

## “The Tumult of the Great Tribulation”

### **2 Thessalonians 2:6-12**

**Theme:** The removal of restraint by the Lord results in justified judgment.

#### **I. THE RELEASE OF LAWLESSNESS - vv. 6-8a**

##### **A. The Restraining of Lawlessness - vv. 6-7a**

1. Having provided them the assurances that the Day of the Lord had not begun, nor had they missed the Rapture of the Church, Paul continues to fill in some of the details that characterizes both the current era of the church and the future tumult of the Tribulation.
2. Paul had mentioned *“man of lawlessness”* in v. 3, indicating that the Day of the Lord will not begin until after the Antichrist has been revealed.
3. He describes his career briefly in vv. 4-5 and now indicates that the spirit of lawlessness that the Antichrist will embody is already present but is being restrained - *“And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.”*
4. *“restrains”* [κατέχω] - “to prevent the doing of something or cause something to be ineffective.” - cp. **Romans 1:18**.
5. The *“what”* (sing. neuter article) that *“restrains”* is a reference to an impersonal operative force, referring to the power of God and His providence over the affairs of His creation.
6. The development and latitude of evil is something that is under God’s control - allowing only that which His purpose determines.
7. The only power that is great enough to thwart the power of darkness & evil in the world is the Holy Spirit - cp. **John 16:8; Galatians 5:16-17; 1 John 4:1-4..**
8. The *“mystery of lawlessness is already at work ...”* - a *“mystery”* [μυστήριον] - refers to something that is unknowable unless it is revealed - demonstrating the level of *“lawlessness”* that will be *“revealed”* through the Antichrist is unknowable currently as sin has not been allowed to flow to its lowest levels yet.

##### **B. The Revealing of the Lawless One - vv. 7b-8a**

1. However, when it is time, *“He who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”*

2. Paul clarifies what He is talking about in the restraint by switching from a neuter reference to the general power of God to **“He”** as a designation of the Holy Spirit.
3. Having established that only the power of God’s Spirit can restrain lawlessness, we know that He does so in a variety of ways:
  - a) Government - ***Romans 13:4***.
  - b) God’s Word -
  - c) Natural Consequences -
  - d) Angels - ***Daniel 10:21***.
4. However, the unique, preeminent presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today is as the Indweller of the Church who cannot depart from the Body of Christ without the removal of that Body - **“... until he is taken out of the way.”**
  - a) **“until he is taken out ...”** [γένηται] - an aorist subjunctive pointing to a definite event at a point in time undetermined.
  - b) He is given to the church as “a pledge of our inheritance” - that irretrievable promise that we are God’s own possession - ***Ephesians 1:13-14***.
5. The terminus of His restraint - causing the unleashing of the **“man of lawlessness”** to freely embody evil - will be the Rapture of the Church.
6. The Holy Spirit’s ministry will revert to how He worked during the Old Testament - even as the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel will be the completion of the prophecy during which the Holy Spirit worked to save men - ***John 14:16-17***.
7. Upon the Rapture of the Church - when the Restrainer is taken out of the way - **“Then (and only then) that lawless one will be revealed ...”**

## **II. THE RECKONING FOR LAWLESSNESS - vv. 8b**

### **A. The Retribution on the Antichrist**

1. From the outset of the teaching regarding the freedom of the Antichrist to oppose God and “exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God,” Paul desires to assure the believers that God’s retribution will fall heavily upon him.
2. He says: **“... whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth ...”**

3. While the restraint was the work of God's Spirit, the final victory is something that belongs to Jesus Christ - *"the Lord will slay ..."*
4. The means by which He does this is *"... with the breath of His mouth"* - a reference to the Word of God - cp. **Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; 19:15, 21.**
5. The word *"slay"* [ἀναιρέω] - refers "remove or take away," or "to get rid of someone" - "to make an end of" him by consignment to the Lake of Fire.

## **B. The Ruination of Antichristianity**

1. Whereas we are told Jesus will *"slay"* the *"lawless one,"* He will also *"bring to an end"* the influences of the *"lawless one."*
2. *"bring to an end"* [καταργέω] - literally means to render ineffective and thereby purge the "system" of the "world" that was ruled by the Antichrist.
3. All Jesus has to do to accomplish this is show up! - *"by the appearance of His coming."*

## **III. THE REPROBATION IN LAWLESSNESS - vv. 9-12**

### **A. The Satanic Deception of Unbelievers - v. 9**

1. Perhaps the saddest commentary in this section is powerful extension of the Satanic deception that already exists - *"... that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan ..."* - cp. **2 Corinthians 4:3-4.**
2. The Antichrist's deception will be satanically empowered - *"... with all power and signs and false wonders,"*
  - a) *"power"* [δύναμις] - supernatural acts that display ability that is outside human ability; miracles.
  - b) *"signs"* [σημείον] - indications that point to the authenticity of the one exerting power.
  - c) *"false wonders"* [τέρασιν ψεύδους] - deceiving influences on witnesses causing awe.
3. These actions build upon one another to produce a context where those who dwell under the influences of the Antichrist will be that he is authentic - *"... and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish."*
4. Those who are the elect after the Rapture - chosen for redemption will be preserved from this deception - cp. **Matthew 24:22-25.**

### **B. The Sovereign Deception for Unbelief - vv. 10-12**

1. The reason that God "gives them over" to such deception is given to us - *"... because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."*

2. *“the love of the truth”* - has a double meaning: a) the Gospel concerning Jesus’ work for us; and b) Jesus Himself who is the truth - cp. **John 14:6**.
3. This refers to those left after the Rapture - they had rejected the Gospel and as a result the opportunity for them to be saved is withdrawn and they are turned over for this deception - *“For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”*
4. There comes a day that those who defiantly reject the truth will be unable to believe it; God will harden their hearts and harden them in the path they have chosen.
5. These deceived ones will believe instead that the Antichrist is God - the long awaited Messiah and will follow him with devotion.

**The removal of restraint by the Lord  
results in justified judgment.**