

## Paul's "Man of Sin"

1. Introduction, mention tonight's sermon
2. Text – **2 Thes. 2:1-4**
3. When one negatively speaks of other groups who state that they are of God, you are often faced with the possibility of, regardless what you say, hurting or offending someone because of family or friends in said religious group.
  - 3.1. We denounce roles and manmade positions of authority, not the person themselves
  - 3.2. We denounce denominations, but not the people themselves
  - 3.3. Hate the sin, not the sinner
    - 3.3.1. **1 Timothy 2:3-6 - For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**
  - 3.4. But there are times we must speak loudly, boldly, even with a tinge of anger because souls are at stake.
  - 3.5. Satan is working through men to promote his bogus and damnable doctrine.
4. Many people buy into the concept that all good people will go to heaven, regardless of what church they are a member of.
  - 4.1. **Matthew 7:21 - Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.**
  - 4.2. Question must be asked, how did we get so many churches teaching so many different things?
  - 4.3. Who is right and who is wrong?
5. When determining which religious group is correct in their line of thinking or practice, there must always be a line of authority established. Who is in charge of the religious matters?
  - 5.1. **John 7:16-18 - Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.**
  - 5.2. Father's will was to purchase his church with the blood of Christ
    - 1.1. Christ is the head over the church, also called the body.
      - 1.1.1. **Matthew 28:18 - All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.**
    - 1.2. The Lord adds to the church (the body), the number who are saved.
    - 1.3. This was done by way of the cross, his death.
      - 1.3.1. **Ephesians 2:16 - and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross...**
    - 5.2.1. **Romans 6:3-4 - do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**
  - 5.3. Christ fulfilled this mission
  - 5.4. The Holy Spirit then fulfilled his mission
    - 5.4.1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17 - Every scripture inspired of God [is] also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.**
  - 5.5. But there are those who would seek to defame and degrade God and Christ
6. John speaks of the those who would set to themselves in opposition to Christ
  - 6.1. **1 John 2:18-19 - 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. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but [they went out], that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us.**
    - 6.1.1. This last hour is simply the Christian age, as arranged by the father, which began on Pentecost.
  - 6.2. **1 John 2:22-23 - Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, [even] he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.**
7. The anti-Christ, the "little horn" of Daniel 7, and "the beast" of Revelation all represent the same falling away. Paul's man of sin gives us the most description in discussing his man of sin.

### Sermon – 2 Thes.2:1-12 - Read

1. In his first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul spoke of the return of Christ and the glories associated with that event.
  - 1.1. There were certain heretics in the vicinity of Thessalonica who were advocating the bizarre notion that the Lord had already returned. Here is how Paul describes that situation.
  - 1.2. Paul argued that the Lord could not yet have come, because "the falling away" must develop before the Second Coming transpires. Incidentally, no great apostate movement evolved between the time this letter was written (c. A.D. 51), and A.D. 70.
  - 1.3. After laying this foundation, Paul continued his letter by describing the traits that would characterize the movement he subsequently calls "the man of sin."

## 2. Traits of the Man of Sin

2.3. The Man of Sin is the ultimate result of "the falling away" from the faith (v. 3).

2.3.1. Our English word "apostasy" is an anglicized form of this original term. In the Bible, the word is used of a defection from the religion ordained by God. As a noun, it is employed of departure from Christianity.

2.4. This sinister force, from a first-century vantage point, was yet to be "revealed" (v. 3). This appears to suggest that the movement had not evolved to the point where it could be identified definitely by the primitive saints.

2.5. This persecuting power was designated as "the man of sin" (v. 3), because sin was its "predominating quality". It/he (vv. 6-7) is the "son of perdition" (v. 3), because its end is to be perdition, i.e., destruction, by the Lord himself (v. 8).

2.6. Finally, this opponent of God is called "the lawless one" (v. 8). This power has no regard for the law of God. One cannot but be reminded of that infamous "little horn" in Daniel's vision. "[H]e shall think to change the times and the law ..." (7:25).

2.7. The Man of Sin opposes God and exalts himself against all that is genuinely sacred (v. 4). He feigns religiousness, but his true character reveals that he is diabolic. His activity actually is "according to the working of Satan" (v. 9).

2.8. In some sense, the Man of Sin will "sit in the temple of God" (v. 4). The "temple" is not a reference to the Jewish house of worship. In fact, after the death of Christ, the Jewish temple is never again called the temple of God. Rather it is used of the Christian's body (1 Cor. 6:19), or of the church as God's spiritual house (1 Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21). The suggestion is this: this unholy being is viewed as a "church" character.

