



Pastor Mike Golay
The Great Apostasy

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Shalom, Pastor Mike Golay here, director of operations with Behold Israel covering the topic of “The Great Apostasy,” as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

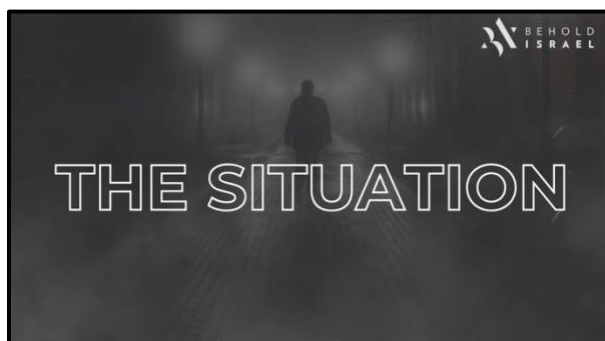


I just want to start out today by telling you a little story that happened to me. A few years ago I noticed that my car was leaking oil. Now of course, that’s not good when your car leaks oil, and it’s never good when you have to constantly add oil because that means there’s a breach in the

integrity of the seals, and the engine, and the gaskets. And what started out to be a few drops turned into a massive leak. So I was putting in probably a quart a week. And after some time, I got used to that. It was a nuisance; it was very frustrating. But I didn’t want to take it to the shop because it was an old vehicle. I didn’t want to put a whole lot of money into it. But one day, folks, one day one of these seals broke. And there was oil coming out, and I couldn’t even get several miles without stopping at the gas stations along the way, putting oil in my car just to keep it going. And I’d wake up the next day and there would be huge puddles of oil. The first thing I have to do is put quarts in there—quarts! —and then drive it.

And in a very similar way I want to draw off this illustration that in 2 Thessalonians and even throughout the New Testament period, there were leaks, there were breaches, there were

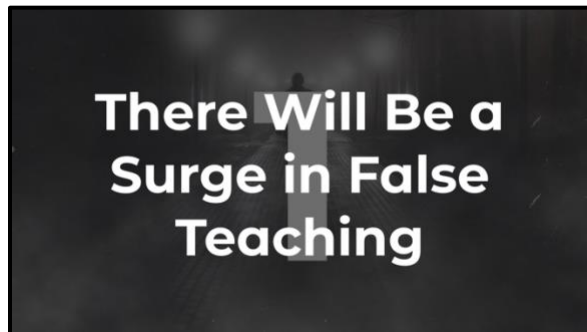
exploits, there was a lot of fake teaching. There was a lot of misguided information, and it was a threat to the church. We see evidence of this throughout the New Testament. To be constantly adhering to good doctrine and the truth, the apostles adamantly placed emphasis on this. But the Bible says here in this passage, and this is why I'm giving this illustration to you for context's sake, Paul is saying that there is a day coming that although we've had many, many leaks; many, many fake doctrines; many, many fallings away; many rebellions from good doctrine that have really cost our engine, they have really done a damage to the body of Jesus. But there will be a day where there will be a massive falling away, a massive rebellion even. And I'm going to talk about that rebellion against God's truth, a resistance, a departure from good doctrine.



The Thessalonians—just to give you a picture of what was actually going on at the time Paul wrote this—they were very excited; they had come to faith. Paul had talked about the coming of the Lord. He had addressed the

Rapture and the excitement of meeting Jesus in the air. And these people were selling things off; they—probably some of them were even waiting for Jesus on the roofs of their homes. If you read some of the scholarly literature there's evidence that some of them were quitting jobs and rallying their entire lifestyles around the Day of the Lord. We know that's an extreme reaction to some of the teachings, and Paul brings balance to that. But these people now when the second letter is written had still confusion about the Day of the Lord. In fact, friends, you're going to see in a minute that they believed that they were actually in the Tribulation. And they thought that they had missed out on the Rapture, and they were fretting, they were nervous. And to make things worse, they got this from false teachers. They got this from bad teaching. And I want to cover what

that looks like for them, and I want to give you and I an orientation of where we're at today and where the Bible says that we're going.



As we open up this topic, I'd really encourage you to grab your Bibles and open them up to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. The first point today is that there will be a surge in false teachings, a surge in false teachings, similar to the surge in

oil falling out of my engine. Now there have always been leaks in my engine but not like this. There have always been false teachings but not like the one that is to come upon the world. As it says in ¹**2 Thessalonians 2:1-2: “¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”** Well, there you see, friends, that there were fake teachings. There were already in those days people saying, “Did you know that you're in the time period?” And like tractor beams that have a magnetic ability to suck people in, so also a lot of these charismatic, charlatan teachers often using the names of actual apostles to get the people to listen to them. They used whatever means necessary to get the attention of the people.

