



2 Thessalonians 2:4-12: Jun 21, 2020

Lawlessness Already At Work

Pastor JD Farag

Well good morning and welcome. This is our 2nd service on Sunday mornings. We're in 2 Thessalonians and the 2nd chapter of 2 Thessalonians. So today is going to be verses 4 through 12. I'll ask you to turn there if you're not there already, and you can join with us online. I'll ask those that are here to stand if you're able. If not, that's alright; you can follow along as I read.

The Apostle Paul is writing by the Holy Spirit to the church in Thessalonica. He says verse 4, "He [speaking of the Antichrist] will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped so that he sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember [verse 5] that when I was with you, I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back so that he may be revealed at the proper time.

For [verse 7] the secret power of lawlessness is already at work. But the one who now holds it back [or restrains] will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way and then [verse 8] the lawless one will be revealed whom [and I love this part, can't wait] whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming." That's the second coming, actually.

Verse 9 "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie [interesting] and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie. And so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." Wow! Wow! Wow!

Let's pray if you would join with me, please? Loving heavenly Father, we're so grateful to you for your word and especially this portion here in your word that we have before us today. Clearly, this is not just your word, but it's a word fitly spoken for such a time as this. So now, Lord, we need for the Holy Spirit to get our attention and hold our attention so that we don't miss anything that you would have to say to us today. Lord, we want to have ears to hear what the Spirit says to us, your church, in Jesus name. Amen. And amen You can be seated. Thank you.

I want to talk with you today about lawlessness and specifically as it relates to what Paul refers to concerning this lawlessness already being at work. As I mentioned in prior weeks, 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2 could be a caption under a picture of everything that we're seeing take place in the world today, particularly here in the United States of America. What follows is really a detailed prophecy about what's going to happen after the rapture of the church. Very important.

First, after the Antichrist has been revealed, the Jews will rebuild their temple, not before. Now back in verse 3 which we spent last week on just that one verse, very in-depth, we're told that the tribulation hadn't started, and won't start, and can't start until the "departure/rapture" happens first, and then the lawless one, the man of sin, the Antichrist will be revealed. So that's the order.

The tribulation hasn't started: They thought it had, which is why he writes this 2nd letter to clear that up. No, you didn't miss the rapture which, by the way, is interesting, think about this They had received this forgery of a letter as if from Paul saying that they were already in the tribulation and they were so freaked out by that. Why? Because if they were already in the tribulation, that meant they missed the rapture, which means that they knew the rapture was before the tribulation.



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I really hope you got that because that's the best I got and that's the best way I can explain it. Last week, we in-depth looked at verse 3, and how what he is saying in verse 3 is that the rapture happens first, then the Antichrist is revealed. That's verse 3.

Now here in verse 4, we're told that the Antichrist, once revealed, will exalt himself so much so that he will set himself up in the temple, the rebuilt temple, and proclaim himself to be God and demand to be worshipped as God. What this tells us is that the temple that's going to be rebuilt will likely have to be rebuilt at the beginning of the 7-year tribulation.

I would venture to say, and I'm not alone in this belief that part of the 7-year peace agreement which we're going to talk about in a moment will include the Jews being able to rebuild their temple. That will, in fact to me, that's what's going to convince them to sign on the dotted line. Why? Because Israel today will do everything and stop at nothing to have their temple. They'll give up whatever it takes.

So, we're told that the Antichrist will set himself up in the temple that means the temple has to be there. Well, Daniel 9:27 comports with this. This is again a very detailed prophecy. Daniel writes, "He [again speaking of the Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for 1... That's the 7-year tribulation.

By the way, I should parenthetically say that the rapture is not what starts the tribulation. The peace agreement is. That's what commences the 7-year tribulation, the 7-year peace agreement. So, we're told that the Antichrist will... It's actually a very interesting word in the original language of the Hebrew Old Testament. It's the same word in my native tongue of Arabic. It's the word, *higbir*. He will confirm, *higbir*, make greater, superior spectacular, this agreement for a period of 17. That's the seven years.

