

LSB 2 Thessalonians 2:5 - 12 THE antichrist the restrainer and the delusion

5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed—whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming— 9 whose coming is in accord with the working of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of unrighteousness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 And for this reason God sends upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness.

We've been studying the antichrist in these past weeks together. He is a person who will be the final one world ruler under the authority to reign of Satan who is a usurper and thief of this world.

Satan in some sense robbed the Creator of the glory He was due in His creation by introducing sin into the world, and then all men sinned and became trapped in sin and death. Satan usurped the rule of this world and it is a world in rebellion against the loving Creator.

Daniel pictured 4 great empires. One world rules. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. And the final ruler under Satan's usurped ownership is an extension of Rome, a ruler who rules the whole world in a revived Roman empire. Satan's last gasp, his last fight to hold onto this world through sinful rebellion before the true owner, Jesus, returns to depose Satan and lock him in chains and to cleanse this world of evil and rebellion against God. Jesus is the rightful owner of this world.

The Bible has much to say about that final conflagration, Satan's final war

of rebellion against God and the final ruler during that seven year reign of terror. It is a time in which Satan pulls out all of the stops and God allows evil to be unrestrained.

God is a God of contrasts that He allows in order in some sense to illuminate His glory and His attributes. Could we understand holiness if there was no evil? Could we understand love if there was no hate? Could we understand beauty if there was no disease and death and decay.

Just as the contrast of thick darkness before the beautiful dawn, there is a sense that God will allow the most horrific evil the earth has never imagined immediately before Jesus returns and crushes all evil and then reigns by comparison to evil in glorious righteousness.

In the midst of the horrors of evil never before seen on earth is a single one world ruler who has a connection to Satan that is the antithesis of Jesus connection to His Father in heaven who was the power behind the miracles that surrounded Jesus.

A man is coming to rule this world who will derive miraculous powers, superhuman powers from Satan. We call him the anti-christ because he is the polar antithesis to Christ and is against God and everything God, including God's chosen elect, those who dwell in this world that belong to God. This man is the full final fury of evil rebellion against God and His elect.

Paul has introduced the subject of the final antichrist who will singularly rule the entire world, as an exhibit in a polemic argument that he is giving to the Thessalonian christians, arguing against a false teaching that they had missed the rapture or that there is no rapture and that they were actually living in the so called "day of the Lord".

And Paul has said, that's impossible for a couple of reasons. First of all, you're still here and God has promised to rescue His own, His church, out of this time frame, which will cause the pretender christians to depart from

the original faith and follow after a false messiah. The apostasy. The departure. A dual departure. The true christians depart with Jesus to glory, and the false christians depart to follow this false messiah who comes onto the scene.

And Paul's second reason they can't be living in the "Day of the Lord" is co-incidental with the first one, the Antichrist has not been revealed.

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.

The "Day of the Lord" the seven year period of jewish history still on God's clock begins when the church is taken out. And immediately when that happens this single world ruler above all others will be revealed. We saw last week that he will make a treaty of protection with Israel and a false peace will ensue under this false messiah's rule.

And then 3½ years into the semi peace, a peace of iron and clay trying to hold together somehow this man enters the jewish temple, stops the sacrifices, abominates the temple, declares himself God, and begins to systematically eliminate anyone who says otherwise.

We'll investigate the term lawlessness this morning by quickly looking at the moral commands in God's 10 commandments, but first is this incredible lawlessness of this man claiming God's first commandment for himself. You shall have no other gods before Me.

The antichrist will say; I am that god. You shall have no other gods before me. It is the living incarnation of Satan's boast revealed to us by God through Isaiah the prophet when Satan declared;

13 But you said in your heart,

*'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'* Isa. 14:13,14

Through the antichrist, Satan is living out this long time boast embodied in this single world ruler. Finally, Satan will say, through his mouth, *you shall have no other gods before me*

Paul calls him; *the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.*

That event is the descent into the final events, the final 3 1/2 years of the day of the Lord. The final provocation. Satan, on the throne, telling the world "*you shall have no other gods before me*" How terrifying to provoke the God of gods to battle claiming His place as God of very gods.

