

## The Mystery of Lawlessness Is Already At Work

### 2Thessalonians 2:1-12

- A. Title: The Mystery of Lawlessness (2Thessalonians 2:7)
- B. Objective. To understand what the global crisis is all about? The pandemic we are facing now is not only a health issue, it is not only an economic issue. As the world is focused on COVID-19, there are movements that many fail to observe and know that they have Biblical and prophetic significance. What we will do is look at the events behind the COVID-19 pandemic and look at them from a biblical lens. But I have to refresh your memories from our past discussions and make clear some of the terms I will be using in this sermon for a better understanding of this week's message of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will be using 2Thessalonians 2:1-12 as our text.
- C. Introduction/Review
  - 1. In the past weeks, part of the prophecy studies we had, we have mentioned the unwavering determination of man to rule the earth. From the very start of creation the Bible says, "God blessed the first man and first woman and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'" (Genesis 1:28) We know the story that during the course of their stay in the Garden of Eden where the Lord placed them, they disobeyed the Lord by the sly and deceptive words of the devil and were tempted to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From there on, they were driven out and away from the Garden and all their efforts to rule and benefit from the earth were only futile and against the will of God. We read that when mankind multiplied, the heart of the Lord sighed because though they were "mighty men, men of renown" but the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:4-5) Those generations of men that were corrupt and violent were destroyed and ended by the Lord sending a great flood that covered the whole earth except the eight members of the family of Noah (Genesis 6:9, Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation and walked with God), who believed the preaching of Noah, a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). After the flood, the men were instructed again to be fruitful, and multiply and to bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. (Genesis 9:7) But, instead of following the word of the Lord to multiply and cover the whole earth, in disobedience, they dwelt together in the plain of Shinar to build a name for themselves using their own technology instead of what the Lord has provided for them. For example, they used "bricks" instead of stones and "bitumen" (asphalt) instead of mortar. They said, "Come, let us build

ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:3-4) And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore, its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:6-9)

2. From there, one can trace the relentless pursuit of man to rule the earth in his own terms and not in the terms of the Lord who gave him the authority to rule the earth as such. From the time of Nimrod who ruled the kingdom of Babel in the plain of Shinar (Genesis 10:9-10), to the Pharaohs of the Egyptian Empire, to Sennacherib of the Assyrian Empire, to Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian Empire, to Cyrus and Darius of the Medo-Persian Empire, to Alexander of the Grecian Empire, to the Caesars of the Roman Empire, to Charlemagne, to Napoleon, to Hitler who with Napoleon had visions of ruling a unified Europe, to Lenin, to Stalin, of the Soviet Union, to Mao Zedong of the Communist Party of China, to Pol Pot of the Khmer Rouge and others, who all aimed to rule the earth outside of the terms of God.

#### D. The Last Human Attempt To Rule The Earth.

1. But there is a final human government that will rise from the old Roman Empire, and this is the feet of the statue dreamt by King Nebuchadnezzar which is made of iron and clay, partly strong and partly weak. This is the last human government in the series of human governments and empires which only goes to show the utter failure of man to rule in his own terms as instigated and coerced by satan, the father of lies who came to steal, kill and destroy. This government will be headed by the antichrist (aka. man of sin, the *first* beast out of the sea, man of perdition) assisted by the false prophet (the *second* beast out of the earth) who will head the one-world religion by causing everyone to worship the antichrist.
  - a. The antichrist is revealed when he confirms the covenant with Israel and with many nations. The covenant will allow Israel to build the third temple on the Temple Mount and allow the resumption of the sacrifices and burnt offerings and will establish a false peace and security in Israel for 7 years. This is a false peace and security because 1 Thessalonians 5:3 says, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Why? Because in the middle of that 7 years, the antichrist would break the peace covenant and

persecute the Israelites, and would put an end to the oblation. He will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (Daniel 9:26-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9)

