

The Man of Sin

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Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Introduction:

- I. **Who is this “man of sin?”**
- II. As I began this study, it dawned on me (accompanied with the desire to stay in bed and hope that the day would pass!) that all that is necessary to correctly identifying the “man of sin” is to understand clearly, along with the assigned text, the book of Revelation (and the man whose number is 666), the book of Daniel (especially the “little horn” of chapter 7), the coming of Jesus in Matthew 24 and the Antichrist John spoke of in 1 John 2.
 - A. Note Jamieson, Fausset and Brown’s comments on I John 2:18:
 1. “These ‘many Antichrists’ answer to ‘the spirit of lawlessness (Greek) doth already work.’ ... He probably answers to ‘the little horn having the eyes of a man, and speaking great things’ (Da 7:8, 20); ‘the man of sin, son of perdition’ (2 Th 2:3); ‘the beast ascending out of the bottomless pit’ (Re 11:7; 17:8), or rather, ‘the false prophet,’ the same as ‘the second beast coming up out of the earth’ (Re 13:11-18; 16:13).”
 - B. Wayne Jackson concurs:
 1. “In conclusion, we emphasize again, the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 7, Paul’s ‘man of sin,’ and ‘the beast’ of the book of Revelation have much in common, and seem to testify in concert regarding one of the most vicious persecutors the church of God has ever known.” (Wayne Jackson)
- III. This passage is notoriously difficult.
 - A. “The passage has been historically noted for its exceptional difficulty. The noted church father Augustine writes of a certain portion of the passage: ‘I confess that I am entirely ignorant of what he means to say.’ New Testament Greek scholar Vincent omits interpreting the passage in his four volume lexical commentary: ‘I attempt no interpretation of this passage as a whole, which I do not understand.’ Renowned Greek linguist Robertson despairs of the task of interpreting this passage because it is ‘in such vague form that we can hardly clear it up.’ Morris urges ‘care’ in handling this ‘notoriously difficult passage.’ Bruce notes that ‘there are few New Testament passages which can boast such a variety of interpretations as this.’ There are even some dispensationalists who admit that it is an ‘extremely puzzling passage of Scripture that has been a thorn in the flesh of many an expositor.’” (Gentry)
- IV. The suggestions for the man of sin’s identity are legion! (Some of these we will discuss in more detail later.)
 - A. General statements:
 1. “Over the centuries, he has been variously identified as Attila the Hun, Napoleon, the Pope, Martin Luther, Mohammed, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt, Henry Kissinger; and Mikhail Gorbachev. Virtually every unpopular public figure has qualified.” (John Noe at www.preteristarchive.com/Modern/2002_noe_man-of-sin.html)

2. “The man of sin has been identified as Nero, the Pope of Rome, Luther, Mahomet, Caligula, Simon Magus, Titus. By others, as representing not an individual, but the succession of popes, the Jewish nation, and especially the Sanhedrin.” (Vincent, 67)
 - a. Vincent began this brief summation of 2 Thess. 2:1-12 by saying, “I attempt no interpretation of this passage as a whole, which I do not understand. The varieties of exposition are bewildering.”

B. “The Antichrist“

1. This position is popular with Premillennialists.
2. “This position is that just prior to the coming of Jesus there will arise a person who is so diabolical and evil that he will be known as the ‘anti Christ.’ He will lead many people into great iniquity. He will attempt to totally overthrow Christianity, but Jesus will come and obliterate him. For a full discussion of this position, see Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of I and II Thessalonians*, pp. 170-179.” (Moyer)
3. This assumes that there is “one” Antichrist.
 - a. John wrote that there were “many antichrists.” (**1 John 2:18**)
 - 1) Anyone who “denies that Jesus is the Christ” (**1 John 2:22**) or who does “not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh” is an antichrist. (**2 John 7**)
 - b. There is no article (“the”) in the original text before antichrist.
 - 1) “Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.” (ASV)
 - c. “Yes, antichrist is sometimes used in the singular form, but since other verses tell us there are many, we know that it is a literary technique where the one represents the many. It is a form of personification.” (Jeffrey W. Hamilton)
4. Even if there was (or is) only one Antichrist, we would have to assume that the “man of sin” and “The Antichrist” were one and the same.

C. A Roman Emperor

1. “Some connect the description with Caligula, Nero, or other of the Roman emperors. Caligula, indeed, ordered supplication to be made to himself as the supreme god and wished to set up his statue in the temple of Jerusalem.” (“Man of Sin,” ISBE)

D. The Pope

1. “Taking the Roman Catholic hierarchy as the development of the man of sin, as I am sure it is, it will be seen that this mystery of lawlessness developed into the ‘man of sin’ only after several hundred years of growth.” (D. Lipscomb)
2. “That man of sin, or, the evil power held by a succession of individual men who shall stand at the head of the party which shall fall away. The apostle most clearly refers to the papal power which was then already at work.” (*Brethren NT Commentary*)
 - a. The papal power was already at work in 51-52 AD?!
3. “The Pope, the Vicar of Christ, is the Man of Sin. He has invented sin, he has taught sin, he has enticed sin, established iniquity by a law, he trades in sins and has grown rich through the sins of Christendom. Sin is the Pope’s work. Sin is the Pope’s being.

Popery is the incarnation of sin as the Gospel is the incarnation of holiness.” (Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley)

- a. Dr. Paisley is a member of the European Institute of Protestant Studies – Should we be surprised that those associated with the Protestant Reformation would hold such a view?
4. “The Early Reformers - In general, they adopted this opinion. Those who held this view were Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melancthon, Beza, Bucar, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hopper, and Jewell. According to them, the apostasy is the falling away from the evangelical doctrine to the traditions of men and the corruptions of popery; the Man of Sin, or Antichrist, is not, as the Fathers conceived, an individual, but the succession of popes; and the restraining power is the Roman Empire, out of whose ruins the papacy arose. (Phillips, p. 349).”
(www.klcc.faithsite.com/content.asp?SID=655&CID=43143)

E. Martin Luther

1. “Most of Protestant Christianity shrinks from such an interpretation; they cannot bring themselves to see the papacy in Paul’s and John’s harsh descriptions (Catholics identify the Antichrist with Luther).” (Jeske)

F. Titus

1. “Presently I am inclined to understand the ‘man of sin’ is none other than Titus, the general who destroyed the Jerusalem Temple and who, by the custom of the time, would have proclaimed himself to be superior to the God of Israel by virtue of his having been able to achieve victory over the Jews. The planting of the Roman standards in the Temple courtyard would have been seen as ‘opposition and exaltation’ of Roman power, represented by Titus himself, over the God of Israel.” (James P. Holding)
2. “We propose that Paul’s ‘man of sin’ was, most likely, a specific person who set himself up in the Temple that was standing when Paul was writing. He could have been (take your pick) Nero, Titus, a Zealot leader; the corrupt chief high priest, or a Christian Zealot.” (John L. Bray)
 - a. This position assumes that the temple in **v. 4** was the temple at Jerusalem.