Then Paul says in vs. 5 *Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*

This is a polemic, an argument against a false teaching, and part of Paul's argument is that we are to recall true revelation given.

Paul says I told you these things. How can you so quickly believe something false when the truth was declared and taught. Our safety against false doctrine and the harm it brings is in knowledge of the truth. The principal of Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*

It's unpopular these days to teach at the level that we are teaching in this church. People want to come to church and feel good. Tolerance for deep study and teaching of God's word is low. It doesn't always immediately make you feel good. But knowledge is necessary for our protection. A

faithful shepherd feeds the sheep and that knowledge base of revealed truth is protection for the sheep.

Paul says, I told you this stuff! You shouldn't have been able to have been disturbed . . . if you were paying attention. *5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?* It's like saying the antithesis of Hosea 4:6 *My people are unmoved because of knowledge*

You wouldn't be having this problem if you had paid attention to the foundational teaching I gave to you when I was with you. Pretty telling that Paul was only with them for a few weeks and in that time frame he taught them a complete eschatology of end times events including the Anti-christ.

You could poll evangelicalism today and about 98% of those who would claim to be under the mass umbrella of christendom don't know there is such a thing as eschatology, study of future things, prophecies about end time events, and this single personality, the antichrist.

That's not only dangerous, but it also explains what Paul called the Apostasy. A vast white-for-harvest wheat field, christendom, evangelicalism, but if you were dropped into the middle of it and looked closely, there's almost no real wheat, the field is tares.

So Paul launches back into the theology they have apparently forgotten but they need to have in their knowledge base about this time. A time that's impossible for them to be a part of. A time immediately after the church age ends at the rapture of the church.

6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

Satan rules this world. Jesus called him the ruler of this world. But Martin Luther pointed out that even the Devil is God's devil. Satan has usurped

the rule of this world since the fall into sin in the garden of Eden, but from that moment until this moment, Satan's rule has been one of restraint put on him by God.

Satan can only operate within parameters allowed by God. He is restrained. And God has designed into a fallen world forces that restrain Satan and make the world possible to live in. 3 restraints upon Satan designed by God. Family units. Civil governments. God's moral laws given to Moses.

Evil would run amuck if it were not restrained. What would a world look like with all of the restraints removed? If Satan were allowed to rule, unrestrained? Paul indicates that what now restrains Satan, will be removed, when antichrist is revealed.

6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

Who is the "he" in these verses who restrains evil and lawlessness and antichrist's revealing. It's God. God restrains Satan and his antichrist until such time as the natural restraining of the Holy Spirit on this earth is removed.

Is it coincidental that the rapture of the church out of this world also lifts the restraint on Satan and his antichrist person. No. The Holy Spirit of God has been working within this world, through the church, the salt and the light of the truth of God, to restrain evil. God's Word and His revelation, His laws restrain evil. And the church is the caretaker of God's word.

A couple of evenings ago Pam and I were watching a famous movie, black and white, made in 1950. *Father of the Bride*, with Spencer Tracey and Elizabeth Taylor. It's a shock to watch that movie.

In 1950, Hollywood would not dream of scandalizing it's audience by a

bedroom scene where a married couple were in a room together with a single bed. The father of the bride is in a separate bed from the mother of the bride discussing . . . oh the horrors . . . the well being of a daughter who will be released from her father's protection, into the protection of a husband.

It was understood and needed no explanation in 1950, that a daughter falls under the protection and care of her father, until she is transferred in marriage, into the protection and care of a husband. The movie is about the father's dilemma, his worries, in trying to determine a safe transfer of this helpless female charge from one patriarch into another patriarch's care.

Beloved, you can ask Mr. Galli at the back of the room. That was only 72 years ago. We look at that movie today and it's shocking to think about the descent into lawlessness that we have covered in mine and Jeff's lifetime.

Lawlessness is the defining characteristic of the one world ruler when every restraint is lifted. Jesus hints in Matthew 24 of the complete removal of God's restraints on Satan. Even in the midst of God's hands off, God still brings restraint. Interesting!

