

The Man of Lawlessness (2 Thess. 1-17)

Gregg Strawbridge, Ph.D.

Oct. 30, 2016

2 Thessalonians 2:1–17 - Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 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. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth....

The date and setting of 2 Thess. seems to be while Paul in Corinth (Acts 18) since only there were Silas and Timothy and Paul were together around 52 AD. This is an extremely difficult passage:

- Augustine: "I confess that I am entirely ignorant of what he means to say."
- Marvin Vincent: "I attempt no interpretation of this passage as a whole, which I do not understand."
- AT Robertson: "in such vague form that we can hardly clear it up."
- Leon Morris: "notoriously difficult passage."
- FF Bruce: "there are few New Testament passages which can boast such a variety of interpretations as this."
- Gary Demarest: "undoubtedly one of the most difficult in all of Paul's writings."
- The interpretations of this passage are more diverse than those of most passages in the New Testament. Even the translation is not certain (is the restrainer "taken out of

the way” or does the lawless one “come forth from the midst” at the end of v. 7?).
 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 601.

CHART OF THE DIVERSITY OF VIEWS

Interpreter	Eschatological View	Temple?	Apostasy?	Restrainer?	Man of Lawlessness?
400 Chrysostom	Amillennial	Church	from the Church	Roman Empire	Antichrist
2006 Kim Riddlebarger	Amillennial	Church	from the Church	Angel, Providence, Gospel	Antichrist Spirit
1980 EBC: Thomas	Futurist-Dispensational	Future Temple	from the Church	Holy Spirit	Future Antichrist/"Prince" of Dan. 9
1970 Charles Ryrie	Futurist-Dispensational	Future Temple	from the Church	Holy Spirit	Future Antichrist/"Prince" of Dan. 9
2000 NBC: DA Carson ed	Historic-Premillennial	Church		Angel/Michael	an antichrist
1980 WBC: F.F. Bruce	Historic-Premillennial	Metaphor of Herods' Temple	from Law/Order	Roman Government	Roman Emperor
1740 John Wesley	Historicist	Church		Lesser Magistrates	Pope/Papacy
1700 Matthew Henry	Historicist	Church		Roman Empire	Pope/Papacy
1545 John Calvin	Historicist	Church	from the Church	Gospel Advance	Pope/Papacy
2016 Ed Stevens	Preterist (unorthodox)	Herod's Temple	Jewish rebellion	Ananias High Priest	Eleazar b. Ananias (zealot)
2000 John Noe	Preterist (unorthodox)	Herod's Temple	Jewish rebellion	High Priest/Ananus	John of Gischala (zealot)
1878 J. Stuart Russell	Preterist (unorthodox)	Herod's Temple	Jewish rebellion	Claudius (?)	Nero
2000 Ken Gentry	Preterist-Postmill	Herod's Temple	Jewish rebellion	Imperial Law/Claudius	Nero
1999 Gary Demar	Preterist-Postmill	Church	Jewish rebellion	Agrippa II/Roman Government	A Jewish High Priest
1990 Greg Bahnsen	Preterist-Postmill	Herod's Temple	from the Church	Jews	Rome/Nero
2000 UBC: David Williams		Figurative		Law and order	Future Antichrist
2000 NIB: Smith		Herod's Temple		magistrate, governor, or emperor	Satanic Forces
1990 Tyndale: Leon Morris		Herod's Temple ("something like")		I know not what	Antichrist
1871 Jameson F Brown		Church	Romanism		Pope/Papacy