

## The Man of Lawlessness

### A Preteristic Postmillennial Interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2

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# Introduction

In this paper I will consider one of the very difficult eschatological passages of Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2. This famous eschatological reference contains Paul's reference to the Man of Lawlessness (Nestle's Text), or Man of Sin (Majority Text).

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."<sup>[1]</sup> 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."<sup>[2]</sup>

As with the hotly debated Daniel 9:24-27 passage, so is it here: an exceedingly difficult prophecy becomes a key text for dispensationalism. Note the following comments by dispensational theologians: Constable observes that "this section of verses contain truths found nowhere else in the Bible. It is key to understanding future events and it is central to this epistle." According to Walvoord, the Man of Lawlessness revealed here is "the key to the whole program of the Day of the Lord." Of 2 Thessalonians 2 Chafer notes: "though but one passage is found bearing upon the restraining work of the Holy Spirit, the scope of the issues involved is such as to command the utmost consideration." Ryrie and Feinberg employ 2 Thessalonians 2:4 as one of the few passages used "to clinch the argument" for the rebuilding of the Temple.<sup>[3]</sup>

Because of its enormous difficulties, 2 Thessalonians 2 has generated lively debate in eschatological studies. In the more pessimistic eschatologies of amillennialism, premillennialism and dispensationalism, there is frequent employment of this passage as evidence of worsening world conditions until the final apostasy. When setting forth objections against the optimism of postmillennialism, amillennialist Hoekema makes but a cursory reference to this passage in a mere two sentences, confident that it offers a self-evident refutation of postmillennialism.<sup>[4]</sup> Though a perplexing passage requiring caution, however, I believe there is sufficient data in it at least to remove it as an objection to postmillennialism.

# The Historical Setting

The Thessalonian epistles are among Paul's earliest writings, vying with Galatians (depending on the North/South Galatia debate<sup>[5]</sup>) and James as the earliest written portions of the New Testament. The letters to Thessalonica were written from Corinth around A.D. 52, and within just a few weeks of each other and not long after his visit in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:17).<sup>[6]</sup> According to Acts 17 and 18, Paul left Thessalonica to go to Berea and Athens for brief visits, and then on to Corinth, where he wrote the Thessalonian epistles. The place and circumstances of writing as discovered in Acts are helpful in casting some light on the dark and mysterious passage before us.

During Paul's visit to Thessalonica he preached to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 17:1-3). Though some Jews believed, others were riled to mob action regarding the Christian message (17:4-5). They even dragged "some of the brethren to the rulers of the city" complaining: "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king -- Jesus" (17:6-7). After taking security from Jason and the others, the civil rulers let them go (17:9). This allowed Paul to depart safely to Berea. The Jews were not so easily quieted, however, for "when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds" (17:13). This resulted in the immediate sending away of Paul to Athens (17:14-15).

Paul stayed in Athens only three or four weeks,<sup>[7]</sup> soon travelling to Corinth (Acts 18:1), where he remained for eighteen months (18:11). But again serious Jewish antipathy arises. Interestingly, it was at Corinth where Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, Christians who had been among the Jews banished from Rome by Claudius Caesar (18:2). According to Suetonius: "As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, [Claudius] banished them from Rome."<sup>[8]</sup> This reference to "Chrestus" is undoubtedly a Latin variant for the name "Christ."<sup>[9]</sup>

Upon meeting these saints, who had suffered from Jewish riots against Christians in Rome, Paul set about preaching to the Jews in Corinth as he had at Thessalonica that "Jesus is the Christ" (18:5; cp. 17:3). Again the Jews violently resisted him, organizing resistance<sup>[10]</sup> against him and blaspheming to such an extent that he determined to turn from the Jews to the Gentiles at this point (18:6). Matters were made worse for him by his remarkable success with a certain prominent Jewish leader, Crispus "the ruler of the synagogue" (18:8). Though Paul seldom baptized, he did baptize Crispus (1 Cor. 1:14-16; Acts 18:8). Due to the intensity of the opposition, the Lord provided Paul a special promise of safety for him to remain in Corinth (18:9-11).

