

Do not be deceived about the future, for Christians will not experience the wrath of the Day of the Lord.

Introduction

If we back up a little bit, we will remember that the Thessalonian church faced great tribulation. This is evident in **1:4-7** (read relevant bits of this). This apparently made them ripe targets for wrong teaching, which is alluded to in **2:1-2**. Somehow, they had been convinced (or nearly so!) that they were in the midst of the Day of the Lord, that God's judgment had begun. This entailed a few things:

1. They forgot previous teaching – In **2:5** Paul chides them, “Do you not remember...I was telling you these things?”
 2. They heard from a false teacher, either from their own midst or from outside (**Acts 20:29-30**), by means of a prophecy or written letter (**1:2**).
 3. They became disturbed, shaken up, even to the point of being deceived (**1:2-3**).
- So Paul writes in chapter 2 to correct their thinking and help them get out of the rut of deception that they were in. **Yes**, they have tribulation. But **no**, this is not the end-time tribulation, which will be of a far worse variety. There will be things going on **then** which are not here **now**.

I. The Man of Sin has not yet been revealed. Vv. 3c-4, 8-9

- A. You would know the Man of Sin by his opposition of God.

Rev 13:6, where it is said of this one, the beast, “And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name....”

- B. You would know the Man of Sin by his claim to deity.

- C. You would know the Man of Sin by his Satanically powered deceitful signs and wonders.

These are reminiscent of the signs of an apostle (**2 Cor 12:12**). If only those who were deceived would hearken back to **Deut 13:1-3** and **18:21-22**. They would know how to evaluate a miracle-worker, even one whose miracles do come true! [Explain]

- D. All will know the Man of Sin by his ultimate end – destruction.

Note for a minute the deception of this Antichrist compared to the true Christ:

	Christ	Antichrist
An open “revelation” or disclosure	1:8	2:8
A “coming”	2:8	2:9
Claim worship as God	1:10	2:4
Powerful signs	1:7	2:9

II. The Apostasy has not yet happened. Vv. 3b, 10-12

Unfortunately, the deceptive works of the Antichrist will be involved in a great apostasy from God. This will perhaps begin to happen immediately after the rapture, but will certainly be “aided and abetted” by the presence of the Antichrist, who will quickly appear on the scene after the rapture.

As for the meaning of the word “apostasia” where “falling away” comes from, **Acts 21:21** gives us a good clue. This is by far the normal meaning of the word – a revolt or defection in a religious sense.

- A. The people of this apostasy are those who rejected the truth of the gospel and took pleasure in wickedness.

Refer to **2 Thess 1:8**, **Rom 1:32** for parallels on these characteristics.

- B. As punishment, God will send them a strong deluding influence.

- C. As a result of the great delusion, they will believe “the lie.”

At this stage, the lie can be about anything as far from the truth as the Antichrist wants it to be. Unbelievers will swallow it hook, line, and sinker.

- D. The final result will be that the apostates will be condemned to death for their unbelief. They will perish in the judgment and be cast into Hell. They will not be saved (vv. **2:12**, **2:10**, **2:10**).

III. The Restrainer has not yet been moved out of the way. Vv. 6-7

- A. At present, the Restrainer is holding back the Antichrist

Who is this restrainer? It is a much debated text, but I'm convinced that it is an oblique reference to the Holy Spirit and particularly His presence in the church during this age of grace. This is evident because:

1. Only the divine power of the Spirit of God can truly restrain the full operation of evil. We cannot. We are not really allowed to say, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” (**Matt 16:23**) No, instead it is, “The Lord rebuke you” (**Jude 9**).
2. The grammar in the text indicates the Holy Spirit (neuter “what” now restrains and masculine “he” who restrains) because other texts in the Bible that clearly refer to the Holy Spirit exhibit this same characteristic (**John 15:26**, **16:13-14**). The Spirit's role in restraint of sin is in **Gen 6:3**.
3. The rapture will remove the Holy Spirit, the restrainer, and the Antichrist will be free to do what he wishes.

- B. At present, evil work is going on all the time, even though there is a restrainer.

This would perhaps explain some of the Thessalonians' problems in the present life—elements of the devil's agents are running around now doing as much damage as possible to the cause of Christ. Persecution against believers is one outworking of this work of the spiritual forces of darkness.

- C. In the future, the Antichrist will be revealed at the appropriate time, when the restrainer is removed. God has the right time in mind for this to occur.

And now we can have a fuller picture of what happens at the end of the present age and at the start of the tribulation period. Here is the list of items in roughly chronological order:

Conclusion

Do not take part in those seeds of apostasy today. They can be subtle! In the meanwhile, take great comfort in the facts of the future. You know what is going to happen. There is no uncertainty beyond the end of life like there was for the OT saint and for unbelievers. And whatever you do, don't be deceived by false teaching.

Another implication of this text is that we should be earnestly preaching the gospel to those around us, to reduce the opportunity for someone to be in the massive crowd of deceive people who will perish.