- b. In the Book of Revelation, John describes the antichrist to be the ruler of this vast empire on earth having power and great authority given to him by Satan himself (Revelation 13:2) that he may continue for 42 months or 3 ½ years or the second half of the 7-year Tribulation period. The antichrist shall receive worship from “all the world” (Revelation 13:3-4), and shall have authority over “every tribe, people, language and nation” (Revelation 13:7). The antichrist, having received authority from satan, shall rule this global or one-world government, sovereign over all other jurisdictions through a unified digital ID certificate which is the mark of the beast or the mark of the antichrist. This will be the universal system of controlling all activities and commerce, and this is where the idea of a one-world economy comes in. Revelation 13:16-17 describes the mark of the antichrist to be required for anyone to transact business. This means anyone who refuses the mark will be unable to buy food, clothing, medicine, or go to school, or go to work or perform other necessities of life. No doubt the vast majority of people in the world will succumb to the mark of the beast simply to survive.
- c. What about the second beast or the false prophet, the cohort of the antichrist? Rev 13:12-17 And the second beast exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
- d. Those who go through the Tribulation period will have an excruciating choice—accept the mark of the beast in order to survive or face starvation and horrific persecution by the Antichrist and his followers. Those who would not submit to the antichrist but choose to endure, even to martyrdom, and come to Jesus Christ during the Tribulation period will be saved and their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 13:8).

2. When will the last global rule of the antichrist start? Will the believers in Jesus Christ be subjects of the global government of the antichrist or will the believers

in Jesus go through the Tribulation period, a period when the Lord Jesus will be pouring His judgment upon a disobedient world?

- a. The Bible teaches that there is an event called the Rapture, an event described in several parts of the Bible when the Lord Jesus Christ will come and take out His church from this world into His glory. John 14:1-3 “ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” This is also described in detail in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, “ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 “ Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”
- b. **Nota Bene:** Take note that the Rapture is different from the Second Coming and they are not interchangeable. Review our past lessons where I have presented the differences of these two events. To summarize the differences, the Rapture is when the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His church (the dead and the living) and they meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and the Lord takes them out of this world into the Father's house in His glory. The Second Coming is when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to the earth with His church. His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) to defeat satan, the antichrist and the false prophet and then establish His Millennial kingdom or His 1,000 years visible and personal reign over all the world from Jerusalem, the city where the Lord has put His name.
- c. Let us go back to our question: When will the Rapture occur vis-à-vis the 7-year Tribulation period? The three primary views are: (1) pre-tribulation - the rapture occurs before the tribulation period, (2) mid-tribulation - the rapture occurs at or near the mid-point of the tribulation period, and (3) post-tribulation - the rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation period. It is not the purpose of this session to present the detailed differences of the four teachings but I have put down below distinct reason why we take pre-tribulation rapture as the most reasonable:
  - 1) Pre-tribulation. This teaching distinguishes the Lord's program for Israel from the Lord's program for the church. The tribulation period is referred to as the last week of Daniel's “70 weeks (of years) determined (by the Lord) upon thy people (Israel) and upon thy holy city (Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for

iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Daniel 9:24). This is the time when the Lord deals with Israel after they rejected the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. This is the time of preparation for Israel's restoration (Deut. 4:29-30; Jer 30:4-11). It is not a preparation for the Church for glory. It is during this period that the partial blindness of Israel is removed and they will finally recognize and receive Jesus as their Messiah and finally say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:39). This is a period when the church is saved from the horrific judgment the Lord will pour upon the disobedient world. Some supporting verses: 1 Thessalonians 1:10 " And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 5:9 "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Revelation 3:10 "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth."

- 2) Mid-tribulation. The problem here is that the church or body of believers (dead and living) becomes divided which is not scriptural because the Bible teaches unity and not division of the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 1:10; Ephesians 4; Psalm 133:1). If the rapture occurs in the middle of tribulation, only those who are living will go through the tribulation while the dead will not. Why should there be a differential treatment of the members of the church.
- 3) Post-tribulation. This teaching makes the rapture nonsensical or it has no purpose because as soon as the dead and living believers are taken up then they come back to earth with the Lord. (Revelation 9:11-17) And if the living are raptured and given glorified bodies with the dead, there will be no one left to populate and be governed in the Millennial kingdom because everyone will be having a glorified body. (Revelation 20:6)

3. Now, let us look at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11, our text we use to understand what is going on behind the scenes of the COVID-19.
  - a. The Rapture. In the first letter of the apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, he describes to them in detail how the rapture goes. The Thessalonians later became disturbed because they received a forged letter or a wrong teaching telling them that the rapture, which Paul taught them in his first letter to the Thessalonians, has occurred and they have been left behind and their dead loved ones remained in the grave and were not resurrected as in the rapture. Paul's intent in this passage is to correct the false teaching that the "Day of the Lord" had already come and the Thessalonian believers had been left behind to endure the Lord's judgment. The term "Day of the Lord" is the day

when, after the Messiah, anointed by the Spirit of the Lord, has “proclaimed the acceptable year of the LORD, that day is the **day of vengeance** of our God” (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19) to an unbelieving world. So, the day of the Lord or the day of vengeance of our God is the Tribulation period. In correcting the false teaching that the day of the Lord has come, Paul writes in verse 1 that concerning “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., second coming) and our (their) gathering together unto Him” (i.e., the rapture), there are two events that must happen before the “Day of the Lord” or the day of vengeance of our God or the Tribulation period.