G. A Muslim Leader.

1. “The coming man of sin will be a gentle Muslim, be from the region of ancient Assyria, will be a prince, will be the king of Babylon (Iraq), will enter the world scene as a man of peace, will be a peace maker with Israel, will seek to bring the world’s religions together, will lay claim to Jerusalem, will allow Jordan to escape from his military might. And lastly, the coming man of sin will be known as the Mahdi to the Muslim world. There is only one man on the world scene today who can meet all these identifying signs. . . . This man’s name is, His Royal Highness Crown Prince El Hassan Bin Talal.” (Dr. Joe Vankoevering at <http://catchthefire.com.au/2009/06/unveiling-the-man-of-sin-possible-identity-of-the-antichrist/>)
2. With the influence of Islam in the world, this view could become popular.

H. Muhammad

1. Some believe the man of sin was Muhammad. (Barnes Notes quoted at http://bible.cc/2_thessalonians/2-3.htm)

I. Barak Obama

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1. If the man of sin is synonymous with the man whose number is 666, even President Obama has not escaped this cursed identification.
 2. “Traditionally we resort to the Hebrew and Greek gematria to work out the identity of Mr. 666. Well, it turns out the right gematria to use is English!” (John Tng at www.fivedoves.com/rapture/2008/obama_666.htm)
 - a. Pity the seven churches in Asia who could not speak English!
- J. “The man of sin is **man of sin**.” (Could it be so simple?!)
1. From Tony Warren at www.mountainretreatorg.net/faq/man-sin.html:
 - a. “Many Theologians have privately interpreted this man of sin to be everything from The Pope, Hitler, Stalin, to a new born devil man himself. It makes for entertaining movie fodder, and for intriguing stories around the camp fire, but as far as Biblical Theology, it’s all worth nothing. There is a better way to determine who this passage is referring to. How about we let the scriptures themselves tell us. And the scripture tells us ‘clearly’ that the man of lawlessness is, *anthropos hamartia*, which literally means man of lawlessness. It is man who refuses to be subject to the laws of God! This is the definition of the lawless man. He is a transgressor of the laws of God. When Satan comes, he will come revealing himself through mankind.

“It seems clear to me that these verses are not referring to one particular man, but to man, ‘in particular.’ Man who being led by the spirit of Satan, forsakes the Lord to transgress the law of God in the Holy Temple.

“Simply put, the man of sin **is** the man of sin. Not an individual, but man of sin. Just as I would say the man of lawfulness or faithfulness worships in the Temple. It’s not a reference to one single man, but to the man who is faithful or follows the laws of God. Likewise, the man of lawlessness is just the opposite! Any betrayer of Christ, just as Judas was deceived of Satan to betray Christ. Any false teachers that seek to establish themselves as authority ‘over’ the teaching of God, abandoning His Word for their own private interpretations, this is the man of lawlessness.”

 - 1) I think this is way too general a view.
- K. A series of individuals of similar character (*e.g.*, Roman emperors or Catholic popes).
1. “That the phrase, ‘the man of sin,’ may refer to a succession of men of the same general character, and that it does so refer here, is evident from the following considerations:

“(1) The word ‘king’ is used in Dan. 7:25; 11:36, to which places Paul seems to allude, to denote a succession of kings.

“(2) The same is true of the beast mentioned in Dan. 7; Dan. 8; and Rev. 13, representing a kingdom or empire through its successive changes and revolutions....”
(*Barnes Notes*)
- L. The great apostasy personified
1. “He is not an individual or a line of individuals (emperors or leaders or Jewish zealots). He is the great apostasy personified, an apostasy that showed itself in the Gnosticism of John’s day and whatever else came after it or along with it. That apostasy is embodied in actual people but it is no more a single individual than the king of Babylon or the ruler of Tyre in Isaiah and Ezekiel.” (McGuiggan)
- V. This passage, though obscure to us, was probably not obscure to the Thessalonians.
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- A. “This chapter is involved in difficulties; it is the obscurest passage in the writings of Paul; it is pre-eminently one of those things in his Epistles which are hard to be understood (2 Pet. 3:16). But it is to be observed that the description of the man of sin, though obscure to us, was not necessarily obscure to the Thessalonians. They had information on this point which we do not possess. The apostle, when at Thessalonica, had instructed them in this subject, and to these instructions he refers in the description which he here gives (vers. 5, 6). Nor was the information which he imparted to them indefinite and general, but definite and precise. He had described the nature of the apostasy, the characteristics of the man of sin, and the influences which retarded his manifestation (vers. 3, 4); and if these points were known to us, as they were to the Thessalonians, most of the obscurity which rests on this prediction would disappear.” (*Pulpit Commentary*)
1. Paul wrote, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now **you know** what” (vv. 5-6) (Emp. mine)
 2. B. W. Johnson, in *The People’s NT with Notes*, believed that Paul “had told them of these things while with them, but now writes more fully.”
- B. I tend to agree with these conclusions. I believe the Thessalonians were told more than what Paul wrote about in this letter.
1. If this is the case, I certainly wish Paul had told us “the rest of the story.” It might have spared us from having to listen to this lecture!
 2. Seriously, it does appear to me that the Thessalonians knew and understood these things whether or not we ever do.

Body:

I. Examining The Text

- A. “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.” (2 Th. 2:1-2)
1. The coming of the Lord would be the same as the coming mentioned a few verses earlier. (2 Th. 2:1:7-10) He is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who did not know God or obey the gospel. Those who had troubled the Thessalonian church would be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence.
 2. At His coming, the faithful will be given rest and will glorify and admire their Savior. It is the day when Paul and the Thessalonians will be gathered together to Him. He had spoken of this gathering in the first letter. (1 Th. 4:13-18)
 - a. Note that the only other time *episunagoge* (“gathering together”) is found in the NT is in Heb. 10:25.
 - 1) Someday, all the redeemed are “going to church” once and for all to glorify and admire our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, forever!
 3. Paul was concerned that his brethren might be “shaken in mind or troubled” by those who claimed to be speaking by the Spirit or that Paul and the apostles had spoken or written to them.
 - a. “He wrote so that they would ‘not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed.’ Paul did not want them to lose their heads over this matter but to keep their mental balance.” (Forrest Moyer)