21 For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Matt. 24:21,22

Jesus is coming to cleanse this world of rebellion. But it's almost funny that if the days hadn't been shortened, Satan might have finished the job for Him. Conditions on earth where no one would survive. But God brings restraint because He still has His elect, millions of them, even in this time frame.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

What is the mystery of lawlessness? It is a time, unimaginable to the jews of Paul's day, and also the judeo christian civilization present in the United States in 1950 when my black and white movie was made, when every limit that God set in place in His revealed Word, will be cast asunder.

The word mystery in the Bible is for something previously unseen, unimagined. Paul wrote this but he couldn't even imagine a time when whatever this lawlessness is, would come. It speaks of a lawlessness at a level never before seen or imagined. What or when is this never before imagined lawlessness? Beloved, I give you 2022. A level of lawlessness Paul couldn't even fathom. A mystery no more. It's here.

A time when the Psalmist's inspired prediction will be realized;

*1 Why do the nations rage
And the peoples meditate on a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against Yahweh and against His Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!"*

This lawlessness, previously a mystery, now, I believe, revealed, is a time when every restraint put in place by God, in love, for our wellbeing and thriving, will be abandoned, rejected, removed.

I was listening to a podcast this week and the two gentlemen were discussing secularism as opposed to every other enemy the church has had to face in 2000 years. Modern secularism is by far the most deadly enemy ever to come upon the church. Here's why?

Lawlessness, the lawlessness spoken of by Paul in our passage this morning, the lawlessness that will surround and define antichrist is a lawlessness that removes God. Eliminates every sky god. A Godless time.

If you get rid of God, you get rid of everything God defined. Binary genders. Male and female. Marriage. Family. Good and evil. Moral law of any kind. All of it is based in God. Secularism dismisses God. Goodbye God, we're going to Bodie.

If you can successfully eliminate God, then everything else goes out the window. Every natural and moral law is dismissed. Gone. No God, no rules. All of it is gone. Secularism has brought a new standard of lawlessness to our world that no one even imagined . . . until now. No God, no rules, no church, no morals, no nothing.

Funny that the cowards who have devised secularism, devoid of all laws, won't get into an airplane that doesn't follow engineering based in God's natural laws. I really think modern secularism is the final lawlessness that Paul was referring to but didn't really even imagine what it would be. It's here.

Secularism is the complete abandonment of God, his natural rules, his order, his moral rules, everything. All gone. God, you are dismissed. There is no God. We can figure this out on our own. Clean slate. The sky is the limit. Who says you can't be married to a german sheperd. Not God! He's dismissed. Go for it.

Let's do a very quick refresher of just God's moral laws given to Moses in the ten commandments. Think about the change in our land, the USA in regards to these moral laws, in just 3/4 of a century. Law vss lawlessness. 1950 to now. We'll begin with the 4rth commandment since antichrist will claim the first 3 for himself. As god.

Exodus 20:8 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Set one day aside to worship and honor God by worship and rest. We don't have to compare 1950 here. In 1950 most people went to some kind of worship gathering on Sunday. Businesses were closed. It was the Sabbath.

I recently saw a poll number that I believe. What was left of church goers, before Covid, just a couple of years ago, is now diminished by 47%. Pitiful before covid, when the government closed the churches, and now almost diminished by half in just 2 years.

The Sabbath is unobserved in our land. Sunday is beer day. Games on TV day. A very interesting possibility to consider in Daniel chapter 7 about antichrist; How would you eliminate any remembrance of the sabbath day?

24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will make low three kings. 25 He will speak words against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make changes in seasons and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Since you're the new sheriff in town, God is eliminated, you're the new god, why wouldn't you decree replacement times and calendars that erase **any** memory of a God who created the world in 6 days and rested on the seventh.

I'm god now. A new calendar with 10 months. Ten 36 day months with 5 bonus holidays mixed in. 10 months of 6 weeks of 6 days, in each month. Clean slate. No more Sabbath. No more Christmas. No more Easter. All forgotten. But we'll celebrate Halloween 5 times during the 365 day year. six six six. Hmmmmmmmm.