Now it gets even more detailed. In the middle of the 7th, at the 3.5-year mark, he, again speaking of the Antichrist, will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple, which has already been rebuilt, like Paul was saying to the Thessalonians, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

Now, what is this abomination that causes desolation? Some speculate that he will sacrifice an unclean animal. There is a precedent for that in Israel's history. Others suggest that when he demands to be worshipped, sets himself up in the temple as God, demanding to be worshipped as God, that will be an abomination in the eyes of the Jews and that will cause the desolation that Jesus refers to in Matthew 24 in what we affectionately refer to as the Olivet Discourse.

Listen to this beginning in verse 15. Jesus is speaking, and he says, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet..." That's the verse we just read. Jesus is referring to that verse we just read about the abomination of desolation. "When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, standing in the Holy Place..."

In other words, not just the holy place, it's the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant was, where the Shekinah glory of God was. That's where he's going to set himself up. "Whoever reads let him understand then let those who are in Judea [This is to the Jews] flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house and let him who was in the



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field not go back to get his clothes. But woe [verse 19] to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days and pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."

Why? Because on the Sabbath and during the winter, when it snows particularly in Jerusalem, all transportation and movement are completely shut down. What Jesus is saying is at the midpoint this abomination that causes desolation, and the Jews will realize this is not our Christ. This is a false Christ, the Antichrist, and that is what they are going to need have happen in order for them to come to a saving knowledge of their true Christ.

So, they're going to flee Jerusalem. Flee Israel to the place, Revelation says, in the wilderness that God will protect them for the last 3.5 years of the 7-year tribulation. Many believe, present company included, that that place is Petra in modern-day Jordan and this all happens at the midpoint of the 7-year tribulation.

Now when this happens, and the Jews flee after this abomination that causes desolation, we're told verse 21, Jesus speaking, "For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world, until this time, no, nor ever shall be." Then he says this very interesting, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elects sake those days will be shortened."

In the context of this passage, Jesus is speaking of the elect is referring to the Jew, his people. That tells you something about the last 3.5 years of the 7-year tribulation that it will be so horrific and unthinkable. During the last 3.5 years that were it not for God intervening and shortening the days. In other words, if they were prolonged or elongated, no flesh would survive.

In verses 5 through 8, we're told that the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way here. Paul asked them this rhetorical question of whether or not they remembered what he told them when he was with them. Namely about the Holy Spirit as restraining the lawlessness, the lawless one, the Antichrist, and his secret power of lawlessness, which will be already at work.

Let me again, just kind of parenthetically say this is important. You would think that, okay, well, so why do we need to have this detail? Why does God deem necessary for us to know that Paul is telling them, "Don't you remember what I taught you when I was with you?" Why is that important?

Because this is a new church with young believers, and we know from the book of Acts that Paul only spent maybe a few weeks there before he was literally run out of town. So, what this is saying is Paul to these new believers in Christ, this new church, was teaching them Bible prophecy. Just going to let that sink in for a moment.

Don't you remember what I taught you when I was with you? You know I have to say that when I first came to Christ back in 1982, don't do the math, I was only 5. I just looked older. I was 19. But I remember just early on always having an interest in Bible prophecy, and now 38 years later, I can stand before you and say that it was that interest in Bible prophecy that really helped me get grounded in God's Word.

So, he's reminding them. He's saying, don't you remember? I told you that the Holy Spirit is restraining the Antichrist. Then once the church is removed in the rapture and the Holy Spirit is taken



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out of the way? You don't want to be here! You don't want to be here left behind! Why? Because all hell is literally going to break loose, and you'll forgive me for saying it that way.

Now here's a thing. We see what's happening in the world today. The lawlessness that's taking place Man, I saw a couple of videos this last week. One I could not finish watching about what's happening in that zone in Seattle. So apparently there's now a couple of people have been killed Police don't go in. One video of someone that's in that zone, I mean, she's weeping almost convulsing. She said you have no idea what's going on in here—some of the evil that is taking place, the lawlessness.

By the way, for those of you who weren't here for the prophecy update or watch it online, I would really encourage you to watch that because what we're seeing right now with Black Lives Matter. This was planned over 100 years ago. It is right out of the playbook; It's according to the script. The Communist agenda, the Marxist agenda, has planned to exploit and expose the one weak spot in this nation to destroy this nation.