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- 1) Shortly after moving to Marion, IN, a woman from the community called the office in a frantic state of mind and asked if I could come and talk to her. She had been watching Jack Van Impe continually and was terrified that the Lord might be coming so soon with all of the supposed “tribulation” that is to happen according to premillennial adherents.
 - a) You may know that Van Impe can take a newspaper and connect the headlines to passages in Revelation, Daniel, or Matthew 24 with the best of them.
 - b. They were to try the spirits, those claiming to be speaking for God by the Holy Spirit. **(1 Jn. 4:1)**
 - c. They could know the truth that Paul had spoken to them.
 - 1) They had received his word as the word of truth **1 Th. 2:13.**
 - d. Note that the early Christians had to determine what was truth and what was not, what were the words of the apostles and what were not.
 - 1) They evidently could know what Paul had actually written and what, although ascribed to him, he had not written.
 - e. *Paul Apple* wrote, “There were deceivers who falsified letters in Paul’s name to carry their point in the church (2:1f).”
 - 1) *A. T. Robertson* strongly asserts: “Paul’s keen resentment against the practice should make us slow to accept the pseudepigraphic theory about other Pauline Epistles. He calls attention to his own signature at the close of each genuine letter. As a rule he dictated the epistle, but signed it with his own hand (3:17).”
 4. “As though the day Christ had come”
 - a. “*is just at hand*” (ASV)
 - b. “*is already here*” (NEB)
 - c. “*has come*” (NASB)
 - d. “*is now present*” (RV)
 - e. “to place on hand, *i.e.* (reflexively) impend, (participle) be instant:--come, be at hand, present.” (Strong’s)
 - f. “Better than Rev. *is now present*. Lightfoot, happily, *is imminent*.” (Vincent)
 - g. Paul was saying that the coming of the Lord was NOT imminent.
 - 1) I would think that this would give our “realized eschatology” friends a problem.
 - 2) The coming of the Lord at the fall of Jerusalem was near (18-20 years), but His second and final coming was not.
 5. “The day of the Lord” was not going to come until the things described here had come to pass.
- B. “*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*
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himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (2 Th. 2:3-4)

1. Whatever these things were referring to, our Thessalonian brethren could know that they would take place before the coming of the day of the Lord.
 - a. If we say there are no signs, that there is nothing to indicate to us when the coming of the Lord is going to occur (*i.e.*, Matt. 24:36), then I don't believe we are looking for these things to come to pass in our future.
 - b. I don't think these things were going to indicate when He was to come, but only that He had not yet come and that he would not come until they had come to pass.
2. *“The son of perdition”*
 - a. This phrase is also used in reference to Judas, the betrayer of our Lord. (**John 17:12**)
 - b. He was destined for destruction, the destruction mentioned in **2 Th. 1:9**.
 - 1) *“Apoleia: ‘the destruction which consists in the loss of eternal life, eternal misery, perdition ... a man doomed to eternal misery. 2 Th 2:3”* (Thayer, p. 71).
 - 2) This man of sin would be eternally damned as a result of his godless iniquity and opposition to all that is holy.” (Moyer)
3. *“Above all that is called God or that is worshiped”*
 - a. This refers to the One and only living God as well as any “gods” or idols that were worshiped by the Gentiles in the Roman world of that day.
 - b. Many of the Christians in Thessalonica had *“turned to God from idols.”* (**1 Th. 1:9**)
 - c. *“Above the true God, and the false gods.”* (Vincent)
4. *“Sits as God in the temple of God”*
 - a. What is the temple?
 - 1) An individual's own personal body? (**1 Cor. 6:19**)
 - 2) The temple in Jerusalem which was destroyed in 70 AD?
 - 3) The church? (**Eph. 2:21**)
 - a) The universal or a local church?
 - 1] Did (or does) the pope sit as God in the universal church?!
 - 4) A place where idols were worshiped? (**1 Cor. 8:10**)
 - 5) Heaven where God dwells? (**Hab. 2:20**)
 - b. Does this have to mean that the man of sin actually sits in the temple of God (whatever that is) or rather that he sits as God who alone sits in His temple? If the later, do we then have to look for someone in the “church” or in the temple in Jerusalem?
 - c. If it could be proven without question that the temple of this passage was the temple in Jerusalem, then the explanations given by some Preterists concerning

who the man of sin would be plausible. But this would be based on an assumption.

- d. The man of sin claimed to be God or a god above all that are called God.
 - 1) Compare with others who did the same:
 - a) The king of Babylon
 - 1] *“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”*
(Isa. 14:13-14)
 - b) The prince of Tyre
 - 1] *“Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Because your heart is lifted up, and you say, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,’ Yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god.”’”*
(Ezekiel 28:2)
 - c) The little horn
 - 1] *“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”* **(Dan. 7:25)**
 - 2] The little horn would arise in the days of the 4th kingdom. (Rome)
 - d) Antiochus Epiphanes or a Roman Caesar
 - 1] *“Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.”*
(Dan. 11:36)
 - a] “It seems to me that the Romans best suit the context. The Romans came; who conquered the kingdoms of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. With no regard for God or man, the Romans eventually destroyed the temple in Jerusalem; and later, with the gradual development of the concept of emperor-deity, they persecuted and sought to destroy the kingdom of God. Considered as a whole, it seems that the Roman power best fits into the general thought of vv. 36-45.”
(Hailey, 1: 262)
 - 2] If this is a reference to Rome, as is the kingdom of the “little horn,” it is not difficult to see why we might want to compare these verses in Daniel with those of our text.
 - a] However, similarity in the language of different texts does not prove that both are about the same person(s).
- 2) *“He opposes ... all that is called God”*

a) The Sea Beast

1] *“Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.” (Rev. 13:6)*

b) Eusebius said this about Nero: “But Nero now having the government firmly established under him, and henceforth plunging into nefarious projects, began to take up arms against that very religion which acknowledges the one Supreme God. ...he was the first of the emperors that displayed himself an enemy of piety towards the Deity. ... thus Nero publicly announcing himself as the chief enemy of God.” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, ch. XXV)

5. *“Showing himself that he is God”*

a. *“Publicly asserting divine dignity.”* (Vincent)

b. He *“openly declare(s) himself a God”* or *“proclaims himself as God.”* (W.J. Conybeare, Ronald Knox, *NT from 26 Translations*)

c. Roman rulers, beginning with Julius Caesar, were considered to be a god.

1) *“Augustus declared Julius Caesar a god, and then emperors worshipped.”* (http://faculty.oxy.edu/horowitz/courses/Hist221/rise_and_fall_of_the_roman_empir.htm)

2) Speaking of Julius Caesar, *“He was recognized officially as ‘demigod’; temples were dedicated to his ‘clemency.’”* (“Roman Empire,” ISBE)

3) When he (Augustus) died, in 14 AD, the Senate declared him a god. (<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/augustus.html>)

4) *“Caligula’s religious policy was a departure from that of his predecessors. According to Cassius Dio, living Emperors could be worshipped as divine in the east and dead Emperors could be worshipped as divine in Rome. Augustus had the public worship his spirit on occasion, but Dio describes this as an extreme act that emperors generally shied away from. Caligula took things a step further and had those in Rome, including Senators, worship him as a physical living god.”* (Caligula, Wikipedia, source - Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LIX.26–28)

C. *“Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.” (v. 5-6)*

1. As noted earlier, I believe that our brethren in Thessalonica knew more about these things than what is recorded here.
2. That being said, I tend to think if we are going to try and know what they knew, we ought to be looking for answers that coincide with their times.
3. *“The attempts to identify this individual with historical characters may be set aside; but the idea is not thereby invalidated. The difficulty is that the apostle evidently conceives of the manifestation of the ‘man of sin’ as taking place, certainly not immediately, but at no very remote period – not 2,000 years later – and as connected directly with the final advent of Christ, and the judgment on the wicked...”* (ISBE)
 - a. I will later note that I don’t think the revealing of the man of sin has to be connected directly with the final coming of Jesus.

