

Commentary Dive

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

#0	<i>The Mystery of Lawlessness</i>	“Sin and lawlessness are in the world, but they have not boiled over because God has a “restrainer” in the world who is holding sin in check. But God has set a future day when he will remove the restrainer, and then the antichrist will come and begin his mass deception, resulting in mass condemnation ... One thing that is clear: evil is already at work, but the restrainer keeps it in check.” (Douglas Mangum, <i>Lexham Context Commentary</i>) Just as there are and will be “many antichrists” before the revelation of the final antichrist (1 John 2:18), so the “mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:7) is already at work before the advent of the “man of lawless ness” (2 Thess. 2:3)
#1	<i>The Rebellion</i>	<u>Option: Religious apostasy</u> “One major event is “the rebellion” (lit., “the falling away,” <i>hē apostasia</i>, from whence comes the English word “apostasy”). This is a revolt, a departure, an abandoning of a position once held. This rebellion, which will take place within the professing church, will be a departure from the truth that God has revealed in His Word. True, apostasy has characterized the church almost from its inception, but Paul referred to a specific distinguishable apostasy that will come in the future (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; 4:3–4; James 5:1–8; 2 Peter 2; 3:3–6; Jude). He had already told his readers about it (2 Thes. 2:5).” (Thomas Constable, <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary</i>, 718) <u>Option: Onset of the Worship of the Antichrist</u> “Some scholars believe that this apostasy (called by Paul “the” apostasy) will consist of people turning from God’s truth to worship the Antichrist [see Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4], who will set himself up in God’s temple and claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4). If this is so, then the judgments of the day of the Lord will occur in the second half of the seven-year period preceding Christ’s second coming.” (Thomas Constable, <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary</i>, 718) <u>Option: Israel’s Covenant with the Antichrist</u> Daniel 9:24-27 teaches that the antichrist will make a seven-year covenant with Israel which will inaugurate the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy immediately after which the kingdom will be restored to Israel. If the Day of the Lord refers to the entirety of Daniel’s seventieth week, this explains well Paul’s two necessary precursors to that time: the antichrist and his covenant.
#2	<i>Restraîner Removed</i>	<u>Option: Rule of Law</u> “The rebellion will take place, according to Paul, publicly and visibly on the stage of history. It will be seen in a worldwide breakdown of the rule of law, of the administration of justice and of the practice of true religion ... Now is the time of <i>restraint</i>, in which the secret power of lawlessness is being held in check. Next will come the time of <i>rebellion</i>, in which the control of law will be removed and the lawless one will be revealed.” (John Stott, <i>The Message of 2 Thessalonians</i>, 171-173)

