

20 MAN OF SIN (THEORY) 2 THESS. 2: 1-11. (YLT used throughout.)

INTRODUCTION: According to the present theory, the powerful Governor of the Jerusalem Temple, was revealed in the role of the “man of sin” in AD 66. While the lawless zealot movement was, generically speaking, the “man of sin” of which Paul spoke, the “son of destruction” who would emerge as the leader of the rebellion, was Eleazar, son of Ananias. Interestingly, Eleazar was the son of the High Priest who ordered Paul to be struck. (Acts 23:2)

1. “And we ask you, brethren, in regard to the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our gathering together unto him, that ye be not quickly shaken in mind, nor be troubled, neither through spirit, neither through word, neither through letters as through us, as that the day of Christ hath arrived;” 2:1-2

First century Thessalonian Christians were upset and confused by false teachers who told them the day of the Lord had occurred. They knew the parousia to be an unseen spiritual transformation, but Paul had to assure them that the day of Christ had not yet arrived. These deceivers may have wanted the Thessalonians to believe that Christian belief was an “add on” to Judaism and that Christians had to keep the law, temple worship, etc.

2. “Let not any one deceive you in any manner, because if the falling away [abomination that makes desolate?] may not come first, and the man of sin be revealed — the son of the destruction...” 2:3

Paul reminds them that certain events had to take place in Judea to set the stage for the destruction of the old order. There would be a falling away from within Judaism under a lawless leader who would unwittingly prepare for all the destruction to follow. Is Paul’s “falling away” the same as Jesus’s “abomination that makes desolate”?

3. He “is opposing and is raising himself up above all called God or worshipped, so that he in the sanctuary of God as God hath sat down, shewing himself off that he is God, [the day doth not come].” 2:4

As governor of the temple, Eleazar ben Ananias, was in charge of all the material aspects of the temple including the treasury and temple military. He appears to have ordered the breaking of the Mosaic Law, prohibiting the acceptance of gentile sacrifices. He also appears to have ordered the priests to begin preparation for the war in the temple! These violations of accepted temple practices led to a cascade of lawless acts that issued in the Jewish/Roman War, AD 67-70.

4. “Do ye not remember that, being yet with you, these things I said to you?” 2:5

Perhaps Paul had previously told the Thessalonians about the fomenting, anti-Roman zealot movement. Since Paul was writing in AD 52, one could speculate that he was referring to something like the AD 46 zealot uprising led by Jacob and Simon, sons of early zealot, Judas of Galilee. It ended in their deaths in AD 48, when they were executed by the Judean Procurator, Tiberius Alexander.

5. “And now, what is keeping down ye have known, for his being revealed in his own time,” 2:6

The zealot “fourth philosophy” was gaining adherents, but Roman governance and Judean men of power and high priests were keeping them in check.

6. “For the secret of the lawlessness doth already work, only he who is keeping down now [will hinder] — till he may be out of the way.” 2:7

Unaided by the Roman army under the corrupt and sinister Roman Governor Florus, Jewish Men of power would be unable to contain the zealot movement at some point, and that point was in AD 66. A seven day battle of zealots vs. Jewish establishment forces ensued and the zealots maintained possession of the temple, gathering to their ranks multitudes of common people due to burning down the building where debt contracts were stored, thus dissolving their obligations.

7. “And then shall be revealed the Lawless One, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the manifestation of his presence.” 2:8

The Lawless One changed what was supposed to be a generous welcoming of outsiders to Yahweh worship, into an exclusive ethnic cult. In the end, the zealot movement would be utterly destroyed in the Jewish-Roman War. Paul’s prediction might have recalled the words of the Master, “Not one stone would be left upon another” i.e. there would be no more temple power in the Day of the LORD.

8. “[Him,] whose presence is according to the working of the adversary, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders...” 2:9

Zealot leaders deceived the people into believing that God was on their side—that they were righteous and wanted only Yahweh to rule over them. However, the fierce fighting and killing between rival zealot factions showed their true nature. In addition, They killed thousands of Jewish countrymen who were in favor of peace with Rome, or who tried to defect to the Romans, or who hid food because of unbearable famine.

9. "...And in all deceitfulness of the unrighteousness in those perishing, because the love of the truth they did not receive for their being saved." 2:10

The majority of Jewish people had rejected their Messiah and were morally adrift and consequently they were easily deceived by zealot charlatans who promised them salvation from Rome, earthly kingdom, and divine favor.

10. "And because of this shall God send to them a working of delusion, for their believing the lie, that they may be judged — all who did not believe the truth, but were well pleased in the unrighteousness." 2:11-12

In the fall of AD 66, Roman General Cestius marched to Jerusalem to put down the uprising, but unaccountably withdrew from taking the city. This seeming weakness of Rome, emboldened the zealot forces and encouraged their megalomania and propaganda. Josephus, a Jewish historian, concluded, "I suppose, owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he [Cestius] was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day." [Wars 2:19:6] The war continued for 3 1/2 years with utter misery and unspeakable horrors.

SUPPORTING FACTS: ELEAZAR AS THE "MAN OF SIN"

The Jews were commanded to accept gentile worship of Yahweh equal to their own.

"If an alien sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he wishes to make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so he shall do." Num 15:14

The Jews had a covenant with Yahweh to be a welcoming beacon to gentiles.

"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness... for a light of the Gentiles." Is. 42:6

Eleazar, the son of Ananias, refused gentile worship of Yahweh declining gentile offerings.

"Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, a very bold youth, who was at that time governor of the Temple, persuaded those that officiated in the Divine service to receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner. And this was the true beginning of our war with the Romans; for they rejected the sacrifice of Caesar on this account; and when many of the chief priests and principal men besought them not to omit the sacrifice, which it was customary for them to offer for their princes, they would not be prevailed upon. These relied much upon their multitude, for the most flourishing part of the innovators [those favoring rebellion] assisted them; but they had the chief regard to Eleazar, the governor of the temple." (Josephus, War 2:17:2)

Under Eleazar, the ministers of the temple prepared for war instead of attending to temple worship, ignoring the pleadings of the men of power and Jewish citizens who wanted peace.

"But still not one of the innovators [rebels] would hearken to what was said; nay, those that ministered about the temple would not attend their Divine service, but were preparing matters for beginning the war." (Wars 2:17:4)

In 66, Eleazar retained control of the profaned temple and lower city in opposition to establishment forces.

"The seditious part [the zealots] had the lower city and the temple in their power. " (Wars 2:17:5)

Jewish establishment forces were unable to gain control of the profaned temple from Eleazar.

Agrippa's forces "strove chiefly to gain the temple, and to drive those out of it who profaned it... Thus were there perpetual slaughters on both sides for seven days' time; but neither side would yield up the parts they had seized on." (Wars 2:17:5)

A garrison of Roman soldiers surrendered, but Eleazar deceptively and lawlessly ordered their slaughter on a Sabbath day—a day Jews were forbidden to fight.

"...but as soon as, according to the articles of capitulation, they had all laid down their shields and their swords, and were under no further suspicion of any harm, but were going away, Eleazar's men attacked them after a violent manner, and encompassed them round, and slew them.... And thus were all these men barbarously murdered..." (2:17:10).

Further study: Josephus, [The Wars of the Jews](#) Also: [Essays on Eschatology](#) by Samuel G. Dawson