D. *“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. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord*

will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”
(v. 7-8)

1. Is “*the mystery of lawlessness*” the same as “*the falling away*” of v. 3?
 - a. The man of sin is the lawless one, so apparently he is associated with the mystery of lawlessness. But I don’t know that he has to be associated with the falling away. I think the falling away and the revealing of the man of sin can be two different things.
2. Since it was already at work, should we not look for fulfillment of these things in the days of our brethren at Thessalonica?
3. This person(s) would be one who would have little if any regard for any law whatsoever. (God’s, man’s, moral, etc.)
4. Who or what was restraining the revelation of the man of sin?
 - a. “*Only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way.*” (ASV)
 - b. “The disposition to amend and change the appointments of God was at work and was restrained in its growth by Paul’s authority as an apostle of the Lord; but when he was taken out of the way it had free course and developed rapidly.” (David Lipscomb)
 - c. “If the Man of Sin is the papal dynasty, what was the force or person that ‘restrained’ the initial revelation of this corrupt, ecclesiastical system? McClintock and Strong, citing numerous sources from the early ‘church fathers’ (e.g., Tertullian, Chrysostom, Hippolytus, Jerome, etc.), said that the patristic writers ‘generally consider’ the restraining force to be ‘the Roman empire’ (p. 255).” (Jackson)
 - d. “Gentry identifies both the Man of Sin (or Lawlessness) and the Beast as Nero: ‘The Man of Lawlessness is Nero Caesar, who also is the Beast of Revelation.’ The restrainer in II Thessalonians 2 is the Emperor Claudius:
 - 1) “The Man of Lawlessness was alive and waiting to be ‘revealed.’ This implies that for the time being Christians could expect at least some protection from the Roman government . . . When Paul wrote II Thessalonians 2, he was under the reign of Claudius Caesar . . . While Claudius lived, Nero, the Man of Lawlessness was without power to commit public lawlessness. Christianity was free from the imperial sword until the Neronic persecution began in November, A.D. 64.” (Quoted in *Preterist Gangrene: Its Diagnosis, Prognosis and Cure*, Martyn McGeown, www.cprf.co.uk/articles/preteristgangrene.htm)
 - e. Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.:
 - 1) “It is at least clear from Paul that something is presently (*ca.* A.D. 52) ‘restraining’ the Man of Lawlessness: ‘you know what *is* restraining [Gk. present participle], that he may be revealed in his own time’ (2:6). This strongly suggests the preterist understanding of the whole passage: the *Thessalonians themselves* knew what was *presently* restraining the Man of Lawlessness; in fact the Man of Lawlessness was alive and waiting to be ‘revealed.’ This implies that for the time-being Christians could expect some protection from the Roman government. The Roman laws regarding *religio licita* were currently in Christianity’s favor, while considered a sect of Judaism and before the malevolent Nero ascended the throne. Paul certainly

was protected by the Roman judicial apparatus (Acts 18:12ff.) and made important use of these laws in A.D. 59 (Acts 25:11-12; 28:19) as protection from the malignancy of the Jews. And he expressed no ill-feelings against Rome, when writing Romans 13 in A.D. 57-59 -- even during the early reign of Nero, the famous *Quinquennium Neronis*.

“While Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians 2 he was under the reign of Claudius Caesar, who had just banished Jews for persecuting Christians (Suetonius, *Claudius* 24:5; cp. Acts 18:2). It may be that he employs a word play on Claudius’ name. The Latin word for ‘restraint’ is *claudere*, which is similar to ‘Claudius.’ It is interesting that Paul shifts between the neuter and masculine forms of the ‘the restrainer’ (2 Thess. 2:6, 7). This may indicate he includes both the imperial law and the present emperor in his designation ‘restrainer.’ While Claudius lived, Nero, the Man of Lawlessness, was without power to commit public lawlessness. Christianity was free from the imperial sword until the Neronian persecution began in November, A.D. 64.”

f. John Bray wrote:

- 1) “Throughout Church history endless speculation has revolved around the identity of this restrainer. However, we do know that this restraint was in force when Paul wrote, and was actively holding back a ‘man of sin’ alive at that time. This fact is a time indicator and should answer the question of when. Some have suggested that the ‘who’ was Nero or the Roman government, which held back Jewish persecution of the early Jewish Christians. Futurists say it’s the gospel, the Church, the Holy Spirit, or an angel. But if any of these is what was really meant, why did the writer use such veiled language? None of these things is ever portrayed in Scripture as restraining lawlessness or being removed from the world.

“The best answer-we believe-is that it was both an office (the ‘what’) and a person (the ‘one who’ or ‘he’). More specifically, it was the institution of the Jewish priesthood led by Ananus, the high priest. The priesthood opposed the Jewish, Zealot-led rebellion. And Ananus wanted peace with Rome. As long as he and the priesthood stood in the way, the lawlessness of the Jewish Zealots was held back, the ‘work of Satan’ couldn’t reach its full realization, and the ‘man of sin’ couldn’t appear on the scene and cause the final destruction. In A.D. 68, however, Jewish Zealots, with the assistance of the Idumaeans, murdered Ananus and over 12,000 other priests and left their bodies unburied - a violation of the Jewish Law. Thus, the priesthood was ‘taken out of the way.’”

- a) Bray believes the man of sin to be John of Gischala.

1] A gospel preacher I visited in the mid 90’s believed this also.

