

"restrain". What is the restraining one which will be taken out of the way before the man of sin will be revealed?

The best answer <sup>is</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>it</sup> that is the Holy Spirit, working through the believers, and also acting, through common grace, to prevent sin from working itself out to the ultimate. The verse does not mean, of course, that the Holy Spirit leaves the world. The third person of the Godhead is, omnipresent. He is always everywhere. He did not come at Pentecost, for He was here all the time. But He began at Pentecost to manifest His power in a special way, and this can properly be spoken of as a coming of the Spirit. Similarly He ceases, at the time of the Rapture, to manifest His power in certain restraining ways, and this can be spoken of as being taken out of the way. Moreover, the believers, in whom He is so active, are removed bodily to meet the Lord in the air. And the restraining influence of Christian believers is far greater than either the world or the church itself imagines!

It is true that this interpretation of v. 7 is not universally accepted. However, it fits the context, is consistent with the rest of the N.T. teaching, and is just what one would expect in view of the clear statement of the Rapture which Paul had already given to the Thessalonian church. I know of no valid objection to it.

Those who do not accept this interpretation of the verse have various alternative proposals, but I have been unable to find much probability in any one of them. The most common of these is that the one that restrains is the Roman Empire. But the Roman Empire was removed long ago, and the man of sin has not yet been revealed. Moreover, there is no place where one might more naturally have looked for the revelation of the man of sin than among the wicked tyrants who sometimes occupied the throne of the Caesars. It is rather amusing to find the following note after v. 7 in a recent translation of the New Testament (The Berkeley version): "This seems to refer to the Roman empire, incarnated in the Emperor, who probably was just referred to as 'the Man of Sin'. Rome, after all, checked the Jews of the earlier period of the church from doing their worst". One almost wonders whether the