

Paul was writing to settle the agitation and quiet the fears of the Thessalonian believers who had mistakenly believed false reports that the day of the Lord was already present. If they had remembered Paul's teaching, they would not have been deceived. Among the truths they should have remembered, was the presence of a restraint upon the intents of Satan, that thus kept the man of lawlessness from appearing. Satan could not and can not act outside of God's timetable. Paul gives a quick overview of that timetable with regard to the man of lawlessness in these 3 verses.

1. The man of lawlessness is currently held back from making an appearance (2:6).
 - a. What or who is holding back his appearance?

That which is holding back his appearance is identified as a person in v.7 by using a masculine form "the one who holds back." The one who holds back must be strong enough to withstand Satan (cf. v.9), which points to a divine power. The best candidate is God Himself by His Holy Spirit.
 - b. Why is his appearance held back? God is restricting his appearance for the right time.

→ Satan can never act beyond what God allows. God's plan for the future will come about when God wants it to happen. Similarly, nothing happens today without God allowing it.
2. The evil principle, lawlessness, which will be embodied by the future man, is already at work.
 - a. For the moment it is called the "mystery" of lawlessness.

"Mystery" is the usual and preferred translation for the word which the NIV interprets as "secret power." It refers to that which man can only know by supernatural revelation. Satan's rebellion against the rule of God is going on in an unseen world. Cf. Job 1–2; Daniel 10:12–14; Ephesians 6:10–18.
 - b. Satan's rebellion against God's rule, lawlessness, was manifest in the persecutions which the Thessalonians experienced. Though not an evidence of the day of the Lord, persecution did reveal the lawlessness which was at work.

→ Know that there is an unseen spiritual battle, because God has revealed it. It may not look that way to your eyes, but believe that it is true. The mystery of lawlessness is at work.
3. The rebellion against God will become personified when restraint is removed and the man of lawlessness is revealed (2:7b–8a).
 - a. The One who restrains the man of lawlessness from appearing will at some point no longer be a barrier (2:7b).

"Taken out of the way" could more simply mean "is out of the way." The simplest understanding is that the Restrainer stands between Satan and his evil purposes. At some future time, the Spirit will stop blocking Satan.
 - b. When that happens, the man of lawlessness will clearly be revealed.

Satan will seem to have his way and he will empower a human figure in an ultimate act of rebellion against God. Many will follow him, but there will be those who will have the eyes to see and recognize him as Satan's man.

→ Don't be concerned about identifying this person, but rather be concerned with being the type of person to whom God would reveal such a person.
4. The man of lawlessness will be destroyed at and by the appearing of the Lord Jesus.
 - a. Jesus will "overthrow" and "destroy" the man of lawlessness. That is, Jesus will put him out of the way and remove him from earth into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).
 - b. Jesus will do so by simply appearing on the scene and speaking his destruction, a quick, complete, and sudden defeat.

"Splendor of his coming" is better translated "appearance of his coming" (ESV). It is at the visible return of the Lord Jesus that He will entirely defeat the man of lawlessness.

→ Though Satan may seem to have his day, he will not win. All his efforts, even today, will not lead to his ultimate victory, but rather his ultimate defeat.

Jesus Christ won the victory on the cross and will in God's timing bring all into subjection, even the worse of Satan's efforts to rebel. The power and authority by which He defeats the man of lawlessness with a word, the breath of His mouth, is the same power by which He rules today. Lawlessness is a work, but Christ is greater. Jesus is the Victor.