5. Could the man of sin have been revealed in the Thessalonians lifetime and then later destroyed when the Lord comes?
 - a. For me, this was a major point to be considered – that the coming of the Lord does not necessarily coincide with the revealing of the man of sin.
 - b. The answer is yes, if we can also understand that those who troubled the Thessalonians would not be punished with everlasting destruction until the Day of the Lord. **(1:6-9)**

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- c. In other words, the time of the revealing of the lawless one and the time of the coming of the Lord did not have to be the same.
 - d. Gentry wrote, “According to Hendriksen verse eight destroys any preterist interpretation identifying the Man of Lawlessness with the Roman emperor, because it ties the events to the era of the Second Advent.”
 - 1) I don’t think they have to be tied together in time.
 - 2) Note: Gentry believes that the coming of the Lord in **v. 8** is a reference to the fall of Jerusalem, but that the coming in **chapter 1** refers to a final coming that has not yet occurred.
 - e. Consider the following from Jim McGuiggan:
 - 1) “... Paul *doesn't* say that the appearance of the ‘man of lawlessness’ *coincides with* the time of the Lord’s coming. He says you can be sure that the Lord’s coming is yet future because the apostasy hasn’t taken place and the ‘Man of sin’ has not yet been fully revealed. The most common way of reading this section is something like this. ‘The Lord hasn’t come yet and the proof of it is that there has been no major apostasy and the Man of Sin has not appeared. You see the Man of Sin is to appear just prior to the return of Christ.
 - “I can see that that makes sensible reading but maybe it isn’t what Paul said. The crucial link is missing. Paul says nothing here that would lead us to think, ‘The Man of Sin is to appear *just prior to* the return of Christ.’
 - “That looks like a summary of the basic proposals in the text and there’s no mention or indication that the Lawless one’s full manifestation occurs just prior to the coming of the Lord.”
 - 6. He would be consumed with “*the breath of His mouth.*”
 - a. Compare with **Revelation 19:15, 21**.
- E. “*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*” (**v. 9-10**)
- 1. The lawless one, the man of sin, the son of perdition was not Satan, but whose coming was “*according to the working of Satan.*”
 - 2. “The terrible phrase, the son of perdition, is applied to Judas in Joh 17:12 (like Judas doomed to perdition), but here to the lawless one (*ho anomos*, verse 2 Th 2:8), who is not Satan, but some one definite person who is doing the work of Satan. Note the definite article each time.” (A.T. Robertson)
 - 3. It is not hard to see why these verses could be compared with **Revelation 13**.
 - a. The beast out of the sea was given his power by the dragon. (Identified as Satan in **chapter 12:9**)
 - 1) This beast is usually understood to be the Roman Empire.
 - b. The beast out of the earth exercised all the authority of the first beast, therefore, his doings were also according to the working of Satan.
 - 1) He also performed “great signs” by which he “deceived” those on the earth.
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- a) This beast is the false prophet of **Rev. 19:20** who is eventually cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.
- 2) Who was this beast who caused men to worship the first beast?
- a) “So this beast symbolizes the religions of the empire which are used by the empire to subject the peoples of its domain to Roman rule. Thus pagan religion serves the empire in an effort to subject the world to the worship of Rome. Caesar’s images are erected in these pagan temples and the worshipers of the gods are directed to worship the empire and the emperors.” (Ogden)
- b) The beast has a number which is the number of a man (666).
- 1] “The reference is to an ancient practice of figuring the number of one’s name by adding up the assigned total for each letter in his name. Many ancient languages used alphabetical characters as numerical figures with specific values attached to the letters. The process is known as gematria. When the sum total of the letters in a person’s name were counted it would reveal the number of his name.” (Ogden, p. 288)
- 2] “The number is 666, and Neron Caesar (his name correctly spelled) computes to the magic number. If the n is dropped, as it most often is, the number computes to only 616, the precise number, according to Irenaeus (175 A.D.), appearing in many early manuscripts of the Apocalypse. Many names could be figured to match the magic number of 666, possibly your own, but none could fit the picture John painted more perfectly than Nero, for he was the first emperor to ‘make war with the saints’ (13:7). It was he also who ordered Vespasian, his own handpicked general, to subdue the Jews and bring them into submission. It was this act on Nero’s part that set in motion the fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel’s desolation and Jerusalem’s destruction.” (Ogden, p. 14-15)
- 3] “‘Revelation 13:17 refers to numerology which was quite familiar to the people of ancient times; according to it, since each Greek letter has a numerical value, a name could be replaced by a number representing the total of the numerical values of the letters making up the name’ (Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 106). One love-smitten fellow scribbled on a wall in ancient Pompeii a Greek sentence which translates, ‘*I love her whose number is 545*’ (Adolf Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*, 277). The number 666 is called in Grimm-Thayer *Lexicon*, p. 669, ‘*a mystical number the meaning of which is clear when it is written in Hebrew letters... “Nero Caesar.”*’” (L.A. Mott)
- 4] When Nero Caesar’s name is transliterated into Hebrew, we get *Neron Kesar* (*nrwn qsr*: Hebrew has no letters to represent vowels). When we take the letters of Nero’s name and spell them in Hebrew, we get the following numeric values: n=50, r=200, w=6, n=50, q=100, s=60, r=200 = 666. (Demar, p. 258)
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- 5] John “uses numbers as a code of letters. Thus the beast whose number is 666 translates to Nero, the mad emperor who had persecuted Christians.” (Kenneth Woodward)
4. Jesus said that in the days before the fall of Jerusalem, there would be “*false christs and false prophets*” who would “*show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*” (**Matt. 24:24**)
5. Those who did not receive the love of the truth and were consequently deceived by the lawless one, would perish and be condemned (punished with everlasting destruction).
- a. The truth is the gospel, the word of God that they had received from Paul when he first preached to them. (1 Th. 2:13)
- 1) “That is the gospel in contrast with lying and deceit.” (RWP)
- 2) “They prefer this system of error and delusion to the simple and pure gospel, by which they might have been saved.” (*Barnes Notes*)
- b. What is “the love of the truth?”
- 1) Paul evidently meant something more than just truth, or else why didn’t he just say, they did not receive the truth?
- a) “He saith not they had not received the truth, but the love of it...” (Matthew Poole)
- 2) Is it the love we have for the truth?
- a) “Not merely love of truth, but love of THE truth (and of, Jesus who is the Truth, in opposition to Satan’s ‘lie.’” (*JFB Commentary*)
- b) “Did not give the truth a loving reception, because they hated it and chose error in its stead.” (*Family Bible Notes*)
- 3) Or is it the love (*agape*) that is revealed or taught in the truth?
- a) Maybe I’m “splitting hairs” here, but it seems to me that they had not received something that was of the truth and that is the love that God had shown them in Jesus Christ. By rejecting Jesus, they had rejected the love God had demonstrated to them. Yes, they rejected the truth, but in particular the love of God that is of the truth.
- F. “*And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*” (**v. 11-12**)
1. “*For this reason,*” i.e., because they did not receive the love of the truth so they could be saved, God would send them strong delusion.
- a. He would allow them to be deceived by the power, signs and lying wonders worked by the lawless one, the man of sin.
2. “The God described in 2:11-12 doesn’t sound like a ‘heavenly sweetheart’. There’s something fearful about a being who will feed people what they’re hungry for and grasp at despite all warning to the contrary. Is it fundamental error they want, is that what suits their taste and will they *have* it? Then God will give it to them. Wasn’t it C.S. Lewis who said the world is divided into two groups? Those who say to God, ‘Your will be done’ and those to whom God says, ‘Your will be done.’” (McGuiggan)
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II. What is the falling away?