All of this explains the strong language against the Jews in the Thessalonian epistles, and helps uncover some of the more subtle concerns therein, as well. In his first letter he wrote: "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to

speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:14-16). He complained of a Satan-inspired thwarting of his ministry, which, according to the context, probably indicates Jewish opposition (1 Thess. 2:18, cp. 15-16[11]). He probably alludes to Jewish opposition in 2 Thessalonians 1:4ff, where he mentions their perseverance and afflictions for their faith (1:4ff; cp. Acts 17:4-6). This also may be motivating his request that the Thessalonians pray for his deliverance from such "unreasonable and wicked men" (3:2; cf. Acts 17:4-6, 13; 18:6; 1 Thess. 2:14-16).

This Jewish context is important for grasping the situation Paul confronts. Furthermore, I will show in the exposition to follow that there are a number of allusions to the Olivet Discourse, which speak of the destruction of the Temple and the judgment of the Jews for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah (cp. Matt. 23:35-24:2; cp. Acts 17:3; 18:5).[12]

## Our Gathering Together

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. (2 Thess. 2:1-2)

Paul's reference "concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him" (2 Thess. 2:1) is the *crux interpretum* of this passage. Paul is here speaking of the A.D. 70 judgment on the Jews -- the very judgment given emphasis in the first portion of the Olivet Discourse, the Book of Revelation, and several other passages of Scripture.

Though he speaks of the Second Advent just a few verses before (1:10), he is not dealing with that issue here. Of course, there are similarities between the Day of the Lord upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the universal Day of the Lord associated with the Second Advent. The one is a temporal betokening of the other, being a distant adumbration of it.[13] Orthodox scholars from each of the millennial schools agree that these two events are brought in close union in the Olivet Discourse. Indeed, His disciples almost certainly confused the two (Matt. 24:3). The two comings are here brought together in 2 Thessalonians, as well.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul even employs a different word for the *coming* of Christ (*elthe*) than he does in 2:1 (*parousia*). There the Second Advent judgment brings "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (1:9); here a temporal "destruction" (2:8). There the Second Advent includes "his mighty angels" (1:7); here the temporal judgment makes no mention of these mighty angels (2:1-12). Thus, the *Second Advent* provides an *eternal resolution* to their suffering; the *A.D. 70 Day of the Lord* affords *temporal resolution* (cp. Rev. 6:10).

Furthermore, the "gathering together to Him" mentioned by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 picks up on the

reference of our Lord in Matthew 24:31. The word translated "gather together" here is *episunagoge*, which is found elsewhere only in Hebrews 10:25, where, significantly, it speaks of a worship assembly. But its cognate verb form is found in Matthew 24:31, where the *gathering* is tied to "this generation" (Matt. 24:34) and signifies the calling out of the elect into the body of Christ with the trumpeting in of the archetypal Great Jubilee (cf. 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:14).<sup>[14]</sup> Here it functions in the same way. With the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Christians would from thenceforth be "gathered together" in a *separate* and *distinct* "assembly" (*episunagoge*; the Church is called a *sunagoge* in James 2:2). After the Temple's destruction, God would no longer tolerate going up to the Temple to worship (it would be impossible!), as Christians frequently did prior to A.D. 70.<sup>[15]</sup>

The Day of Christ/Lord here mentioned is in fulfillment of Joel 2:31-32, which is brought to bear upon Jerusalem in Acts 2:16ff. There Peter identifies tongues as a covenantal sign<sup>[16]</sup> of curse regarding the coming destruction with blood, fire, and smoke, (Acts 2:19-21, 40). This explains why it was at *Jerusalem* (and nowhere else) that Christians sold their property and shared the proceeds (Acts 2:44-45): it was soon to be destroyed (Matt. 24:2-34; Luke 23:28-30).<sup>[17]</sup>

Paul consoles them by denying the false report that "the day of Christ had come" (2 Thess. 2:2). Apparently, the very reason for this epistle so soon after the first one, is that some unscrupulous deceivers forged letters from Paul and falsely claimed charismatic insights relevant to eschatological concerns. In his earlier letter he had to correct their grief over loved ones who had died in the Lord, as if this precluded their sharing in the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-17). Now new eschatological deceptions are troubling the young church (2 Thess. 2:1-3a): Some thought that the Day of the Lord had come<sup>[18]</sup> and, consequently, quit working (2 Thess. 3:6-12). Due to the catastrophic upheaval associated with the looming divine judgment upon Israel, Paul suggests to the Corinthians that they forgo marriage for awhile (1 Cor. 7:26-29). But here the Thessalonians were being tempted to stop all necessary labor, thinking the time had come.

