

When the future man of lawlessness appears, it will be a time of spiritual disaster for those who follow him. Three ingredients will lead to their spiritual defeat. It is a pattern to learn from. Even though the man of lawlessness is restrained from appearing (2:6), the mystery of lawlessness is already at work (2:7). Therefore, it is important to be on guard.

I. Satanic deception (2:9–10a)

1. Satan will deceive through the miraculous.
 - a. Miracles are works of supernatural power. The satanic miracles which the man of lawlessness will perform will be true acts of supernatural power. He will use them to support his false claim of deity (cf. 2:4). They are therefore deceptive miracles and false signs. They will nevertheless amaze people, which is the reason they are called “wonders.”
 - b. God the Father attested to Jesus with miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22). Jesus authorized and empowered His apostles to perform signs, wonders and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4), showing them to truly be His apostles. Satan will mimic that in the man of lawlessness thus deceiving many.

The miraculous is not a certain sign of it being from God. God warned the people through Moses that false prophets might perform miraculous signs and wonders, but if they led people away from the worship of Jehovah God, they were false (Deuteronomy 13:1–5). False worship might not mean using a different name, but distorting who God is, and thus failing to obey Him (cf. Matthew 7:22ff). Combat deception by knowing the truth and measuring everything by the truth.

2. Satan will deceive through “natural” sorts of evil.
 - a. The context supports the understanding that Paul is warning against unrighteousness or wickedness that leads to deception.
 - b. The Bible warns elsewhere of such “natural” wickedness that deceives: the deceitfulness of wealth (Matthew 13:22), deceitful desires (Ephesians 4:22), empty religiosity (James 1:26), and sin in general (Hebrews 3:13).

Satan seeks to deceive by natural and supernatural means. Be on guard against both.

II. Personal rebellion against the truth (2:10b, 12b)

1. People will rebel against the truth of the gospel.
 - a. The context (2:10) shows this is truth about being saved. But that covers many truths.
 - b. Their rebellion against the truth is a failure to love it (2:10), which is explained in verse 12. On the one hand they will not believe, on the other they will rather delight in wickedness. To love the true is to fully commit oneself to it. Cf. John 3:19–21.
2. The rebellious are defined as those who are perishing.
 - a. There are only two options: love the truth or perish.
 - b. But “perishing” also indicates a condition which allows deception. Those who belong to God will not be deceived, if they hold to the truth (cf. Matthew 24:24). Those who are born of God have the Spirit of God; they want to know the truth and are enabled to understand the truth.

It is dangerous to run from the truth. A mark of the end times is the choice people make to have teachers who say what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

III. Divine judgment (2:11–12a)

1. At the time of the man of lawlessness, God will send delusion upon those who have rejected the gospel-truth, so that they will believe “the lie.” The “lie” is probably the false claim to deity. God will cause them to believe a foolish lie, because they would not believe the truth about Jesus Christ.
2. The result of their rejection of the gospel-truth is their just condemnation. There is salvation in none other than Jesus Christ. Believing “the lie” will publically show their true heart condition. Superficial neutrality will not be possible. Their condemnation will be just, because God says that there is sufficient evidence to believe the truth (cf. Romans 1:18–20).

The Thessalonians benefitted from knowing the future by being motivated to live now correctly. They had been forgetting what they had been taught. That puts them in danger of spiritual defeat. They had already been deceived and needed to be on guard. Greater deception is coming, but lawlessness is still at work today.

Be on guard against failing to love the truth, especially the gospel-truth. Rejoice that God has revealed Jesus Christ to you as Lord and Savior.