Do you know what that weak spot is? Race relations. So, they're pitting the blacks against the whites, and it is completely destroying this country. It was planned all along. That was their plan. So once the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit is not removed from the earth, the church is removed from the earth. The Holy Spirit is just taken out of the way. Okay, go ahead.

You've heard that expression, you ain't seen nothing yet. Well, let me just say, you ain't seen nothing yet. What's coming, once the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is out of the way and we've been raptured? It's going to make this look like child's play. Very interesting.

In Matthew 24, again prior to Jesus talking about this abomination that causes desolation, he makes a very interesting statement here recorded in verse 12 of Matthew 24. He said that "Because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold." This is well I'm kind of getting ahead of myself. This is what will mark the time of the end prior to the return of Jesus Christ in the rapture of the church, and it's happening exactly as we were told it would.

Okay, verses 9 through 12, what happens next? Well, we're told that God himself will send a powerful delusion, a strong deception. Now, this is interesting for a number of reasons, chief of which is that Paul is providing us details with great specificity. Notice the coming of the Antichrist will be in accordance with how Satan works displaying power through signs and wonders and not only will this serve the lie, interesting the lie, God himself sends them this powerful delusion so that they will actually believe the lie, and in so doing be condemned.

Now, this might jam some people's gears. I need a more modern metaphor: Crash some people's hard drives, there that's better. That doesn't sound fair. You mean in the midst of all this lawlessness the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit is out of the way. The church has been raptured. All hell is breaking loose. The Antichrist has been revealed, and God is going to, like add insult to injury, and send this powerful delusion so that they're going to believe the lie that serves the lie?

He's even going to allow it and make no mistake about it; nothing happens unless God allows it. Whoa! That really crashed the hard drive, didn't it? Wait! You mean that God is allowing everything that we're seeing happen right now? Yeah. Why would he do that? Because, in the end, it serves, not



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the lie. It serves the truth who is the truth, Jesus Christ Who said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and there is no way to the Father except through me."

God will never allow the devil to do anything unless ultimately, in the end it's for his glory and our good. That's another topic for another time. So, we have a question we need to answer, and the question is: Why would God do this? Why would God send them this powerful delusion so that they believe the lie and are condemned? Thankfully the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit tells us why.

It's because they rejected the truth. That's why. Simply put, their hearts were already hardened, their mind already made up, and as such, their fate had already been sealed. They've already rejected God and the truth. So, God just says okay, the Spirit of God is not going to strive with man forever.

I mean, it just comes a point where the Lord just says, I'm not going to force myself on you. You've rejected me, and I've given you so many opportunities, and you continue to reject me? Look, I can take a hint. You don't want me. You rejected me, so fine. He just gives them over to their mind already being made up.

I think about Pharaoh. A very interesting account when we were in Exodus, he continued to harden his heart. We're told, I think it's something like 8 times, and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and Pharaoh hardened his heart, and Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then it's not, "and Pharaoh hardened his heart" it's, "... and God hardened Pharaoh's heart." What? That doesn't seem fair. I mean, it's kind of like Pharaoh didn't have a fighting chance. I mean, God hardened his heart? No!

That's not what happened. It's God saying, you've already hardened your heart, fine You've already made your choice! You've already made your decision. You've already made up your mind. You've already rejected the truth, so I'm going to stop fighting you and give you what you want. Because you don't want me. This is why God gives them over to their lawlessness and wickedness.

Get this! Wrap your mind around this. We're told that they actually take great delight in it. This has helped me so much because, like you, I'm sure when you watch all of this, you're like, how is this even possible? I mean, you actually are falling for this? Yeah, right here. This explains it.

This resolves the problem because, for the life of me, I could never imagine why anybody would do anything like this. Well, this explains why. They've rejected the truth. So, of course, wickedness and lawlessness will ensue. I have heard it said like this. When you reject the truth, you open yourself up for the most bizarre of lies. You'll believe anything.

So here comes this powerful delusion, and it's God just saying you know what? Fine. It's not my will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But you keep rejecting me and rejecting me and rejecting. You know, it's kind of like a callous on your hands, right? When you just keep over and over and over again, you develop a callous, and you become numb, and it becomes hardened. And that's what happens to the human heart. Over and over again, you keep rejecting God and the truth, and then this callousness, this numbness, this hardness, so you feel nothing.