The word "trouble" (Gk: *throeo*; 2:2) is in the present infinitive form, which signifies a continued state of agitation. It is the same word used elsewhere only in the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:7; Matt. 24:6). There it is even found in the same sort of theological context: one warning of *deception* and *trouble* regarding the *coming* of the Day of Christ. "Take heed that no one *deceives* you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be *troubled*; for such things must happen, but *the end is not yet*" (Mark 13:5-7).

## The Man of Lawlessness

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. (2 Thess. 2:3-7)

Paul is quite concerned about the deception being promoted: "Let no one deceive you by any means" (v. 3a). He uses the strengthened form for deception (*exapatase*) with a double negative prohibition. To avoid the deception and to clarify the true beginning of the Day of the Lord upon Jerusalem, Paul informs them that "that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). Before they could say the Day of the Lord "is come," then, there must first (see: RSV) be the falling away and the revelation of the man of lawlessness, who is also called "the son of perdition." These do not have to occur in the chronological order presented, as even dispensationalists admit.<sup>[19]</sup> Verse nine is clearly out of order and should occur in the midst of verse eight, if strict chronology were important.

## The Falling Away

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.<sup>[20]</sup> 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."<sup>[21]</sup> Or does the *apostasia* refer to a political rebellion of some sort?

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.

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 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.<sup>[22]</sup>

# Identifying the Man of Lawlessness

The Man of Lawlessness is Nero Caesar, who also is the Beast of Revelation, as a number of Church Fathers believed.<sup>[23]</sup> The difficulty of this passage lies in the fact that Paul "describes the Man of Sin with a certain reserve" (Origen, *Celsus* 6:45) for fear of incurring "the charge of calumny for having spoken evil of the Roman emperor" (Augustine, *City of God* 20:19). Thus, Paul becomes very obscure, apparently hiding his prophecy regarding the coming evil of and judgment on the Roman emperor. Josephus did the same when speaking about Daniel's fourth kingdom, which applied to Rome (Josephus, *Ant.* 10:10:4). Paul and his associates had already suffered at the hands of the Thessalonian Jews for "acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king -- Jesus" (Acts 17:7). Wisdom demanded discretion in his reference to imperial authority; his recent (1 Thess. 2:17) personal ministry among them allowed it: they were to "remember" that while with them he "told [them] these things" (2:5). His personal instruction would allow them to know much more than we can from his discrete allusions in his letters.

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."<sup>[24]</sup> 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 Romanians 13 in A.D. 57-59 -- even during the early reign of Nero, the famous *Quinquennium Neronis*.<sup>[25]</sup>

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."<sup>[26]</sup> 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.

Even early in Nero's reign, his evil was hidden from the public eye by careful tutors -- until he broke free of their influence and was publicly "revealed" for what he was. Roman historians write of Nero: "Although at first his acts of wantonness, lust, extravagance, avarice and cruelty were gradual and secret. . . yet even then their nature was such that no one doubted that they were defects of his character and not due to his time of life" (Suetonius, *Nero* 26). "Gradually Nero's vices gained the upper hand: he no longer tried to laugh them off, or hide, or deny them, but openly broke into more serious crime" (*Nero* 27, cp. 6). "After this, no considerations of selection or moderation restrained Nero from murdering anyone he please, on whatever pretext" (*Nero* 37). "Other murders were meant to follow. But the emperor's tutors, Sextus Afranius Burrus and Lucius Annaeus Seneca, prevented them.... They collaborated in controlling the emperor's perilous adolescence; their policy was to direct his deviations from virtue into licensed channels of indulgence" (Tacitus, *Annals* 13).

## The Mystery of Lawlessness

Remarkably the Jews were kept so in check by imperial law that they did not kill James the Just in Jerusalem, until about A.D. 62, after the death of the Roman procurator Festus and before the arrival of Albinus (Josephus, *Ant.* 20:9:1). With these events the "mystery of lawlessness" was being uncovered as the "revelation of the Man of Lawlessness" (the transformation of the Roman imperial line into a persecuting power in the person of Nero) was occurring.

