

2 Thessalonians 2:6-10 Rise of Antichrist

1

Introduction

A hallmark of false doctrine is its attack on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout history, mystics, rationalists, legalists, cultists, and other heretics have assaulted Christ's deity, humanity, and the sufficiency of His saving work. Satan had devoted much time creating false systems of religion that teach lies about Jesus. He is disguised as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14) and his false doctrines deceive billions of people, keeping them from the life-giving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is coming a satanic false religion that will dominate the world like no other in history (cf. Rev. 17). Its object of worship will be the most powerful, evil, deceitful person to ever live: the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist. He will be the culmination of Satan's long war against God. Like Satan he will disguise himself as an "angel of light" and deceive the whole lost world (Rev. 12:9; 13:14).

2

2 Thessalonians 2:6-10

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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 the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

3

The Reveal

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8a

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As the phrase **and now you know** indicates, the Thessalonians understood **what** force was currently **restraining** Antichrist because Paul had told them when he was with them. The Greek verb translated **restraining**, means “to hold back,” “to hold down,” “to suppress”. Paul does not state “what” is holding back the Antichrist. Many suggestions have been made, but no human force can suppress such evil. This leaves only the Power of God as able to hold back the purpose of Satan for his Antichrist.

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God does the restraining so that he [Antichrist] may be revealed in his own time.

Satan does not want to operate on God's timetable. If he could, he would have revealed Antichrist long before now. He longs for the false messiah, through whom he will rule the earth, to appear. But nothing, not even the purposes of hell, operates independently of God's sovereign timetable. Therefore, the man of lawlessness will not appear until the time predetermined by God.

God will not allow Antichrist to be revealed until all the redeemed of the church age are gathered into the kingdom (cf. Rom. 11:25). Evil will not overstep its divinely ordained bounds. The true Messiah was revealed "when the fullness of the time came, [and] God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4); the ultimate false messiah will likewise be revealed in God's appointed time.

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Though Antichrist may be restrained, evil will not be; in fact, the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Mystery describes something which has been "kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25) and is incapable of being known unless revealed by God. The true character of lawlessness is already at work and Satan has tried to put forth his antichrist multiple times. (1 John 2:18; cf. 4:3). Evil, lies, hypocrisy, immorality, and false religion permeate the world and growing worse. Every generation is more wicked than those before (2 Tim. 3:13), but sin's ultimate manifestation is yet to come. When the restraint is removed and Antichrist appears, the true character of evil will be manifested. It should be noted that not only will the man of lawlessness be revealed, but God will also release bound demonic force upon the earth (Rev. 9:1-19).

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The sovereign, divine force that currently restrains Antichrist is exerted by a person—the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). Only He has the supernatural power to hold Satan in check. The Holy Spirit has always battled wickedness in the world.

Addressing the wicked pre-Flood generation, God declared, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever” (Gen. 6:3). The Holy Spirit also opposes evil by convicting the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). The phrase **taken out of the way** must not be interpreted to mean that the Holy Spirit will be removed from the world. That is impossible, since He is omnipresent. Nor could anyone be saved during the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 7:14) apart from His regenerating work (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5). The phrase refers not to the removal of the Holy Spirit from the world, but rather to the cessation of His restraining work.

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Summarizing Paul’s teaching on this issue, William Hendriksen wrote:

Accordingly, the sense of the entire passage (verses 6 and 7) seems to be this: Satan, while perfectly aware of the fact that he cannot himself become incarnate, nevertheless would like to imitate the second person of the Trinity also in this respect as far as possible. He yearns for a man over whom he will have complete control, and who will perform his will as thoroughly as Jesus performed the will of the Father. It will have to be a man of outstanding talents. But as yet the devil is being frustrated in his attempt to put this plan into operation. Someone and something is always “holding back” the deceiver’s man of lawlessness. This, of course, happens under God’s direction. Hence, for the time being, *the worst* Satan can do is to promote the spirit of lawlessness. But this does not satisfy him. It is as if he and his man of sin bide their time. At the divinely decreed moment when, as a punishment for man’s willingness to cooperate with this spirit, the “some one” and “something” that now holds back is removed, Satan will begin to carry out his plans.

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The Reveal

Romans 1:18–31 gives an example of the removal of restraint so that sin is unleashed:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore **God also gave them up** to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen.

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The Reveal

²⁶ For this reason **God gave them up** to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, **God gave them over** to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

The three statements that “God gave them up” or “over” (vv. 24, 26, 28) describe the removal of divine restraint and the flood of immorality, homosexuality, and perverted thinking and behaving that drowns those so judged.

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For the third time in this passage (cf. (vv. 3, 6, 8), Paul notes that **the lawless one will be revealed** when the Holy Spirit's restraint ceases. Antichrist will expose the depths of his evil nature by desecrating the temple and proclaiming himself to be God. God's judgments, which will begin during the first half of the Tribulation, will intensify dramatically as the Day of the Lord arrives in all its judgmental fury (cf. Rev. 4–19). Antichrist's reign of terror will be short-lived.

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So What ...

The passage in Romans shows how God turns cultures over to their sin and ultimately to judgment. America is there! We have been turned over immorality, homosexuality, and perverted thinking. We are ripe for judgment. It is easy to talk about politics and complain about the direction of our country. Another election will NOT change the direction of our country. It might slow things down for a time, but unless we look at the core issues and repent of our sin and return to God we are in essence part of the problem. Perhaps our leadership is part of God's judgment on our nation. Perhaps the next time God turns us over will be to the Antichrist.

This should not cause us to fear for He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. However, it should encourage us to live holy!

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