

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (The Restrainer) {Teacher. <45-50 minutes>.}

- I. Introduction {[HOOK]. <10 minutes>.}
- A. Spirit of God's primary working in believers—primary group of believers.
1. **OT—Temporary Empowering/Coming Upon (primary group—Israel):** "**And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel...**" (Jdg. 3:10). "**...I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD**" (Eze. 39:29). "**The Spirit of the Lord came upon**" (5 times), "**the Spirit of God came upon**" (5 times). **Psa. 51:11** says, "**...take not thy Holy Spirit from me.**" **1Sa. 16:14** says, "**But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul...**"
 2. **NT—Permanent Indwelling/Remaining In (primary group—Church):** "**16-And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; 17-Even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you**" (John 14:16-17; cf. **Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30**).
- B. How does the Imminence of Christ (the fact that the Rapture could occur at any time) make you think you should live your life? {Remember in the early NT church that Christians sold possessions, homes, quit jobs, etc. It was so popular to have such a strong community of Christians that in **Acts 5** it describes Ananias and Sapphira selling their possessions and keeping back part and lying to be in the "in" Christian crowd. It makes me expectant, gives me a sense of urgency, and makes me want to be ready to meet Him.}
- C. What would you say if someone said you missed the Rapture, that it has already come, and that you have been left behind? {Does this seem far-fetched without it being a joke? Well, this is exactly why God had Paul write about in **2Th. 2**.}

- II. Scripture {[OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION]. <30 minutes>. Have someone read and have folks focus on highlighted Restrainer and Antichrist references.}
- A. **2Th. 2:1-12** (Highlights the **Restrainer** versus the **Antichrist/Satan**).
- 1-Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, 2-That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3-Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4-Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5-Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6-And now ye know What withholds that he might be revealed in his time. 7-For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now lets will let, until He be taken out of the way. 8-And then shall that Wicked be**

*revealed, **whom** the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: 9-Even **him**, **whose** coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10-And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11-And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12-That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

- B. **2:1-3**— *"The day of Christ" "shall not come" until 2 things occur. {Paul tells Christians not to worry or be deceived that "the day of Christ" has not come and "shall not come" until 2 things occur.}*
- C. First, what is **"the day of Christ" (2:2; Php. 1:10; 2:16)**? *{That exact quote is seen 3 times in Scripture. The "day of the LORD" is seen in Scripture 31 times, 25 in the OT, and 6 in the NT. All OT references use God's name for "LORD" (Hebrew: Jehovah-Self existent, eternal, the Jewish national name for God, Lord. This is God's covenant name, such a holy name for God most would not speak or write it; see Yahweh). All NT references use God's name for "Lord" (Greek: "Kurios"-supremacy, supreme authority, controller, God, Lord, Master. A respectful title). Clearly "the day of Lord" or "the day of Christ" refers to the time when Christ comes. He comes to rescue the just and judge the wicked. This phrase scares the wicked unbelieving enemies of God's people, and excites the righteous believing followers of God. 1Th. 4:13-18 comforted the Thessalonians of Christ's coming (the Rapture) with and for Christians "to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Here in 2Th. 2, Paul encourages them that this has not happened yet. He says 2 things must occur first.}*
- D. What 2 things must occur before this **"day of Christ" (2:3)**? *{"The falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed."}*
- E. What does **"the falling away"** (KJV) or **"the rebellion"** (NIV) mean **(2:3)**? *{Gr:apostasia-defection from truth, apostasy, falling away, forsake. 4 main views of the meaning of this "falling away."*
1. Some interpret this as many **Christians losing their salvation** by leaving the Truth and their faith. I see this contradictory to the clear teaching of eternal security in Scripture as Christians (present tense) **"have everlasting life" (John 3:16)**, and after Christ has given them **"eternal life" (does not end), "they shall never perish" (John 10:28)**. So, Christians are eternally secure by having received what Christ finished on the cross and gave to all who **"received Him"** by grace through faith **(John 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9)**.
 2. Some claim the departure is **the Rapture** (lots of Christians leaving the earth), but that confuses the point of the passage trying to tell Christians the Rapture has not happened yet, and Christians will be the closest to