The evil "mystery of lawlessness" was "already working," though restrained in Claudius' day (2 Thess. 2:7). This is perhaps a reference to the evil conniving and plotting of Nero's mother, Agrippina, who may have poisoned Claudius so that Nero could ascend to the purple (Tacitus, *Annals* 12:62ff; Suetonius, *Claudius* 44). This is another indication for the preterist approach. The true nature of lawlessness was already at work in the imperial cultus and its rage for worship, though it had not yet jealously broken out upon the Christian community. In addition, the cunning machinations to secure imperial authority for Nero were afoot.

## Showing That He is God

The Roman emperor, according to Paul, "exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped" (2 Thess. 2:4a). A warning of the evil potential of emperor worship was publicly exhibited just a few years before, when the emperor Caligula (Gaius) attempted to put his image in the Temple in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Ant.* 18:8:2-3).

The phrase "so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" is interesting. When *hoste* ("so that") is followed by an infinitive (*kathisai*, "to sit"), it indicates a *purpose* intended, not necessarily a *purpose accomplished*.<sup>[27]</sup> It was Caligula's *intention* to sit in "the temple of God" in Jerusalem; it was the emperor's desire to "show himself that he is God." In fact Philo tells us that "so great was the caprice of Caius [Caligula] in his conduct toward all, and especially toward the nation of the Jews. The latter he so bitterly hated that he appropriated to himself their places of worship in the other cities, and beginning with Alexandria he filled them with images and statues of himself."<sup>[28]</sup>

This was for all intents and purposes accomplished by future emperor Titus, who concluded the devastation of Jerusalem set in motion by Nero. Titus actually invaded the Temple in A.D. 70: "And now the Romans . . . brought their ensigns<sup>[29]</sup> to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy" (Josephus, *Wars* 6:6:1). By September, A.D. 70, the very Temple of which Paul spoke in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 was forever gone. This fact also supports the preterist understanding of the passage.<sup>[30]</sup> In fact, it parallels Matthew 24:15 and functions as Paul's abomination of desolation, which was to occur in "this generation" (Matt. 24:34).

Not only so but in Nero the imperial line eventually openly "opposed" (2 Thess. 2:4) Christ by persecuting His followers. Nero even began the persecution of Christians when he presented himself in a chariot as the sun god Apollo, while burning Christians for illumination for his self-glorifying party.[\[31\]](#)

## The Lord Will Consume

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. (2 Thess. 2:8-9)[\[32\]](#)

As just indicated, the lawless one was eventually openly revealed. The mystery form of his character gave way to a revelation of his lawlessness in Nero's wicked acts. This occurred after the restrainer [Claudius, who maintained *religio licita*] was "taken out of the way," allowing Nero the public stage upon which he could act out his horrendous lawlessness.

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.[\[33\]](#) The strong preteristic indications in the passage heretofore, however, demand a different understanding of the destructive coming of Christ here mentioned. As already shown in the discussion of verse 1, Matthew 24:30 is most relevant here: "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." And that verse is specifically applied to the first century (Matt. 24:34), as is Revelation 1:7[\[34\]](#) (cp. Rev. 1:1, 3); Matthew 26:63-65; and Mark 9:1. Christ comes in judgment upon Jerusalem in the events of A.D. 67-70.

In that judgment-coming against Jerusalem there is also judgment for the Man of Lawlessness, Nero. There is hope and comfort in the promised relief from the opposition of the Jews and Nero (2 Thess. 2:15-17). Not only was Jerusalem destroyed within twenty years, but Nero himself died a violent death in the midst of the Jewish War (June 8, A.D. 68). His death, then, would occur in the Day of the Lord in conjunction with the judgment-coming of Christ. He will be destroyed by the breath of Christ, much like Assyria was destroyed with the coming and breath of the LORD in the Old Testament (Isa. 30:27-31) and like Israel was crushed by Babylon (Mic. 1:3-5). In fact, by God's providence Nero's death stopped the Jewish War briefly so that Christians trapped in Jerusalem could escape (cp. 1 Thess. 1:10).[\[35\]](#) The Man of Lawlessness/Beast, Nero Caesar, dies in the Day of the Lord with the Great Harlot, Jerusalem (Rev. 19:17-21; cf. Rev. 22:6, 10, 12).