- b. The two events before the Tribulation period are (a) the “the falling away first” (Gr., *apostasia* or departure) and (b) that the “man of sin (the antichrist) be revealed, the son of perdition.” Yet there is something that is holding the appearance of the antichrist at that proper time. Though the **“mystery of lawlessness”** is already at work or as the apostle John puts it, the **“spirit of the antichrist”** is already in the world (1 John 4:3), the antichrist will not be revealed until He (the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit) who is now restraining the antichrist will be “taken out of the way”.
- c. How does the Holy Spirit restrain the nefarious work of the antichrist? The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict, to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:7-11). The Holy Spirit that is indwelling the believers, works through them. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preached that believers in Christ are the salt of the earth and the light of the world to prevent spiritual decay and spiritual blindness and cast out spiritual darkness. The “falling away” that must happen before the antichrist is revealed could be understood in two ways: (1) it may mean the taking away or departure or rapture of the church and/or (2) it may mean the departure of people from sound doctrine in the last days and having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will **turn away from listening to the truth** and wander off into myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4). So when the Church, the body of believers, is raptured or caught out of this world, the convicting work and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is also taken away by the removal of transformed lives of believers conformed to the image of the Son of God who do not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit. When the restraining force of the Holy Spirit through the rapture of the Church is taken out of the way, the flood gates of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places, evil and wickedness in high places would have been opened (Ephesians 6:12). The world by then would have entered a period when wickedness will be so great by the coming of the antichrist after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying

wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

- d. After the Church is taken away then the antichrist, the man of sin is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). When he is revealed, he will be accepted as the world leader and he will confirm the peace covenant with Israel and **with many nations** (Daniel 9:27). This will be the start of the 7-year Tribulation period when the antichrist will reign over the global government that will be put up. In other words, the rapture of the Church precedes the Tribulation period at the end of which is the second coming of the Lord here on earth to destroy the last attempt of man to rule the earth through the global or one-world government of the antichrist.

#### E. The Final Kingdom.

- 1. Outside of the terms of the Lord's truth, righteousness, justice, holiness, grace and mercy, man's efforts and endeavors to rule and govern the earth will be put to nought just as the Lord Jesus said, "For without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5) or "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). On the other hand, as the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33). (For anyone to enter the kingdom of God, he must be born again; he must be given the right to become a son of God by believing and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as his all in all. If you love the world or the things that this world can offer (the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life) you cannot enter the kingdom of God.)
- 2. This is the reason why all the kingdom of men were dashed to pieces by the stone uncut with human hands from the mountain and the stone covered the whole earth. This stone is the figure of the kingdom of God from heaven to replace all failed human governments. The prophet Daniel said as he interpreted the dream of king Nebuchadnezzar, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." This is the kingdom that will be set up by the Messiah, the Christ, whose name is Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), for it is now God Himself reigning among men as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty

God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isa 9:6-7)

F. Behind the Scenes. We are living on the threshold of the age that is about to come. This is the age when the antichrist will reign during the Tribulation period. The mystery of lawlessness is already at work or the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world but the Holy Spirit and the Church are still restraining the wicked one, the antichrist from being revealed. If the stage for the revelation of the antichrist is being set at the background, then the rapture which comes earlier is imminent. What backstage activities are being prepared for the revelation of the antichrist?

