



## Man of Lawlessness

There is much confusion about the “man of lawlessness” referred to by the apostle Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonian brethren. This expression comes out of Paul’s comments about a future (from his time perspective) massive falling away from the original faith prior to Jesus’ second coming. “Let no one in any way deceive you,” he asseverates, “for [the second coming] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction ...” To many of modern times, confused about “the rapture,” a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and Jesus’ coming down to reign on earth for a thousand years, this “man of lawlessness” is the *Antichrist*, an evil Hitler-type of madman who will execute a severe reign of terror lasting seven years over the earth from this temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. (This also corresponds to the second beast of Revelation 13:11-18 whose number is the dreaded 666!) To anyone who has a modicum of understanding about the kingdom of Christ — knowing that it is a reference to the church — and knowing that Jesus is reigning now, this whole premillennial perspective on the “man of lawlessness” is nonsense.

- ◆ **More on the apostasy** — Paul speaks to Timothy concerning the fact that many would “fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods” (1 Timothy 4:1-3). While there are a number of religious bodies (such as a number of those grouped in the modern New Age movement) which advocate celibacy and avoiding of meats, the only one which fits the category of apostasizing from the original faith is Catholicism (in the west, Roman Catholic; in the east, Greek Catholic or Orthodox). Hence, when the apostle speaks of the fact that the second coming of Christ cannot occur until “the apostasy” happens, he is speaking of the development of Catholicism in a massive way, and its overshadowing of the real church of Jesus Christ.

*They were  
claiming  
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- ◆ **The man of lawlessness** — The man of lawlessness, termed also “the son of destruction,” is further described as the one “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 God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The temple of God, from a new covenant perspective, is the church of the Lord. The one who would take the place of God as the head of the church would be the developing papacy. Certainly the “Pope” [the Big Papa] claims to be head of the church. He is addressed as “his holiness,” and he receives the worship of men, sticking out his ring to be kissed. “The man of lawlessness” is a personification of the concept of the papacy, which developed as an outgrowth of the apostasy called Catholicism.

Catholicism and the Papacy developed as a result of the work of demonic influences on men with lying tongues. These forces of deception created the confusion about Jesus’ return in the first place, and twisted the early apostolic beliefs into the modern tortured versions of Catholicism. Even then, Paul had to warn about “a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us.” They were claiming apostolic authority, much as the false prophets of the Old Testament claimed to speak as from God. “Test the spirits,” the apostle John said to those first century brethren, “to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). For us of the modern time, we know that no one can receive a revelation from God. So anyone claiming to bring doctrines by revelation is clearly false. But everything else must be carefully compared to the scriptures, to see if it lines up squarely with God’s holy word. If it does, then it is true. If it does not, it is false, and it must be exposed as such. Even Catholicism!