2.8.1. This person represents himself as God, either: (a) by making claims that belong only to deity; (b) by receiving adoration reserved exclusively for God; or, (c) by usurping prerogatives which only God can accomplish. Clearly, the Man of Sin is an ecclesiastical character. Recall the description of John's lamb-like beast in Revelation 13:11ff.

2.9. He deceives those who love not the truth; by virtue of the "lying wonders" he effects (v. 9-10). In identifying the Man of Sin, one must thus look for a post-apostolic movement that claims to prove its authenticity by miracles.

2.10. The early stages of this ecclesiastical apostasy were "already at work" in the early church (v. 7). The passage suggests that this movement currently was working itself towards a greater goal. The child, later to become a Man, was growing in Paul's day. The error was "already operative", but not yet "revealed" (v. 6). **This is a crucial point.**

2.11. In Paul's day there was some influence that "restrained" the budding Man of Sin. This was some sort of abstract force, "the restraining thing" (v. 6). And yet, this force was strongly associated with a person/persons "he who restrains" (v. 7).

2.12. The restraining force eventually would "be taken out of the way," or, more correctly, "be gone." And so, the Man of Sin, in "his own season," would be revealed openly (vv. 6, 7).

2.13. The Man of Sin, though having roots in the world of ancient Christianity (v. 6), would nevertheless endure, in some form or another, until the end of time, i.e., until the Second Coming of Christ. At that time, he will be destroyed by the Lord's word of Judgment (v. 8; cf. Rev. 19:15). In view of this, the Man of Sin cannot be some persecuting enemy that faded into oblivion centuries ago.

## 3. Theories Regarding the Man of Sin

3.13. Having surveyed the major elements set forth in the text that were to characterize the Man of Sin, we are now prepared to look at some of the current theories advanced in an effort to identify this sinister being.

### 3.14. Pagan Mythology

3.14.1. Liberal theologians contend that Paul's concept of the Man of Sin reflects a belief in ancient, pagan mythology – an idea that had been absorbed by the early Christians. This view *rejects* the proposition that the Scriptures are inspired of God.

### 3.15. Satan Himself

3.15.1. Some have argued that the Man of Sin is Satan himself. This view cannot be correct. Satan was not a part of "the falling away" (v. 3), and this "lawless one" is said to come "according to the working of Satan" (v. 9), which obviously distinguishes him from Satan personally.

### 3.16. Principle of Evil

3.16.1. Some allege that no specific power or person(s) are in view. Rather, the apostle merely has personified a principle or idea of evil, which may appear in various forms in different historical periods as an opponent of truth. The text tells of a particular movement, "the falling away" (v. 3).

### 3.17. Judaism

3.17.1. This theory would thus see the Man of Sin (Judaism) destroyed by the Coming of the Lord in the destruction of Jerusalem via the Romans in A.D. 70.

3.17.2. The concept is totally false. Judaism was not a part of "the falling away" (v. 3). Moreover, Paul's prophecy of the Second Coming (the *parousia* – v. 8) was not fulfilled in A.D. 70, as evidenced by the fact that Christians were not "gathered together" unto the Lord in connection with Jerusalem's fall (cf. 1 Thes. 4:14ff).

### 3.18. A Roman Ruler

3.18.1. A popular idea contends that the Man of Sin is a Roman ruler – perhaps Nero Caesar. Again, though, this concept does not fit the facts. No Caesar "fell away" from the faith (v. 3).

### 3.19. The Future Anti-Christ

3.19.1. Millennialists (and some others) contend that the Man of Sin "is an individual embodying anti-God power who is still to arise before the future day of the Lord". But Paul stated that the "mystery of iniquity," characteristic of the Man of Sin, was "already at work" (7) in the first century. This clearly eliminates any person of the modern era.

#### 4. Identifying the Man of Sin

4.13. The best evidence indicates that the Man of Sin represents the **papal dynasty of the apostate church of Rome.**

##### 4.14. **The Apostasy**

4.14.1. The Roman Catholic system, with its autocratic papal dynasty, did not suddenly appear in a given year of history. Rather, it was a result of a gradual apostasy from the primitive faith. Paul declared: "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith ..." (1 Tim. 4:1). He details some of the traits of this movement, e.g., forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats, etc. (1-4).

4.14.2. The many corruptions of the divine economy – changes in the plan of redemption (e.g., sprinkling, infant baptism, etc.), alteration of worship (e.g., the mass, the veneration of Mary, etc.) – were progressively implemented. Catholicism evolved as a defection from the original faith.

##### 4.15. **Not Revealed in the First Century**

4.15.1. The apostasy was just a budding phenomenon in the apostolic age. Consequently it was not fully "revealed" until centuries later.

