

Doctrine of the Man of Sin

Eschatology

1. Since so many believe that 2 Thessalonians 2:3 speaks of a future antichrist it is important to consider this passage. *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”*
2. The next verse offers a specific description of his conduct.
 - *2 Thessalonians 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*
3. During the days of the Reformation, many of the Reformers were convinced the reference was to the papacy in general, and the pope in particular.
4. However, consistency of interpretation determines that someone be found, if possible, who would be able to sit in the temple prior to AD 70 when the temple was destroyed.
5. When Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, the temple was still standing. There is nothing in view here of the temple being a metaphor for the church, nor is anything said about a rebuilt temple.
6. Paul’s man of lawlessness was alive in his day, since the restrainer was alive. We are not told the identity of the man of sin, nor were the Thessalonians, but they did know the identity of the restrainer.
 - *2 Thessalonians 2:6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. In the next verse we read “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”*
7. Paul was not describing a distant antichrist figure; he had someone in mind alive and well on planet earth during the first century. This person was called the “*son of perdition*” just like Judas.
 - *2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*
 - *John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*
8. It is not unreasonable to assume that the person Paul had in mind was a Jew who would occupy the temple during the siege before it was destroyed.

9. There was such a man that came into prominence during the dark days of the civil war that broke out in AD 66. His name was John Levi of Gischala. Josephus records his exploits.
10. Josephus, a Jewish military officer spared by the Romans and enlisted to record the current happenings for the Romans, tells how John Levi of Gischala came upon the scene. He was a selfish, unscrupulous man with persuasive powers who convinced many that he was sent by God to liberate them. He disregarded the laws of God, desecrated the temple, melted down many of the sacred vessels of the temple, plundered the people, and committed all sorts of unscrupulous atrocities described in detail by Josephus. In a passion of tyranny he convinced the Jews that they should go to war against the Romans.

John Levi had over-ridden all restraints except that of the high priest, Ananus. But John enlisted aid from the Idumaeans, who killed 8,500 of the people including the high priests, and Ananus in particular. Josephus recognized the great significance of this, recording, *"I should not mistake if I said that the death of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city, and that from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs"* (Josephus, p. 313).

That which restrained – the Levitical priesthood in general, and the person of Ananus in particular – was taken out of the way, just as Paul had told them. Josephus, an unbelieving Jewish historian, points to this most sinful and lawless character as the one most responsible for inciting the rebellion which ultimately brought the vengeance of God against Israel and their city – the great tribulation.