1. United Nations News<sup>1</sup>. A sustainable global economy must arise once COVID-19 pandemic is reversed, UN chief tells G-20 summit. World leaders at the G-20 virtual summit held on Thursday committed to inject over \$5 trillion into the global economy to counteract the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Guardian<sup>2</sup>. Former UK PM Gordon Brown calls for global government to tackle coronavirus. ‘The more you intervene to deal with the medical emergency, the more you put economies at risk,’ says Gordon. He is calling world leaders to create a temporary form of global government health experts and the heads of the international organisations to tackle the twin medical and economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. “This is not something that can be dealt with in one country,” he said. “There has to be a coordinated global response.
3. Science Alert.<sup>3</sup> Gates Foundation Says We'll Need to Work Together to Vaccinate 7 Billion People The wealthy Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation called Wednesday for global cooperation to ready COVID-19 vaccines for 7 billion people, while offering an additional US\$150 million toward developing therapeutics and treatments for the virus. Bill Gates is also funding ID2020.
4. The ID200 Alliance is building a new global model for the design, funding, and implementation of digital ID solutions and technologies. No government, company or agency can solve this challenge alone. Setting the future course of digital ID and navigating the associated risks is a challenge that requires sustained collaboration and global partnership. The ID2020 Alliance working in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060442>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/mar/26/gordon-brown-calls-for-global-government-to-tackle-coronavirus>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.sciencealert.com/vaccinating-billions-will-require-the-whole-globe-to-work-together-says-gates-foundation>

partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees are now drafting a Manifesto which lays out shared principles and forms as starting point to guide the future digital identity globally. Identity is vital for political, economic and social opportunity. The present system of identification is archaic, insecure, lacks adequate privacy protection and for over a billion people to keep track, it would be inaccessible.

5. Rice University has developed a technology of vaccination called Quantum-dot tattoo which hold vaccination record. A pattern of 1.5-millimeter microneedles that contain vaccine and fluorescent quantum dots are applied as a patch. The needles dissolve under the skin, leaving the encapsulated quantum dots. Their pattern can be read to identify the vaccine that was administered. This is the technology for tracking everyone with the mark on the right hand or on the forehead to allow them access to goods and services.
6. Forbes<sup>4</sup>. Gates called for a "national tracking system similar to South Korea", saying that "in Seattle, the [University of Washington] is providing thousands of tests per day but no one is connected to a national tracking system" and that "Whenever there is a positive test it should be seen to understand where the disease is and whether we need to strengthen the social distancing."

#### G. Where is the crisis leading us to?

1. While our eyes and attention are transfixed on what is going on with COVID-19, there are back stage events that are setting up the stage for the revelation of the antichrist and his government.. It is a deceptive stage when fear for health and life is induced. While the virus should not be ignored but the fear being induced is simply unwarranted and fueled by the mainstream media when authorities say that there will be a second wave or the virus has already mutated.. The fear cause people to accept a global government that is supposed to bring solutions to the crisis or pandemic. People playing the end-time roles may not know it but they are playing the role that is predicted in the Bible. They are speeding up and promoting the formation of a global government. Without the corona virus, no one would have expected things would be moving so swift toward a global government, global digital economy and an ecumenical religion by syncretism, (i.e., a pick and mix approach to combine religious traditions and practices) to come up with solutions to tackle the problems of this world. Behind all the press and political posturing, you see a satanic influence of strong deception. This is the mystery of iniquity mentioned by the apostle to the Thessalonians that is

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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattperez/2020/03/18/bill-gates-calls-for-national-tracking-system-for-coronavirus-during-reddit-ama/#18d7d2b26a72>

already at work to bring about the soon revelation of the antichrist. But before that happens, we are out of here. We would have been raptured.

2. A New World Order in the making. By all its looks, COVID-19, and its far reaching repercussions, has started to usher in a New World Order for leaders to come together under one world government, one world economy and one world religion to come up with solutions to the crisis. There will be a global government and global economy where everyone will be vaccinated to be traced and tracked before anyone can go back to work, business, school or mass gatherings like the church.

H. Why has the Lord allowed this global crisis?

1. It is to remind us that this world is not our home. We are pilgrims, just passing through. It is a great error for a Christian to plant the roots of his life too deeply into the temporal soil of this world that will pass away. The Bible says that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and that we should set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:2)
2. Knowing that we are in the last days, Paul wrote this to Timothy and to us, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2Timothy 4:1-2)
3. And because we are transients not residents in this world, the crisis reminds us of the soon and very soon return of Jesus to rapture His church. Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed (Romans 13:11). We are living on borrowed time. The window to get ready is closing. Mat 24:42 “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” Therefore we should be ready when He comes to rapture His church.

10 May 2020 Message of the Lord