- A. Would we assume that those who fell away were once believers?
- B. Are we to believe that Paul was talking about the apostasy that would become the Roman Catholic church and that the man of sin was the pope or the papacy?
1. This is the view I was taught in my youth by elders and preachers, including an old mentor that I loved and thought the world of.
 2. It was the predominant early protestant view and conveniently so.
 - a. They were “protesting” the practices of the Catholic church.
 - b. “So too all of the Reformers without exception were Protestant Historicists, who denounced the Papacy as Antichrist. Thus: Luther; the *Articles of Smalcald* (II:4); Melanchthon; Osiander; Flaccius Illyricus; Nigrinus; Chytraeus; Funck; Zwingli; Calvin; Bullinger; Beza; Tyndale; Knox’s *Geneva Bible*; and Cranmer. So too: Pareus; James I; Mede; the *Preamble to the Decrees of Dordt*; the *Dordt Dutch Bible*; Thomas Goodwin; the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:6); Gerhard; Jurieu; Alsted; Turretin; John Brown of Haddington; Whitby; Sir Isaac Newton; Gill; Thomas Newton; Matthew Henry; Wesley; Bengel; Adam Clarke; Albert Barnes; James Denney; and many others.” (Lee)
 - 1) “Howling in rage at this denunciation, the Romish Preterists then countered by alleging that not their later Papacy but precisely the A.D 54-68 Pagan-Roman Emperor Nero was the antichristian ‘man of sin’ in Second Thessalonians. Sadly, certain inconsistent Protestants today agree with this.” (*Ibid.*)
 - c. “Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt... I shall briefly show that (Paul’s words in II Thess. 2) are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy.” (Quoting John Calvin, *Institutes* at www.remnantofgod.org/4fathers.htm)
 - d. “Identifying the lawless man-Antichrist has caused a great deal of speculation among theologians. Guesses range from Caligula to Nero to a Nero Redivivus to some Christian heretic to the Jewish nation to Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Communism, Islam, and so forth. Millennialists generally prefer not to commit themselves, looking instead to a future man near the time of the rapture. It has always been the contention of Lutheran orthodoxy that the Antichrist was meant to be identified in history, and that overwhelming historical evidence points to only one possible identification: the Roman papacy, understood collectively.” (Jeske)
 3. “During the Reformation, many believed that the ‘man of sin’ was the pope and the ‘falling away’ spoke to Catholicism’s corrupt forms of worship and doctrine. However, few scholars can be found who take this seriously today. The present tense of the verbs indicates that the ‘mystery of iniquity’ was *already* at work, and he who ‘*now letteth*’ would let until taken out of the way (II Thess. 2:6, 7). This can hardly describe the papacy, which did not grow up until centuries later. Instead, the better view is that Paul is describing the full and final rejection of Christ by the Jews through their participation in the persecution under Nero and apostasy from the church and a return to Judaism.” (Simmons)

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4. “This seems to be a view with a wide acceptance amongst the church. Although I can see where you can make the criteria fit (although I think at times you have to stretch to make the argument), I think it has some problems that I cannot get past. . . . The Roman Catholic Church is centuries away, while the Man of Sin in 2 Thessalonians is something that is already working, but has not yet come in full force.” (Wesley Walker)
 5. “The papacy didn’t start until A.D. 606 when the current bishop of Rome accepted the title of Pope. But by this time the branch that he led no longer resembled the early church. It is difficult to say that he sat in the temple of God. They sat in an apostate church, but not in the church itself.” (Hamilton)
 - a. While I pointed out earlier that I don’t think the temple of **v. 4** has to be the church, even if it was, it certainly was not the church the first pope claimed to be the head over.
- C. What lawlessness, what departure from the faith, was already at work at the time **2 Thessalonians** was written?
1. Why were **Hebrews, Galatians, Romans, and 2 Corinthians 3** written?
 2. What was the concern that caused the meeting in **Acts 15**?
- D. McGuiggan believes it was Gnosticism.
1. “So, what’s *my* guess on the Man of lawlessness? He is the personification of the massive departure from the faith which showed *one of its profound evils* with particular clarity in the doctrine of Gnosticism that came more and more out into the open in John’s day.”
- E. Thoughts from Kenneth Gentry:
1. The word “falling away” is *apostasia*, which occurs only here and in Acts 21:21 in the New Testament. Historically, the word may apply either to a *political* or to a *religious* revolt. But to which does it refer here? Does it refer to a future worldwide apostasy from the Christian faith, as per pessimistic eschatologies? Amillennialist William Hendriksen writes that this teaches that “by and large, the visible Church will forsake the true faith.” Dispensationalist Constable comments: “This rebellion, which will take place within the professing church, will be a departure from the truth that God has revealed in His Word.” Or does the *apostasia* refer to a political rebellion of some sort?
 - a. A good case may be made in support of the view that it speaks of the Jewish apostasy/rebellion against Rome. Josephus certainly speaks of the Jewish War as an *apostasia* against the Romans (Josephus, *Life* 4). Probably Paul merges the two concepts of religious and political apostasy here, though emphasizing the outbreak of the Jewish War, which was the result of their apostasy against God.
 - b. This may be inferred from 1 Thessalonians 2:16, where Paul states of the Jews that they “always fill up the measure of their sins [i.e., religious *apostasia* against God]; but *wrath has come upon them to the uttermost* [i.e., the result of political *apostasia* against Rome].” The *apostasia* [revolt] Paul mentions will lead to the military devastation of Israel (Luke 21:21-22; 23:28-31; Acts 2:16-20). The filling up of the measure of the sins of the fathers (Matt. 23:32) leads to Israel’s judgment, thereby vindicating the righteous slain in Israel (Matt. 23:35; cf. Matt. 24:2-34). The *apostasia* of the Jews against God by rejecting their Messiah (Matt 21:37-39; 22:2-6), led to God’s providentially turning them over to judgment via their *apostasia* against Rome (Matt. 21:40-42; 22:7). The emphasis must be on
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the revolt against Rome in that it is future and datable, whereas the revolt against God was ongoing and cumulative. Such is necessary to dispel the deception Paul was concerned with. In conjunction with this final apostasy and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem, Christianity and Judaism were forever separated and both are exposed to the wrath of Rome.

III. Is there a connection between those who troubled the Thessalonians and the “falling away” and the “man of sin?”

A. Who had troubled them? (See Acts 17:5-9)

1. At the instigation of the Jews who did not believe, a mob set all the city in an uproar. This mob dragged Jason and some brethren before the rulers of the city. They were accused of acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar on the account of their saying that there was another king – Jesus. The troubled crowd and rulers took security from Jason and the others and let them go.
2. Paul had said in his first letter, that they had suffered the same things from their own countrymen, just as the churches in Judea had from the Jews. (2:14)
 - a. Their own countrymen would have been other Gentiles.
 - 1) They suffered persecution at the hands of the Roman authorities.
 - b. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown see Jews included: (1 Thess. 2:14)
 - 1) Countrymen, “including primarily the Jews settled at Thessalonica, from whom the persecution originated, and also the Gentiles there, instigated by the Jews; thus, ‘fellow countrymen’ (the Greek term, according to Herodian, implies, not the enduring relation of fellow citizenship, but sameness of country for the time being), including naturalized Jews and native Thessalonians, stand in contrast to the pure ‘Jews’ in Judea (Mt 10:36).”