- the Truth forever once the Rapture does occur—not fallen away from it. This also deviates from the normal meaning of "apostasia."
3. Some hold the apostasia is **disciples defecting**, or many that followed Christ, will stop following Him. They believe they are saved, but do not follow or depart from the truth that following Christ results in abundant life. This primarily claims there will be a massive departure by many followers of Christ, although still remain Christians. This is compelling, yet many Scriptures teach that Christians cannot continually practice sin (which rebelling, disobeying, and not following Christ is clearly sin), since each Christian is a "**new creature**" and Christ's "**seed remaineth in him**," (**2Co. 5:17**; **1Jo. 3:9**). This also would not encourage or comfort disciples of Christ, which is the main thrust of this passage.
 4. Many see this as a **world-wide departure and rebellion against the truth** in so many deceptive lies, specifically against the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word, the Messiah, Savior, the only way to the Father, the only truth, and true life. We have always had apostasy, but never a world-wide apostasy. But we will when the Restrainer is removed, so this Antichrist evil world-wide apostate leader appears. It is clear when **2Th.** was written, one of the deceptions and lies, was "**that the day of Christ**" had already come. Today, most people claim to be Christian, but we are already seeing many in our once Christian country, and many in the world forsaking truth and the Truth, even in the Church.}
- F. Who is "**the man of sin**," "**the son of perdition**," (**2:3**), that one who "**exalts himself**" as and above God, sits "**in the temple**" (**2:4**), who is "**wicked**" (**2:8**), and "**after the working of Satan**" (**2:9**), "**with all deceivableness**" (**2:10**)? {This can only be the Antichrist that will come masquerading as Christ until Christ comes the 2nd time and destroys him and casts him into hell (**2:8**; **Rev. 19:20**). The Apostle John describes the Antichrist as a blasphemous beast that requires his 666 mark and worship, or he kills them (**Rev. 13**). Further proof this is future. Since Titus destroyed the Temple (70 AD), less than 2 decades after Paul wrote **2Th.**, and it has not yet been rebuilt (but it will be in the End Times), it is clear the Antichrist has not yet sat "**in the temple**" demanding worship as God.}
- G. How has and does Satan work in many smaller lesser antichrists today? {The Apostle John provides the only 4 explicit places where predecessor "**antichrists**" or the same Satanic spirit of antichrist have worked in the past and continue working today. "**Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time**" (**1Jo. 2:18**). "**Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son**" (**1Jo. 2:22**). "**And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world**" (**1Jo. 4:3**). "**For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver**

and an antichrist" (2Jo. 1:7). Clearly, they all show a Satanic deceptive and lying attack directly denying the Truth of the Deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, and His Father God.}

- H. Who is this Restrainer (the One who "**withholds**," and "**lets**") or keeps back the Antichrist from appearing (**2:6, 7**)? {This Restrainer is from the Greek word *katecho*-to hold down, hold fast, keep, withhold, let, possess, retain, stay. The main views think it or he is Satan, a prophet or someone else, the Gospel, Roman or Government in general, the Church, or the Holy Spirit.
1. **Satan** would not restrain himself, his deception, his tempting to sin or to evil, his lawlessness, and he certainly has not been doing that for almost 2,000 years. Clearly Jesus says, "**If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand**" (**Luke 11:18-19**). Satan fits the singular masculine pronoun, but not the neuter one. Also, Satan is not "**taken out of the way**" when the Antichrist is revealed. This is actually when Satan is most visible, involved, and working through the Antichrist.
 2. **A specific prophet or person** does fit the singular masculine "**He Who...He be**" restraining aspect, but does not fit the singular neuter "**What**" or it. There also is no believer with the power to restrain Satan's plan of the Antichrist, nor has any believer lived anywhere close to 2,000 years restraining Satan, sin, and "**that man of sin**" since **2 Thes-salonians** was written.
 3. **The Gospel** is "**the power of God**" (**Rom. 1:16; 1Co. 1:18**) and so it does restrain sin and men of sin by gloriously saving many from sin. It does fit the context that it or "**What**" restrains (is neuter and so is the word "**gospel**"), but it does not fit the context of "**He Who...He be**" (is masculine). This view claims Paul is the He that preaches the gospel (borrowing a little from the specific prophet view above). This does not make sense for almost 2,000 years since, though proponents claim Paul continues to restrain by his gospel message in his Epistles. However, the Gospel is never taken out of the way until after the Antichrist comes and not until Christ Himself comes, then time is up. In fact, after the Antichrist is revealed "**the everlasting gospel...is preached to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people**" during the Tribulation Period (**Rev. 14:6**). So, it is impossible for the Gospel to be "**taken out of the way**" or removed prior to the Antichrist, as the Scripture states the opposite.
 4. **Government.** All governments have risen and fallen over the last 2,000 years. All either started or have become corrupted by power over time, so clearly do not restrain evil, but often support them and their lawlessness. Many Preterists (hold prophecies were fulfilled in history) believe the Restrainer was the Roman government and the Antichrist was Nero. Both are false. The Roman government persecuted Christians, it did not restrain the Antichrist (who will come). The government actually becomes led or ruled by sinful evil autocrats or deceivers in lawless fashion. Also, **2:7** shows this Restrainer is singular (translated as "**He**" or as a person, not government). **Daniel** and **Revelation** both show the Antichrist not being restrained by government, but actual rising from government. **Rev.**