Romans Chapter 1, hang in there with me. I hope this is helpful. I know it's helped me, and I hope it's helpful and encouraging to you. But I remember when we were studying verse by verse through Romans. I think we were in Romans for like 2 years. What a book, man I mean what a "meaty" book. I



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mean just meat, doctrine. That's my story, and I'm sticking with it. That's why it took us two years to get through. It was a lot to chew on.

But I remember very clearly teaching through Chapter 1, I probably should say just weeping through Chapter one. Let me just read verses 28 through 32. This might fill in some blanks and connect some dots.

Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit to the church in Rome, says, "Furthermore just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers..."

I find it very interesting that gossips and slanderers would be included with a list such as this. No, it gets worse. "... God haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful..." And get this, "They invent ways of doing evil." You know inventors? They invent things.

What Paul is describing here is someone who is so evil, so given over to a depraved mind, that they're actually thinking of evil that they can invent. Hey, I know! Let's do this! Wow. That's how depraved they are.

Then he says this, this is very interesting to all you young people. I want you to hear this. It's very, very important. They disobey their parents. Are you watching online? Isn't that interesting included in that list? Do you get the impression that God takes that seriously? He does. They have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree..."

That's interesting. They know, yet they just rejected it. They've not accepted it. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

By the way, that should also answer another question and fill in another blank. You know why the world hates us so much? Is because we expose their darkness, their wickedness, their lawlessness. That's why it is that they take the 10 Commandments out of the public square. Because the law, the perfect law of God is a mirror that shows us-us. I don't want that shown. I don't want to see that. I don't want that to be exposed.

That's why it is by, the way, that family member, that friend, that co-worker? That's why they hate your guts. Sorry to say it like that. Jesus loves your guts, but they hate your guts. Don't take it personally. Jesus said they hate you because they hated me first, and that's the reason why.

When Paul writes to Timothy in his 2nd epistle Chapter 3 verses 1 through 5, He sort of echoes what he wrote to the Roman church, and in so doing, he lists 19 markers, 19 characteristics, of what the last days are going to look like. He says, "But know this that in the last days perilous times will come." Now listen to this, okay?

As I read this, as you follow along, do so through the lens of what we're seeing take place in the world today. "For men will be lovers of themselves. Lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, [here it is again, disobedient to parents, right there] disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving,



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unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power and from such people turn away."

That's what's going to mark the last days. Are you depressed? Well, I would submit that what we are witnessing before our very eyes today is exactly what we're told would happen at the time of the end. Think this through with me.

Don't you find it interesting that God would deem it necessary to inspire the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit to give us these prophecies in this detail and specificity? So that those who are living at the time of the end, that last final generation, which is us by the way. Nobody else wants to raise your hand? Okay, fine. Okay! There we go! Yay, all right. Yeah, kind of felt like a wave in a coliseum there for a second.

So that we would be encouraged. The Apostle Paul in his 1st epistle to the Thessalonians is trying to encourage, and he's going to do it again next week. He's going to be here. The Apostle Paul is going to be here next week to encourage us in the rest of the chapter. But that's the whole point.

He says, here's what's going to happen. "Therefore encourage each other with these words." In other words, we should be so encouraged by this. What? Are you kidding me? What are you talking about? Are you well? I don't know about that. But how is this encouraging? This is terrifying.

No, I'll tell you why it's encouraging. The rapture happens first; Then, all this happens. We're not going to be here. Be encouraged! Hey, it gets better. Yeah, it gets better. Let me take it further if you don't mind? What are you going to say no? I'm going to do it anyway. It's even better than that. Think this through with me as well.

It's like God is saying I'm going to give you this specific description of what the world is going to be like right before the 7-year tribulation. In other words, you're going to see things that will ultimately be fulfilled in and during the 7-year tribulation before the 7-year tribulation. Just so you'll know how close you are. Ho! That's a game-changer.

Especially as I see what's coming, and by the way, I hold back a lot. That might come as a surprise to many of you. You hold back? Yeah, well, God knows there are so many things that I just... I was sharing before first service before we went live. We finished proverbs Thursday night Problems 31, and the next book is going to be Ecclesiastes, which we may or may not start Thursday night.