B. At the Lord’s final coming, when all the dead will be raised and when all will be judged, all that have opposed and exalted themselves above all that are called God will be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence.

1. This will include those who had (and would) troubled the Thessalonians.

C. If we conclude that they were troubled by both Jews and the Roman authorities, could this give us some insight into what the falling away and who the man of sin were?

1. Was Paul preparing them for the persecution to come, a persecution that he had already talked to them about?
2. If the man of sin was a Roman ruler who would be a persecutor of Christians, this would have been a major concern for our brethren in Thessalonica.

IV. Who did the early church fathers believe was the man of sin?

A. Most of these quotes identify him with “the antichrist.”

1. Please know that I know that the early church fathers could have been just as wrong in their interpretation of this passage as I might be!
 - a. Some seemed to look back at an earlier fulfillment while others thought it remained to be fulfilled.

B. “The Pulpit Commentary says: ‘The prediction of St. Paul concerning the Man of Sin made a deep impression upon the early Fathers, and the reference to it in their writings are

numerous. There is also a comparative unanimity in their sentiments. In general they considered that the fulfillment of the prediction was future; that the Man of Sin was Antichrist, and an individual; and that the restraining influence was the Roman Empire”
(www.klcc.faithsite.com/content.asp?SID=655&CID=43143)

- C. “In 422, Augustine of Hippo wrote about 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11, where he believed Paul mentioned the coming of the Antichrist. Though he rejects the theory, Augustine mentions that many Christians believed that Nero was the Antichrist or would return as the Antichrist. He wrote, *so that in saying, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work,” he alluded to Nero, whose deeds already seemed to be as the deeds of Antichrist.*” (Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero>)
- D. Jerome: “As for the Antichrist, there is no question but what he is going to fight against the holy covenant, and that when he first makes war against the king of Egypt, he shall straightway be frightened off by the assistance of the Romans. But these events were typically prefigured under Antiochus Epiphanes, so that this abominable king who persecuted God’s people foreshadows the Antichrist, who is to persecute the people of Christ. And so there are many of our viewpoint who think that Domitius Nero was the Antichrist because of his outstanding savagery and depravity.” (St. Jerome - Commentary on Daniel; notes on Daniel 11:27-30, -- Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan 1958 via <http://www.preteristarchive.com/Rome/Monarchs/nero.html>)
- E. F.W. Farrar (1882): “All the earliest Christian writers on the Apocalypse, from Irenaeus down to Victorinus of Pettau and Commodian in the fourth, and Andreas in the fifth, and St. Beatus in the eighth century, connect Nero, or some Roman emperor, with the Apocalyptic Beast .” (p. 541, via <http://www.preteristarchive.com/Rome/Monarchs/nero.html>)
- F. From McClintock & Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*
1. “The early Christians looked for Antichrist in a person, not in a polity or system. ‘That he would be a man armed with Satanic powers is the opinion of Justin Martyr, A.D. 103 (Dial. 371, 20, 21, Thirlbii, 1722); of Irenaeus, A.D. 140 (Op. v, 25, 487, Grabii, 1702); of Tertullian, A.D. 150 (De Res. Carn c.24; Apol. c. 82); of Origen, A.D. 184 (Op. i, Delarue, 1733); of his contemporary, Hippolytus (De Antichristo, 57, Fibricii, Hamburgi, 1716); of Cyprian, A.D. 250 (Ep. 58; Op. 120, Oxon. 1682); of Victorinus, A.D. 270 (Bibl. Patr. Magna, iii, 136, Col. Agrip. 1618); of Lactantius, A.D. 300 (Div. Inst. vii, 17); of Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 315 (Catech. xv, 4); of Jerome, A.D. 330 (Op. iv pars i, 209, Parisiis, 1693); of Chrysostom, A.D. 347 (Comm. in 11 Thess.); of Hilary of Poitiers, A.D. 350 (Comm. in Matt.); of Auguatine, A.D. 354 (De Civit. Dei, XX, 19); of Ambrose, A.D. 380 (Comm. in Luc.). The authors of the Sibylline Oracles, A.D. 150, and of the Apostolical Constitutions, Celsus (see Orig. c. Cels. lib. vi), Ephraem Syrus, A.D. 370, Theodoret, A.D. 430, and a few other writers, seem to have regarded the Antichrist as the devil himself, rather than as his minister or an emanation from him. But they may, perhaps, have meant no more than to express the identity of his character and his power with that of Satan. Each of the writers to whom we have referred gives his own judgment with respect to some particulars which may be expected in the Antichrist, while they all agree in representing him as a person about to come shortly before the glorious and final appearance of Christ, and to be destroyed by His presence. Justin Martyr speaks of him as the man of the apostasy, and dwells chiefly on the persecutions which he would cause. Irenaeus describes him as summing up the apostasy in himself; as having his seat at Jerusalem; as identical with the Apocalyptic Beast (c. 28); as foreshadowed by the unjust judge; as being the man who ‘should come in his own

name,' and as belonging to the tribe of Dan (c. 30). Tertullian identifies him with the Beast, and supposes him to about to arise on the fall of the Roman Empire (De. Res. Carn. c. 25). Origen describes him in Eastern phrase as the child of the devil and the counterpart of Christ. Hippolytus understands the Roman Empire to be represented by the Apocalyptic Beast, and the Antichrist by the False Prophet, who would restore the wounded Beast by his craft and by the wisdom of his laws. Cyprian sees him typified in Antiochus Epiphanes (Exhort. ad Mart. c. 11). Victorinus, with several others, misunderstanding Paul's expression that the mystery of iniquity was in his day working, supposes that the Antichrist will be a revived hero; Lactantius, that he will be a king of Syria, born of an evil spirit; Cyril, that he will be a magician, who by his arts will get the mastery of the Roman Empire. Jerome describes him as the son of the devil, sitting in the Church as though he were the Son of God; Chrysostom as 'the Anti-God', sitting in the Temple of God, that is, in all the churches, not merely in the Temple at Jerusalem; Augustine as the adversary holding power for three and a half years--the Beast, perhaps, representing Satan's empire. The primitive belief may be summed up in the words of Jerome (Comm. on Daniel): 'Let us say that which all ecclesiastical writers have handed down, viz., that at the end of the world, when the Roman Empire is to be destroyed, there will be ten kings, who will divide the Roman world among them; and there will arise an eleventh little king, who will subdue three of the ten kings, that is, the king of Egypt, of Africa, and of Ethiopia, as we shall hereafter show; and on these having been slain, the seven other kings will also submit. 'And behold,' he says, 'in the ram were the eyes of a man'--this is that we may not suppose him to be a devil or a demon, as some have thought, but a man in whom Satan will dwell utterly and bodily--'and a mouth speaking, great things;' for he is 'the man of sin, the son of perdition, who sitteth in the temple of God, making himself as God'" (Op. iv, 511, Col. Agrip. 1616). In his Comment. on Dan. xi, and in his, reply to Algasia's eleventh question, he works out the same view in greater detail, the same line of interpretation continued. Andreas of Caesarea, A.D. 550, explains him to be a king actuated by Satan, who will reunite the old Roman Empire and reign at Jerusalem (In Apoc. c. xiii); Aretas, A.D. 650, as a king of the Romans, who will reign over the Saracens in Bagdad (In Apoc. c. xiii)."