17-18 shows a 1-World Government (not restraining evil) that will actually be the evilest as it is led by the Antichrist, empowered by Satan himself, whose goal is to attack believers and the nation of Israel (to try to indirectly hurt God and those He loves).

5. The Restrainer is **the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church**. Some rightly cite the Church as restraining sin, Satan, the Antichrist, and deception. And it does, as does the individual Christian, Gospel, and government by the Spirit. However, the Church could not do this alone, and is also feminine, not masculine or neuter like this Restrainer. This Restrainer restrained evil from the beginning, during the OT, before Israel, during the nation of Israel, during the life of Christ, and during this current Church age. Paul is here writing to the Church, regarding the Spirit's Restraining work in, and by the Church. He is the only One powerful enough (Omnipotent) and capable to continue to restrain sin, Satan, lawlessness, and evil. The Holy Spirit's chief place of restraining residence gets removed when all Spirit-indwelt believers (the Church is Raptured) removes that major restraining influence by the Spirit. A dramatic spiritual void is created when this restraining influence is removed, which allows the Antichrist to be revealed. When all believing saints are gone, the Holy Spirit's indwelling and filling ministry dramatically removes salt and light (cf. **Mat. 5:13-15**) from a dark and dying world. This is consistent with the Rapture discussed in **1Th. 4:13-18** that gives believers "**comfort**" that they did not miss the Rapture and that they are not already in the Tribulation period. Also, the Greek word for Restrainer in **2:6-7** has the concepts appropriate for the Holy Spirit restraining, holding down, holding fast sin, Satan, deception, and evil, while at the same time possessing and keeping believers safe until the Rapture. The Holy Spirit is found in the Bible as neuter and masculine (just as the Restrainer is neuter in **2:6** and masculine in **2:7**). The Holy Spirit is still working since Paul's writing of **2 Thessalonians**. There are really no acceptable alternatives that could fit all the specifics, but the Holy Spirit, indwelling the Church. FYI-The Holy Spirit's ministry will continue in the Tribulation Period, just as it did in the OT, especially working in believers, prophets, and the nation of Israel. It will not include the permanent sealing and indwelling of Christians that was promised by Jesus to the Church that began at Pentecost and concludes at the Rapture, "**Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession**" (**Eph. 1:13-14; cf. 4:20**).}

III. Application {How to apply Paul's encouragement. <5-10 minutes>.}

- A. How have I been used by the Spirit to restrain sin (as salt and light) in the lives of those around me (explain)? {Speaking up about what God says is right and wrong. Trying to tell, teach, and counsel others about God, His Word, His Son, the Gospel, and about how to live an abundant Christian life. Supporting traditional Christian values, even when contrary to the worldly philosophies.}

- B. How do you feel that "**the day of Christ**" has not happened yet? *{Glad there is still time to make a difference, glad that we are not in the Great Tribulation period, but excited for Christ to come and take me home.}*
- C. If I were Raptured out today, would lawless and sinfulness increase? *{Yes, as I try to make a daily difference in the lives of those around me.}*
- D. Am I even aware of "**the mystery of iniquity**" (defined as the mystery of "immoral or grossly unfair behavior") that is already working around me (explain)? *{Repeated sin leads to deception, wickedness, and iniquity. I am seeing more clearly how and why lawlessness deceives and leads many away from God, His Word, Jesus, the Truth, and His glorious gospel.}*