I've kind of have been sensing that Lord might want me to share something before we start in Ecclesiastes on Thursday. I'm still praying about it, but in Ecclesiastes is we have this very interesting verse that says with much knowledge comes much sorrow. The world says it like this, ignorance is bliss. Think about that; Let that sink in.

We as Christians, we know what's coming. We have the knowledge of the truth and what comes packaged with that is sorrow and grief. But here's why we can be encouraged. Because if the tribulation period is casting its shadow on this period prior to the tribulation? That means we're really close. Do you know what else that means? That means that no matter how difficult it is right



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now? And believe me, with what's coming, I mean you've got to be reading the same news feeds that I am.

In Hawaii, the unemployment rate, what is it, almost 40%? It's in the high 30s because of the tourism revenue because of this lock-down. I was talking to my wife about this, even if they just turn the switch back on and said, okay, we're open, come back. It's too late, too late. And this is only the beginning. Wow, Pastor, I was doing great until you said that. Why did you say that?

Because I know this on the authority of God's Word. The truth of the matter is this: That as things get as bad as they are and they are getting bad, that means that the Lord's return is at the door and I'm encouraged. It's almost to the point where, and I could be misunderstood when I say this, but I almost want it to happen.

Because I want to go home. Because this world isn't my home. I have all this detail in Scripture that tells me this is what the world is going to like before Jesus comes and takes us out of this world. I'm seeing it all happen.

Here's how I say it and see it. When I know that I have this to look forward to it makes whatever I'm going through easier to get through. Because I have this blessed hope. Now, does that mean that it's not going to get worse before the rapture? Not at all. It could get worse, but God. But God.

Do you think for a second that the Lord is going to allow his bride to get all bust-up before the wedding? Do you like how I said that? This is why I just can't get it with these, I don't want to go there but I kind of already did. It's kind of like, no, the church has to go through the tribulation! To which I say, why? What's the point?

Wow, what kind of wedding is that going to be? Here's the bride coming up all busted-up, bleeding. I know that's kind of a graphic picture, but it just doesn't make any sense. Before my wife and I got married, I was counting the days down. I couldn't wait. I picture Jesus just going, Is it time yet? Is it time yet?

I don't mean to be dismissive, and we'll close. I don't mean in any way diminish whatever that trial is in your life. I just want to encourage you: This is how it ends. This is how it ends, and the sufferings Paul said of this life are not even worthy of being compared with the glory that awaits. When you think about this short period of time, however long it is or ends up being, as compared to eternity?

I mean let's just say that this goes on, I can't imagine it, for years and years and years and just keeps getting worse and worse and worse. Even that, compared to the glory that awaits in eternity, the first trillion years. There are no years, I'm just using that as a sort of example.

I mean, the first trillion years will be but a moment in eternity as compared to the years that we're alive here in this world with the hardships and the suffering and the trials this life? Not even on the same scale to be compared.

Let me just say one, one last thing. I know, I probably already said one last thing. But it's almost like I'm hearing, "Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit is saying to the church." And I think what



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the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is saying to the church today is, "Hang on." To the Church of Philadelphia, "I know you have little strength." I know you're just hanging on by a thread.

Some of you are here today, you're just hanging on by a thread. You're so battle-weary, or you're watching online, and I mean you're just at your wit's end. The Lord is saying to us, "Just hang on." I'm coming. I'm coming, and I'm going to take you out and deliver you from the hour of tribulation that is coming upon the whole world. You've not denied my name, and you've kept my Word. I know you're just barely hanging on, and I know it's really bad, but I'm coming. That's what the Spirit is saying to the church, you be encouraged. You be encouraged.

Why don't you stand, and we'll pray? Thank you, Lord. Lord, I thank you so much for your Word. Lord, thank you for telling us in your Word beforehand what's going to happen before it happens. So, when we begin to see it happen that nonbelievers would believe and believers would look up and lift up their heads.

You're the lifter of our head, Lord. As the psalmist so eloquently writes, "You lift us up, you lift up our heads, and we look up because we know that our redemption draws near.

So, Lord, even so, Lord, come quickly. Maranatha. In Jesus name. Amen.