Beloved, this is only speculation, but the possibility is limitless once the old God is eliminated and you're the new god. Perhaps that's why time, times and half a time are spelled out for us, 1260 evening and morning days.

Antichrist can't change God's order of evening and morning, 24 hour days. Although he could replace hours with a new segment that is 4 of the old hours long. 6 of those in an evening and morning. Lots of 6's possible in his new calendar and time frame. Six weeks in a month. Six days in a

week. 6 time periods in each day. 6 - 6 - 6

Just thinking out loud. Not saying anything dogmatic. Just stating what would be possible. Or some variation of the same idea. Changing times and calendars and days and weeks and months erases any memory of the old sky God and His Sabbaths. In secularism, there's certainly no real reason to NOT do something like this. The mystery of lawlessness.

God's first three laws replaced, redirected to the new god on his throne, in Jerusalem, in the temple. God's fourth law obliterated. No more sky God. No more sabbath to keep Holy. No more definition of holiness. Holiness is re-defined by the new god. He'll tell you what is holy. Forget about the old holy. Redefined by secularism. Personalized by the new god.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which Yahweh your God gives you.

Families, under attack and gone. Father's, the very idea of a patriarchal leadership of family, an evil idea to our lawless land. These days children who have survived the gestation period and are born, are lucky to have a single parent who feeds and cares for them. Lawlessness has destroyed families, fathers, mothers, children. There's nothing left to honor. Lawlessness has hollowed out the family.

Meanwhile, this week, in Virginia, a bill was put in place that would make a father or a mother who were un-affirming of a child's gender dysphoria, a criminal act that could be punished by prison time. What parents that are left are being gutted of parental rights over the welfare of their children.

And in the fight for children to even exist, Joe Biden arrested 11 Pro-Life activists this week;

The Department of Justice arrested eleven more nonviolent pro-life activists for alleged violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

Several individuals, ranging from twenty-four years old to eighty-seven years old, had coordinated on social media to blockade an abortion facility in Mount Juliet, Tennessee, allegedly using “force and physical obstruction to injure, intimidate, and interfere with employees of the clinic and a patient who was seeking reproductive health services,” according to a statement from the Department of Justice.

Some face up to eleven years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000, while others face up to one year in prison and fines of up to \$10,000. G3 Weekly

In the same week the military service of our nation which is funded by your tax dollars made provision for service members to have leave and transportation to states where their unborn children can be murdered.

Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.

That seems pretty clear. Yet since 1973 we have murdered 64,000,000 million babies, and we stand around asking each other why, why, why, when a kid walks into a high school and murders 17 people, a crime he had been pre-meditating since he was 13 years old, and we **don't** give him the death penalty.

Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery.

Adultery assumed a married man and woman. But in our land, absolute personal autonomy with zero restraints by any God or any laws is not only demanded, but it's getting dangerous for anyone who would speak against that very lawlessness.

Our president has clamored onto a perceived political advantage of the necessity of abortion in order for this new god of self, absolute personal autonomy to achieve equality for men and women.

Our secular world left adultery in the dust of history. The unspeakably

degrading abominations that this culture is guilty of make adultery look sort of old fashioned and quaint.

Exodus 20:15 “You shall not steal.

We don't even bother calling the cops any more. Except we might need a police report to send to the insurance company. Meanwhile, our government holds a gun to our heads if we don't hand over whatever the number the IRS tells us belongs to them? So they can pay the way to murder babies??

Exodus 20:16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Don't lie. Never mind the lies about covid and everything else that have been foisted on us by the media and our lovely governing authorities. Lying is lawlessness. The mystery of lawlessness began in the garden . . . with a lie.

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male slave or his female slave or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

This is one I've thought much about these past few years of lawlessness. This may be the most egregious lawlessness we are guilty of. God says, if someone has something that you didn't get, if you even want what they got, it's sin. Think about that.

Our current culture is telling us, if you didn't get something that someone else did get, you not only *should* want it, but you need to rage that you didn't get what everyone else got.