# Conclusion

The Man of Lawlessness passage is to be preteristically understood for several reasons:

- (1) Obvious parallels with Matthew 24 and Revelation 13 tie it into their era of accomplishment: the late A.D. 60s up to A.D. 70 (Matt. 24:34; Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10).
- (2) The reference to the Temple as still standing (2:4).
- (3) The present restraining of the Man of Lawlessness (2:6).
- (4) The knowledge of the Thessalonians regarding the restrainer (2:6).
- (5) The contemporary operation of the Man of Lawlessness in mystery form during Paul's day (2:7).
- (6) The overall relevant correspondence of the features with the contemporary situation in which the Thessalonians found themselves.

The fulfillment of this dreadful prophecy of Scripture does not haunt our future. Its accomplishment lies in our distant past. It was a relevant warning of events looming in the first century.



The Man of Lawlessness

A Preteristic, Postmillennial interpretation

of 2 Thessalonians 2

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Paul's reference to "the Man of Lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2 is one of the more difficult New Testament prophecies. It is also one of the several prominent passages that are thought to demand a pessimistic assessment of the progress of history. The Man of Lawlessness is one of the evil eschatological characters who appears in much prophetic literature. He is often used as a rebuttal to the positive postmillennial expectation for our future.

But who is this Man of Lawlessness?

What did Paul intend to teach his readers about him?

What are the clues provided by Paul to help us locate this evil personage in history?

In this exegetical study, Gentry provides evidence that the Man of Lawlessness was alive in the day when Paul originally penned the prophecy. In fact, this partially explains the obscurity of the passage to us who are living 1900 years later. This evil character had a real and dreaded influence in the first century. And there is ample evidence to this fact, despite the relative obscurity of the passage as a whole.

Come, let us reason together!

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[1]Augustine is cited in Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament*, 4 vols., (Chicago: Moody, rep. 1958 [n.d.]), 2:82. Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rep. 1946 [1887]), 4:67. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* 4:51. Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians (NICNT)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 213. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1969), 309.

[2]E. Schuyler English, *Rethinking the Rapture* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1954), 72.

[3]Thomas L. Constable, "2 Thessalonians," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1983), 717. John F. Walvoord, *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1990), 493. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7 vols., (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1948), 6:85. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1953), 151. See also: Charles Lee Feinberg in Feinberg, ed., *Prophecy and the Seventies* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 181.

[4]Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 178.

[5]Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (3rd ed.: Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 457-465.

[6]William Hendriksen, *I and II Thessalonians (NTC)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955), 15. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 566-567, 579. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 53.

[7]F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts (NICNT)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rep. 1980 [n.d.]), 364.

[8]Suetonius, *Claudius* 25:4. Cp. Dio Cassius, *History* 60:6; Orosius, *History*, 7:6:15ff.

[9]Michael Grant, ed., Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves (London: Penguin, 1979), 202. Bruce, *New Testament History*, 297-299.

[10]The Greek term *antitassomenon* ("opposed") in Acts 18:8 is a military term and indicates organized resistance.

[11]Cf. Matt. 12:43-45; John 8:44; Rev. 2:9; 3:9. In 2 Corinthians Paul mentions Satanic blinding to the gospel (4:4) in the context of making reference to the veil blinding the Jews regarding the New Covenant (3:15; cp. Heb. 8:8-13). He then discusses his own grievous persecution (4:7-18). See my *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 13.

[12]Page attempts to draw the parallel with Revelation 20, comparing the restraint and deception of Satan and the flaming coming of Christ with the deception, restraint, and coming here. Sydney H. T. Page, "Revelation 20 and Pauline Eschatology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23:1 (March, 1980) 31-44.

[13]There are various Days of the Lord in Scripture. For example, upon Babylon (Isa. 13:9, cp. v.1) and Egypt (Jer. 46:10, cp. vv. 2, 11-14; Eze. 30:36).

[14]See: J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 144-150. David Chilton, *The Great Tribulation* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), 25-28.