		Option: <u>The Church</u> “When the church leaves the earth in the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way in the sense that His unique lawlessness-restraining ministry through God’s people will be removed” (Thomas Constable, <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary</i>, 719) Option: <u>Good Angel</u> “Another interpretation is that it means that God himself, through some heavenly agency ... restrains the power of evil. (Jewish literature referred to the holding back of Satan and the evil powers by a heavenly being until the end of the world; cf. Rev. 7:1-3; 20:1-3).” (I. Howard Marshall, <i>New Bible Commentary</i>, 1289)
#3	<i>Antichrist Revealed</i>	The antichrist is called the “man of lawlessness” because he will lead a great rebellion against God’s authority and he is called the “son of destruction” because he is destined for destruction by Messiah “Throughout history there have been many who have done Satan’s evil work (cf. the ‘many antichrists’, 1 John 2:18) ... Paul’s concern is not with the evil ones who appear from time to time, but with the most infamous of all, one who will appear in the last days ... He is not Satan, for he is distinguished from him (v. 9); but he is Satan’s instrument, imbued with Satan’s spirit.” (Leon Morris, <i>Tyndale New Testament Commentary</i>, 126)
#4	<i>Abomination of Desolation</i>	<u>Literal or Symbolic Temple?</u> “The emerging consensus ... argues that Paul’s apocalyptic language should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally and is ‘a graphic way of saying that he [the man of lawlessness] plans to usurp the authority of God’ (Bruce, 169). Other interpreters affirm the interpretation that may be traced to Hippolytus (ca. AD 170-236) and possibly to Irenaeus (ca. AD 130-200), which holds that the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt in the last days.” (Köstenberger, Quarles, and Kellum, <i>The Cradle the Cross and the Crown</i>, 532) If there will be a literal, physical temple rebuilt in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:1-2, 8) in which the antichrist will proclaim himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:4), this is certainly the act Jesus refers to as the “abomination of desolation” (Matt. 24:15-16, 20)
#5	<i>Wicked Deception</i>	The “wicked deception” (2:10a) and “strong delusion” (2:11a) refer to believing the claims of the “man of lawlessness” (2:3b) as he “proclaims himself to be God” (2:4b) and attests to this claim “with all power and false signs and wonders” (2:9b)
#6	<i>Day of the Lord</i>	The eschatological Day of the Lord is the climactic period of transition between the present, evil age and the age to come, known also as <i>the tribulation</i> and <i>Daniel’s 70th week</i>. During this time God will pour out His wrath against ungodliness during the tribulation (Rev. 6:16) and Israel will be tested and purified (Zech. 13:8-9). This seven-year period (Dan. 9:27) begins with the removal of the restrainer (2 Thess. 2:6-7) allowing for the revelation of the antichrist, the man of lawlessness (vv. 3, 8), who will make a seven-year covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27), likely Israel’s apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3), which he will break at the midpoint of the tribulation by performing the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15) soon gathering all nations in war against Jerusalem (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2; Rev. 16:12-13, 16; 19:19) and nearly destroying it (Zech. 13:8; 14:1-2).

#7	<i>Second Coming</i>	When all hope seems lost, Jesus will return (Matt. 24:27), accompanied by cosmic signs (vv. 29-30), the sound of a trumpet (v. 31), and His heavenly host (25:31), resurrecting those who perished in the tribulation (Rev. 20:4) and rescuing His belabored saints in Jerusalem. He will descend on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11-12) and split the mountain in two (Zech. 14:4), enabling the escape of those believers trapped in Jerusalem (v. 5). Then Christ and His army will advance on the invading army and utterly defeat them (Zech. 12:9; Rev. 19:21), banishing them to the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). In light of this salvation, many Israelites will repent and turn to God (Zech. 12:10; 13:1; Rom. 11:25-26).
#8	<i>Saints Gathered</i>	<u>Option: Pre-Tribulational Rapture</u> “If Paul had taught them that the Church would experience the woes of the day of the Lord (<i>aka</i> the great tribulation) and only after those woes experience the rapture, then it is unlikely that the Thessalonians would have been frightened by this teaching that maintained that the day of the Lord had arrived. But they <i>were</i> frightened, suggesting that Paul had taught them that they would not be present on earth during the day of the Lord because of escaping it through the rapture of the church.” (Kevin Zuber, <i>Moody Bible Commentary</i>, 1893) <u>Option: Post-Tribulational Rapture</u> “Paul’s discussion seems most consistent with the notion of a premillennial return of Christ that acknowledges that the church will experience the persecution associated with the mystery of lawlessness ... Paul’s argument that the Day of the Lord had not come and that the church would recognize its approach because of the appearance of the man of lawlessness implies that believers who are alive at the time will be present when the man of lawlessness appears. Moreover, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the catching up and the Second Coming are contemporaneous ... If Paul had affirmed a pretribulational rapture, his most powerful argument against the notion that the Day of the Lord had already come would have been to point out that the church had not yet been raptured.” (Köstenberger, Quarles, and Kellum, <i>The Cradle the Cross and the Crown</i>, 532)
#9	<i>Antichrist Killed</i>	The antichrist will be resisted by other world powers active at that time (Dan. 11:40-45) before Jesus returns, at which point the antichrist will turn his attention against the Son of God (Rev. 17:14a; 19:19), but be dramatically defeated (2 Thess. 2:8b) and banished to the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).