We are tearing down western civilization, governments, rules, laws, based in this single law of God. Communism is based in the rejection of this law. Everything should be equal. Not according to this law of God. This single law, along with the one about theft, is the biblical basis for property rights

and ownership.

That junk in my yard is mine! Don't take it away from me. God said so. Don't even wish it was in your yard instead of mine. Coveting what is mine and not yours . . . is sin. Wanting what someone else has that you didn't get is sin right out of the pit of hell. Social justice and the resulting rage for a so-called equality is based in this sin.

Nothing is equal in a fallen world. You forfeited equality in the garden, at the fall. And if you even *want* what someone else has that you don't have, that is coveting and that is sin. And yet our lawless culture has made covetousness the new standard of their holiness. We're in this mess in the first place because Satan coveted a position to be God instead of God.

Coveting is the root cause of lying, stealing, murdering, sexual immorality, every other moral evil is based here. All those others are outward acts. Coveting is inside your heart. Jesus said;

18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

How did we get here? How did we get from the civilization of 1950 to the lawlessness of 2022? Well the first thing we did was eliminate God. Kill God. Front cover of Time magazine circa 1966; **God is Dead** Thank you Charles Darwin. I wouldn't want to be him on judgement day.

Once that was accomplished we became a secular society free from the old restraints of some sky God. Have you heard the word Progressive. One political party that supports absolute personal autonomy, enabled by modern Godless secularism, likes to use that word progressive.

But beloved the progress of the progressives is away from God's laws into

more and more lawlessness. I would boldly say the antichrist would have found the world unaccepting if he showed up in 1950. But in 2022 the world not only waits to welcome him, he is the messiah they've been dreaming of to weave the world together into a progressiveness never before thought possible. Progress into wickedness devoid of a God with moral standards.

The Holy Spirit's restraint from God's restraining effect of salt and light dwelling in this world in God's people; vanished. Gone. Removed, as it were. Into that vacuum walks a man who is not only charismatic, he has miracle powers to solve the world's problems. A politician who can actually bring REAL change. He'll be unstoppable . . . until Jesus arrives and stops him with the breath of His mouth. Unhindered and unstoppable.

Scripture gives us the words right out of the mouths' of that world's inhabitants; Rev. 13:1b - 4 *Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. 2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain fatally, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth marveled and followed after the beast. 4 And they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"*

Jeff and I were over at Carl's the other day installing a new pellet stove for Carl and Karen and I asked Carl something about the antichrist being somehow connected to Rome and how narrow or wide he thought that clue might be. And Carl's response was that he never dreamed he would see with his eyes the lawlessness and the rejection of God at the level we are at right now, before the Lord came to remove His bride.

I agree, and I also wonder out loud. How long Oh Lord. All of the lawlessness I outlined above is shocking and we're surprised that God is

storing up wrath, storing up wrath, storing up wrath, but the single thing that may be the straw that breaks the camel's back . . . so to speak . . . is the children.

The LGBTQ+++ revolution is coming for the children. They want to start cutting on and drugging up children at younger and younger ages. Sex change operations on 8 year olds? And since 8 year olds are aware of their sexuality and want to change it, who says children have to be some pre-set age before they can be free to enjoy their absolute personal autonomy too.

Mark my words, one of the plus signs at the end of that alphabet soup will be P for pedophilia. Coming soon to a TV near you. And Jesus was pretty clear about how He feels about adults who interfere with and meddle with children. Harm children.

Lawlessness is poking a finger in God's eye. So, if murdering babies and abandoning sexual morality and men with men and women with women and telling God don't give me your baloney about assigned genders, if that wasn't enough fingers in His eyes, lets ramp up pedophilia and maybe even bestiality and see if that'll do it.

I stand with Carl in stunned awe at the lawlessness this world is raging against God. But I don't see any particular reason this morning that Israel would be desperate for a peace treaty that some man singularly has enough power to broker. That has to happen almost immediately when the church is removed. Could come quickly but I don't see it.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed

I hope you have a better idea this morning concerning lawlessness and what that word means. It is the rejection and complete abandonment of the judeo-christian revealed God and the rejection of God's moral and natural laws built into the universe at creation.