[15]Acts 1:4; 1:8; 18:21; 20:16; 24:11. Even in this early post-commission Christianity, believers continued to gravitate toward the Jews: engaging in Jewish worship observances (Acts 2:1ff.; 21:26; 24:11), focusing on and radiating their ministry from Jerusalem (Acts 2-5), frequenting the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1ff.; 4:1; 5:21ff.; 21:26; 26:21) and attending the synagogues (13:5, 14; 14:1; 15:21; 17:1ff.; 18:4, 7, 19, 26; 19:8; 22:19; 24:12; 26:11).

[16]For a study of the contra-Jewish function of tongues, which are so detailed in 1 Corinthians, see: Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Crucial Issues Regarding Tongues* (Mauldin, S.C.: GoodBirth, 1982).

[17]David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1981), 168-170.

[18]Greek: enesteken. A. M. G. Stephenson, "On the meaning of *enesteken he hemera tou kuriou* in 2 Thessalonians 2:2", *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geshichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 102 (1968) 442-451. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (4th ed.: Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), 266. See: Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 215. Note the agreement among the following translations: NASB, NKJV, NEB, TEV, Moffatt's New Translation, Weymouth, Williams, Beck.

[19]Constable, "2 Thessalonians," 718. Non-dispensationalist Marshall comments: "The argument is difficult to follow, partly because of the way in which Paul tackles the theme in a non-chronological manner." I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians (NBC)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 185

[20]For political *apostasia* see the Septuagint at Ezra 4:12, 15, 19; Neh. 2:19; 6:6. For religious *apostasia* see the Septuagint at Josh. 22:22; 2 Chr. 29:19; and 33:19, and in the New Testament Acts 21:21.

[21]Hendriksen, *I and II Thessalonians (NTC)*, 170. Constable, "2 Thessalonians," 718.

[22]See my *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 293-298. Cf. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Prophecies of St. Paul" in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. by Samuel G. Craig, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 473-475.

[23]E.g., Augustine, *City of God* 20:19; Chrysostom cited in Alford, *Greek Testament*, 2:80. If we are correct in equating him with the Beast, we could add: Victorinus, *Apocalypse* 17:16; Lactantius, *On the Death of the Persecutors* 2; Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History* 2:28, 29. See my *The Beast of Revelation* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

[24]The view that the Roman government was the restrainer is called by Schaff "the patristic interpretation." Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (3rd ed: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 1:377n. It was held by Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 24 and *Apology* 32; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:25-26; Augustine, *City of God* 20:19; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7:15.

[25]Trajan, *Epistle* 5; cp. Suetonius, *Nero* 19. See: B. W. Henderson, *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero* (London: Methuen, 1903), ch. 3.

[26]Bruce, *New Testament History*, 310.

[27]As in Luke 4:29, where the Jews led Jesus to a hill "so as to cast him down" (*hoste katakretnisai auton*). Ernst Best, *Commentary on First and Second Thessalonians* (London: Black, 1977), 286-290. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan,

1955), 214.

[28]Philo, *Legatio ad Caium* 43, as cited by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:6:2.

[29]The Roman standards were "sacred emblems" (Josephus, Wars 3:6:2). "The camp religion of the Romans is all through a worship of the standards, a setting the standards above all gods" (Apology 16).

[30]W. G. Khmmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. by Howard Clark Kee (17th ed.: Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 267. The dispensationalist idea of a rebuilt Temple here has to be read eisegetically into the text, for the reference to the Temple in 2 Thess. 2:4: (1) was written while the Jewish Temple was still standing as the obvious referent, (2) lacks any allusion to a rebuilding of the Temple, and (3) if speaking of a rebuilt Temple, is contrary to the clear, divinely ordained disestablishment of the Temple (e.g., John 4:24; Matt. 24; Hebrews).

[31]Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 279-284. Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44.

[32]Such imperial arrogance would produce alleged miracles as confirmation. Vespasian is called "the miracle worker, because by him "many miracles occurred." Tacitus, *Histories* 4:81; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 7. Notice that Paul speaks of these as "lying wonders."

[33]Hendriksen, *I and II Thessalonians*, 173.

[34]See my *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 8.

[35]See: Josephus, Wars 4:11:5. Cp. Luke 21:18, 20-24, 27-28; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:5:3; Epiphanius, *Heresies* 29:7. See also: Rev. 7:1-17 in Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 243-244.