

2 Thessalonians 2:3b

PREFACE

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

v3

Paul says that Christ will not return in judgment until these two events occur: the apostasy and the revealing of the “man of lawlessness.” In our last session we saw the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation with the great apostasy—the inception of a period of profound rebellion and falling away from God and His Christ—and how this will set the stage, lay the groundwork for the individual described by Paul as the

- man of lawlessness (NASB, NIV & ESV)
- man of sin (KJVs)

and

- son of destruction (NASB & ESV)
- man doomed to destruction (NIV)
- son of perdition (KJVs)

In **vv6-7** Paul describes the mechanics behind his rise to power and public revelation—that is, how it was orchestrated supernaturally; in **vv8-10** he describes the man’s deceptive methods—and his end; in **vv11-12**, the mechanics behind his success with the masses—again, orchestrated supernaturally; **in this passage** Paul gives us the man’s description and behavior.

Last week I described the events from the Rapture to the Millennium as not individual plays, but acts within one play—that is, one act sets up the next. If the Tribulation is a two-act play, this moment Paul describes will be the dramatic climax at the end of the first act. All of the first act has been setting the stage for, slowly building up to this moment, when the “hero” of the story takes center stage in all his glory. The curtain drops for the intermission—except in this play there is no intermission, no moment of relaxation with wine and cheese before a return to the story. And when the curtain rises on the second act, the hero begins his ultimate descent into failure and loss and ignominious death.

lawlessness, sin = *anomia* = from <G459> (anomos); **illegality**, i.e. violation of law or (genitive) **wickedness** :- **iniquity**, × transgress (-ion of) the law, **unrighteousness**.

Once in a while in our life we may have come across someone with this quality—not just one who breaks the law occasionally, but one with utter disregard for the law, whether legal or moral. This person seems to have no conscience, no sense of shame or regret. Here is the picture of the ultimate, self-indulgent narcissist, caring nothing about anyone but his own desires and pleasure.

destruction, perdition = *apoleia* (ap-o'-lee-a) = from a presumed derivative of (apollumi); **ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal)** :- damnable (-nation), destruction, die, **perdition**, perish, pernicious ways, **waste**.

It is important to note that this word does not refer to *extinction*—utter annihilation. That is, the word refers to a “loss of well-being,” rather than a loss of existence (that would be the word *olethros*). And as we see in the NIV, this description of the “man of lawlessness” as also “son of destruction” can be interpreted two ways:

- In the NT, to refer to someone as a “son” means that this person *behaves* like the father; when I was a young boy, and an adult of my dad’s generation and acquaintance observed me doing something like my dad, he would remark, “You are your dad’s son,” meaning not so much that I sprang from his loins, but that I was growing up with his qualities. I was behaving like him. Here this son of destruction or perdition is one who *behaves* like his father: Satan. And this behavior will bring everlasting destruction, perdition on countless millions during this time of tribulation.
- But this also means (as the NIV points out) that this man is doomed to destruction, perdition; his end is sure: the lake of fire for all eternity. Loss of well-being indeed.

The Antichrist

The apostle John is the only one in Scripture to use the word *antichristos*—our word antichrist ([against or an opponent of the Messiah, or it can also mean the opposite or “instead of” Messiah \[more on this in a moment\]](#)); this is a direct transliteration of the Greek. John uses the term specifically, to refer to the one person of the Tribulation, as well as generally, to refer to anyone who speaks or acts against Christ.

Read 1 John 2:18.

In the fourth chapter he speaks of the *spirit* of the antichrist.

Read 1 John 4:2-3

As we saw in our previous session, many believe that the antichrist is more a group, or philosophy, or system, or a series of individuals such as the papacy. But that is contradicted by Paul, the prophet Daniel, and even Jesus Himself. Daniel offers a fulsome description of this son of perdition as an individual.

Read Daniel 8:23-25.

To the Jewish leaders Jesus said,

“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.” (John 5:43)

Scripture seems clear that the antichrist will be an *individual* who will come to prominence during the yet-future Tribulation. And he will be evil incarnate. It’s not enough to just say he will be bad; just as this will be *the* Tribulation—like no other—this will be *the* antichrist—the embodiment of every evil against Christ Jesus. But note: this doesn’t mean that he will be *seen* as evil. Remember who his “father” is:

Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Here is David Guzik on this:

The Antichrist is the “opposite Jesus”; he is the “instead of” Jesus. Most people have focused on the idea of the “opposite Jesus.” This has made them think that the Antichrist will appear as a supremely evil person, that as much as Jesus went around doing good, he will go around doing bad. As much as Jesus’ character and personality was beautiful and attractive, the Antichrist’s character and personality will be ugly and repulsive. As much as Jesus spoke only truth, the Antichrist will speak only lies. This emphasizes the idea of the “opposite Jesus” too much. The Antichrist will instead be more of an “instead of Jesus.” He will look wonderful, be charming and successful. He will be the ultimate winner, and appear as an angel of light. In this sense the Antichrist will be a satanic messiah, instead of the true Messiah Jesus Christ.

Without at all suggesting equivalency, note how this man and the various other roles in this situation are a dark, mirror image of the original:

Holiness	Evil
God the Father	Satan
Holy Spirit	spirit of the antichrist
Christ Jesus	the antichrist, son of perdition
heaven	hell, perdition

There are other similarities between this “man of lawlessness” and Jesus—antichrist and *the* Christ. (from Guzik)

- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a “coming” (or presence = *parousia*)
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:1 and**
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:9**
- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a “revealing”
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:7 and**
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:3**
- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a “gospel” or message
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:10-11**
- Both Jesus and the man of sin say that they alone should be worshiped
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:4**
- Both Jesus and the man of sin have to support their claims with miraculous works
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:9**

The Beast

Finally, we have this man’s identification as “the beast.” There is more than one “beast” mentioned in the Revelation; most (but not all) identify the first “beast” of Revelation 13 as the antichrist. Note: the “dragon” is Satan.

Read Revelation 13:1-9.