(<http://www.preteristarchive.com/Rome/Monarchs/nero.html>)

- G. **Irenaeus** [A.D. 189]: "[B]y means of the events which shall occur in the time of the Antichrist it is shown that he, being an apostate and a robber, is anxious to be adored as God, and that although a mere slave, he wishes to be proclaimed as king. For he, being endued with all the power of the devil, shall not come as a righteous king nor as a legitimate king in subjection to God, but as an impious, unjust, and lawless one . . . setting aside idols to persuade [men] that he himself is God, raising himself up as the only idol. . . . Moreover [Paul] has also pointed out this which I have shown in many ways: that the temple in Jerusalem was made by the direction of the true God. For the apostle himself, speaking in his own person, distinctly called it the temple of God [2 Thess. 2:4] . . . in which the enemy shall sit, endeavoring to show himself as Christ" (*Against Heresies* 5:25:1-2).
1. "But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months and will sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire" (ibid., 5:30:4). (www.catholic.com/tracts/the-antichrist)
- H. **Tertullian** [A.D. 210]: "[T]he man of sin, the son of perdition, who must first be revealed before the Lord comes, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; and who is to sit in the temple of God and boast himself as being God. . . .

According indeed to our view, he is Antichrist; as it is taught us in both the ancient and the new prophecies, and by the apostle John, who says that ‘already many false prophets have gone out into the world,’ the forerunners of Antichrist, who deny that Christ is come in the flesh, and do not acknowledge Jesus, meaning in God the Creator” (*Against Marcion* 5:16). (*Ibid.*)

Conclusion:

- I. I believe the man of sin came and was revealed in the lifetime of our brethren in Thessalonica and that he will be destroyed with everlasting or eternal destruction when the Lord comes, a coming that has not yet taken place.
 - A. I am not now looking for a man of sin to be revealed before the Lord comes.
- II. The early Christians could know that the Lord’s coming a final time at the end of all time was not going to occur before His coming in judgment upon Jerusalem. (I say this based on the idea that they would have understood the coming(s) of the Lord as most of us do.) The exact time of this latter event was also unknown to them except to know that some signs would be given to indicate that it was about to take place.
- III. If these things have happened, then what do these verses have to do with us?
 - A. From a historical point of view, nothing!
 1. This should not trouble us as most of us believe that Matthew 24:1-34 and most of the book of Revelation were for our 1st century brethren and not for us.
 - a. I do believe that there are great lessons to be learned even though the fulfillment of the prophecies is in our past, even the long ago past.
 - b. The two greatest antagonists of Christianity continue to be false religions and governments.
 - B. We have in the NT, the story of Christians living out their lives in faith in their own particular set of circumstances.
 - C. We have to live our lives in our own time, but do so with the knowledge that the Lord has told us little if anything of what He may be doing in the affairs of men.
 - IV. While I think we can know more about this passage and the man of sin than Vincent thought we could, I like what he said in some closing remarks:
 - A. “About the only valuable thing that can be fairly extracted from the passage is Paul’s firm assurance that God’s hand is ever on the work of evil, and that in whatever form or with whatever power it may reveal itself, it will inevitably be subdued and crushed by the power of Christ.”
 - V. If I had to take a position, I would lean towards the man of sin being a Roman Emperor(s) and if a particular one, that being Nero.
 - A. Augustine of Hippo would not agree:
 1. “Some think that the Apostle Paul...alluded to Nero, whose deeds already seemed to be as the deeds of Antichrist.... But I wonder that men can be so audacious in their conjectures....” (*City of God*, ch. 19, quoted by Dr. Francis Nigel Lee)
 - B. I find myself agreeing with some things that some “full” Preterists have to say about these verses. I think that it is possible to do so without believing that the coming of the Lord in these same verses is referring to the fall of Jerusalem.

1. Again, if we can see that the fulfillment of the falling away and the revealing of the man of sin were imminent but not the coming of the Lord, then I think “Preterist” explanations can be considered feasible.
2. “Whether a single emperor was thought of or the line of emperors, is a more difficult question. The latter hypothesis will best satisfy the conditions of the problem; and we believe that the line of emperors, considered as the embodiment of persecuting power, is the revelation of iniquity hidden under the name of the Man of Sin. With this is connected in the description certain other traits of Roman imperialism—more especially the rage for deification, which, in the person of Caligula, had already given a foretaste of what was to come. It was Nero, then, the first persecutor of the Church—and Vespasian the miracle-worker—and Titus, who introduced his divine-self and his idolatrous insignia into the Holy of Holies, perhaps with a direct anti-Christian intent—and Domitian—and the whole line of human monsters whom the world was worshipping as gods, on which, as a nerve-cord of evil, these hideous ganglia gathered—these and such as these it was that Paul had in mind when he penned this hideous description of the son of perdition, every item of which was fulfilled in the terrible story of the emperors of Rome.” (Warfield)
3. “Roman historian Tacitus (56-117 A.D.) spoke of Nero’s ‘cruel nature’ that ‘put to death so many innocent men.’ Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) described Nero as ‘the destroyer of the human race’ and ‘the poison of the world.’ Roman satirist Juvenal (60-140 A.D.) speaks of ‘Nero’s cruel and bloody tyranny.’ Suetonius (70-160 A.D.), speaks of Nero’s ‘cruelty of disposition’ evidencing itself at an early age. He documents Nero’s evil and states: ‘neither discrimination or moderation [were employed] in putting to death whosoever he pleased on any pretext whatever.’” (www3.telus.net/trbrooks/Nero.htm)
4. “Because of these similarities (between Daniel 7, Revelation 13 and 2 Thess. 2), it seems most logical that Paul is speaking of the same personage as was Daniel and John. In so doing, he was helping prepare them for the coming persecutions that many of them would have to face. I fail to see that advantage to these people for Paul to be speaking of some far removed event. I urge you to study this diligently and reach your conclusions carefully. In so far as it is possible, we need to allow the Bible to help us understand prophecy. We do not need speculation.” (Moyer)

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