view and could not have human origin.

My purpose is not to provide justification for the authenticity of these remarks. Each of us must decide for ourselves the validity of the information being given to us, whether from holy and righteous sources, or from the vile Prince. We should remember that he mixes truth with lies. Everything he says is not false; otherwise foolish human kind would quickly see through him. The power of his appeal is in his judicious mixing of false concepts with truthful statements. And even his false concepts are centered in the wishful thinking of man. He uses their weaknesses to appeal to them. He is very devious.

Our world is about to enter a spiritual judgment, the likes of which have never before taken place in God's creation. And we human mortals now living will respond according to our individual relationships with God. Whether we want to or not, we are participants in a unique cosmic episode.

I shall now go on to other historic revelations concerning these events.

### Unclean Spirits

Mark 16: (14-15) "And they excused themselves, saying that this age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who, through the agency of unclean spirits, does not allow the true power of God to be apprehended. Wherefore, they said to Christ, 'reveal now Thy righteousness.' And Christ said to them, 'The limit of the years of Satan's authority has been fulfilled, but other terrors draw near, and I am delivered up of death on behalf of those that have sinned, that they may be turned to the truth and sin no more, so that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness in heaven.'"

You will not find this text in your Bible. It is not published in any modern edition. Three reasons exist.

First, the text does not appear in many of the most ancient manuscripts; it appears in later manuscripts.

Second, the character of the writing appears expository, a later Christian commentary, not as something that was part of Mark's original gospel.

Third, the passage is highly disturbing; it makes specific assignment of the activities of the Devil, and that assignment is in the sordid practices of spiritism, through the agency of unclean spirits.

This brief passage, located between verses 16:14 and 16:15, is only part of the textual problems found at the end of the Gospel of Mark. Various versions occur in different ancient manuscripts. These are summarized in most editions of RSV. *The New Oxford Annotated (RSV) Bible*, 1973, adds the remark that ". . . a few authorities insert additional material after verse 14," but does not quote the text.

This text is quoted in the *International Critical Commentary* under the section dealing with John 16:11. It also appears in the exhaustive critical edition of *The Greek New Testament* by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce Metzgar, and Allen Wikgren, published by the United Bible Societies, 1968. The commentator in ICC goes on to remark that:

*"The impending 'terrors' may be the persecutions foretold in John 16:2-3."*

Indeed, that is exactly what is going on.

This text carries multiple portent.

1. The Prince of this World acts through the agency of "unclean spirits." Or, stated otherwise, through "seducing spirits." See 1 Tim 4:1. That is the only mechanism available to him. The spirits are unclean because they invade the sacredness of human mind. The spirits are seducing because they betray man.

2. Through this agency the true power of God cannot be apprehended. The agency of "unclean spirits" camouflages a true relationship with God. This God effectively diverts his believers to worship him.

3. The persecutions he will bring through the agency of "unclean spirits" are recognized for their terror content. Although he may have brought terror to previous world regimes, greater horrors draw near.

All residents of this planet will experience a true spiritual judgment.

This small section, and its history deduced from surviving manuscripts, added some time after the first century, demonstrates that knowledge, discussion, and considerable interest in Jesus' prediction was current in early Christian days; it was part of the body of early Christian thought. As the centuries passed the significance of Jesus' remarks became diluted, while practical belief of Devil's work faded under increasing skepticism. The Devil gained ever tighter grip on the attitudes of men.

As we approached this century the validity of those remarks were increasingly discounted. Those fundamentalist groups who continued to believe in the Devil were buried beneath the debris of mythology and mysticism. Hence, the fearful tone and apprehensive nature of the Mark appended text caused it to be excluded from modern editions. Godless generations discount the reality of spirit personalities; they do not believe the Devil would have such power. This suppression is an excellent indicator of how this Prince has blinded the minds of recent generations.

What is meant by unclean spirits?

In many cases in the New Testament it meant demonic possession, the actual seizure of certain human mortals by rebel spirits. See Mark 1:23f, 3:11, 7:25, Luke 9:42, Acts 8:7, and so on. In some cases the context is uncertain; it could mean spirits who do not actually possess human mortals, but merely communicate with them in their minds. See Mark 6:7, Luke 6:18, Acts 5:16, and so on. Notably, references to unclean spirits do not appear in John's gospel.

The fact of demonic possession is well attested in the record prior to Jesus' resurrection. It is not well attested after his resurrection. The ancient Druids, the priesthood of the Celtic people, upon hearing reports of Jesus' resurrection, recognized that all demonic spirits had been removed from the planet at that time. If demonic possession existed yet today it would be far more prevalent. Recent cases which have received great notoriety can be explained through emotional or mental illness. Or, in some rare cases, certain human mortals have submitted their minds and bodies to actual Devil possession.

If this evidence is indicative of the current planetary regime it would mean that spirits capable of involuntary demonic possession are no longer with us; all spiritist activities today originate with the fallen Prince. Beyond this cursory comment I shall defer discussion to later chapters. Here I wish to focus on the fallen Prince.

Given these brief remarks about spirit communication through human mind the curious passage in Matt 12 now takes on striking meaning.

Matt 12:38-45 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation."

I shall not engage in discussion of the textual problems of this passage. Regardless of the integrity of this text it shows the stern attitude of Jesus. Those spiritual events which are about to come down upon us are far more significant than what Jonah witnessed. They are far more weighty than what Solomon gave us. This is judgment, planetary judgment, great and incisive judgment, far more than the men of Nineveh saw, and far more than the Queen of Sheba saw.

Do you want a sign? You will not get one. Do you want someone or something to reassure you or give you "proof." You will not get it. Those sleeping in the dust of the earth will arise at this judgment and they will condemn this unbelieving and adulterous generation. Something greater than Jonah is going on here. Something greater than Solomon is going on here. When the fallen Prince departs from the mind of a man and returns to find it empty, swept, and put in order he returns with even greater vengeance to perform his nefarious purpose. The state of that man becomes worse then when he first started seeking the spirits. So shall it be with this perverse and evil generation. They wanted spirit communications; they shall receive thunderbolts which will take them into light, into bliss, and into death. But not before his deadly work is done.