

- (3) His activities will be in accord with the working of Satan, and will include all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders (verse 9).
  - (4) He will oppose God and every religion, and will establish his own religion (verse 4a).
  - (5) He will establish his world center of worship in God's temple, and there show himself as God, to be worshipped (verse 4b).
  - (6) He will deceive those who have not believed and have refused the truth, so that they might continue in the wickedness in which they have delighted. Because they have rejected God's truth, God, by withdrawing the influences of His Spirit, will allow them to be strongly deluded and deceived by the man of lawlessness (verses 10-12).
  - (7) This lawless one is doomed to destruction, and will be overthrown and destroyed by the Lord Jesus at His coming in power and glory (verse 3, 8b).
- d. Who is the one who restrains the full expression of the mystery of lawlessness that is already at work? Is it the great system of Roman Law that deterred the grosser forms of social and personal immorality? Is it the Body of Christ, individually and collectively, that functions as salt and light in an ungodly, unrighteous world-system? Is it the Holy Spirit particularly in His ministry of indwelling the church? Or is it the Holy Spirit, working both outside of and through the members of Christ's Body?

One advantage of the last-mentioned option is that the Spirit of God has always been the Restrainer, even holding back the full expression of human depravity in all dispensations. Before the Flood He strove with mankind, and throughout human history since the Flood He has worked through the Law of God written on man's nature, through the conscience, through human laws and human government, and has held back many outward expressions of innate sin among men and nations.

The option that appears the best to fit all the data is that the one who presently restrains the full expression of human corruption from bursting forth is the Holy Spirit.