##### 4.16. **Lawless**

4.16.1. Could any citation more clearly illustrate the spirit of lawlessness than this declaration regarding the papacy? **"The pope doeth whatsoever he listeth [wills], even things unlawful, and is more than God".** That is the very essence of lawlessness.

##### 4.17. **God-Opposing**

4.17.1. The papacy opposes God. Surely anyone who claims to be "more than God" cannot be described otherwise than as an enemy of the Almighty.

##### 4.18. **Ecclesiastical Usurper of Divine Status**

4.18.1. The papal rulers, as it were, "sit in the temple of God," i.e., the church; it is an ecclesiastical force. The pope claims that whereas Christ is the head of the church in heaven, the papacy is the head of the church on earth. Yet Jesus affirmed that he possessed "all authority ... in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18). Jesus does not share "headship" with the pope.

4.18.2. The papacy usurps the place of God by:

4.18.2.3. Making claims that belong only to deity – "Our Lord God the pope; another God upon the earth, king of kings, and lord of lords" (Newton, p. 456).

4.18.2.4. Accepting adoration not proper for a man. Men bow before the papal dignitary, kiss his feet, ring, etc. Contrast the disposition of Peter when Cornelius bowed before him (Acts 10:25, 26).

4.18.2.5. Presuming to act for God in matters pertaining exclusively to deity, e.g., offering forgiveness of sins. For example, in Catholic doctrine, Absolution is a "judicial act whereby a priest remits the sins of a penitent who has contrition, has made confession and promises satisfaction" (Attwater, p. 3).

##### 4.19. **Claim of Miracles**

4.19.1. The whole history of Catholicism is checkered with the claims of "miracles." The Church always requires four, or in some instances six, miracles before she proceeds to beatify or canonize a saint".

##### 4.20. **Early Stages at Work in Paul's Day**

4.20.1. The beginnings of the papacy were sown in the apostle's time. Idolatry had invaded the church (1 Cor. 10:14), even in the worship of angels (Col. 2:18). Handling the word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2) had begun; strife and division were affecting the church (1 Cor. 3:3). Gospel truth was sacrificed for the sake of money (cf. 1 Tim. 6:5; Tit. 1:11) – compare the practice of "simony" in Catholicism, i.e., the purchase of church offices. Distinctions were made regarding meats (1 Cor. 8:8), and human traditions were creeping into the church (Col. 2:23). Certain men were beginning to exert superiority and to flex their religious muscles (3 Jn. 9,10). Out of these attitudes and actions, the papacy finally was born.

##### 4.21. **Initially Restrained by Pagan Rome**

4.21.1. It is a matter of history that when imperial Rome fell in A.D. 476, great power was shifted into the hands of church clerics. If the restraining force was the Roman empire, and that force was removed in the 5th century A.D., does it not seem strange that the Man of Sin [Lindsey's "Fuehrer"] has not yet been made manifest – if the dispensational scheme of things were true?

##### 4.22. **Flourished After Fall of Rome**

4.22.1. After imperial Rome fell, the apostate church of that day accelerated in its power. As mentioned earlier, great political authority was gained. Crowns were removed and bestowed at the behest of papal rulers. For example, in the 11th century of the Christian era, Emperor Henry IV sought to depose Pope Gregory VII (known as Hildebrand). In retaliation, Gregory excommunicated the emperor, and absolved all subjects from allegiance to him. Henry was powerless under the papal ban. In January, 1077, the emperor went to Canossa in northern Italy to beg the pope's forgiveness. He was forced to stand barefoot in the snow for three days, awaiting an audience with the pontiff (Hurlbut, p. 111).

##### 4.23. **To Continue Till Return of Christ**

4.23.1. The apostate church, an evolution from truth to error, clearly had its genesis in the first century; and yet, this movement continues to this day, and, according to Paul's prophecy, will abide, in one form or another, until the

Coming of Christ. "The apostasy" is the only system which fits the demands of this passage. It is both ancient and modern, something that cannot be said of a Caesar, the Jewish Zealots, a modern Anti-Christ, etc.

- 4.24. Coffman Commentary: "[T]he identification of the papacy and its religious apparatus with Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 was the prevailing view for more than a thousand years, a view supported by the writings and interpretations of many of the most brilliant men who ever lived on earth; and, on that account, there is no way for this writer to accept the sneers and snickers with which this interpretation is greeted by many modern commentators, as being an effective refutation of the arguments upholding it".

Conclusion:

1. The battle is for souls.
2. The battle is for truth.
3. The battle is for salvation.
4. Christ rules as the head of the church, both on earth and in heaven.
5. Anyone who sets themselves in opposition to him is a "man of sin."
6. What does God's truth tell us today?