So the people were confused. “Who should I believe? Should I believe this report or this report, this teacher or that teacher? This person seems to make sense. This person speaks with great conviction over here. Who should I believe?” Well, the reason Paul is writing this is to bring a peace and a rest to their souls so that they know that they can be confident in God's truth.

¹ Quotations are from English Standard Version

Now they falsely believed that they were already in the Tribulation period. In other words, that the Day of the Lord had already come. And as you already may know, the Day of the Lord in the end times refers to the second advent of Jesus, which starts with the Rapture and ends with the second coming. They viewed that as one event, as one concept, and so they believed that they missed the Rapture. How horrible. How horrible to be in that position where you look around and you see that you're still here on Earth and you're wondering, "Did I miss this? I've worked so hard." I mean, some of them had put so much of their time—they're quitting jobs and investing their lives in this whole doctrine of the Day of the Lord—and they can't miss it. And many of them felt like they did.

I don't know if you've ever been shaken or stirred like we see here or be made to waver. The Greek word *saleuthēnai* is simply "to be made to waver, to waffle, to doubt, to question, to be insecure" about something. I know that for me, there are all kinds of YouTube videos sometimes that we watch. For me, people forward me no shortage of videos on Facebook, Instagram; "Pastor Mike, you need to watch this. This is critical." And I'll watch some of them. Some of them are quite long, and a lot of these videos give compelling evidence for their case. A lot of them are interpretations of the Scripture, and sometimes I waffle. And I wonder is this person speaking the truth? Years ago when I lived in Israel, I met with some rabbis, and I wanted to share my faith with these rabbis. And I opened up to Isaiah chapters 52 and 53 which talks about the suffering servant of the Lord, whom I believe is none other than Jesus the Messiah, the suffering servant. And they looked at me and they laughed, and they said, [Hebrew accent] "Ah, hah, hah, ah, hah, hah, this is not Jesus. If you look back in to the previous chapters, you will see that it is the nation of Israel. It's the nation of Israel that suffered." And I looked at this. And it said that in the previous chapters, and I was wavering. I was wavering, I was shaken. I didn't know how to respond. I was

young; I didn't know much Hebrew at the time. And I just said, all I could say was, "Well, I believe it's Jesus, and you've given me some things to think about." So I walked away not evangelizing them, but they were evangelizing me! And I walked away like a dog with his tail between his legs feeling defeated, ashamed.

But I started studying. I started reading the Scripture, and lo and behold, I found out that the suffering servant is Jesus. That he starts out with a theme of Israel and that from Israel, he pulls out the ultimate servant. Although Israel was a servant, Jesus was the ultimate servant, the Messiah. It says specifically that He would give His life for His people. And I became so thrilled that I could see with my own eyes the truth. And I wish I would have taken their phone numbers. It was kind of one of those spontaneous meetings that we had right there on the street. I didn't know where they lived, I didn't know where they worked. There was no way for me to follow up. But my faith was no longer shaken because I read the Word of God and I also consulted with some very close, godly Bible-believing teachers. It's ironic how we experience the same things today that they did back then, and we need just as much as they did, a confidence in the Word of God especially in terms of what's going to happen in the world with the great apostasy to come.

Having said that, there are three ways the Bible says here that this fake news, this fake teaching, this fake guidance was coming. Paul says that number one: Spirit. He says right here, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed either by a spirit, spoken word, or a letter. Let me look briefly at a spirit. The spirit is the Greek word *pneumatos* and it's where we get pneumatic in English for *air*. Like if you've ever had a pneumatic nail gun, it operates off of compressed air. This same word is used in 1 Corinthians chapter 12:10 to refer to the gift of prophecy or the Spirit of God speaking through you. In this case, it was a foreign spirit. There were foreign spirits using people to communicate fake prophecies, fake *pneumatos*. And so that was one means in which

people were getting fake doctrine. It's interesting; if you go over to **1 John 4:1**, he says, "**Beloved, do not believe every spirit,...**" every *pneumatōs*, "**...but test the...**" *pneumatōs*, "**...the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.**" So that is a perfect illustration of what's going on here. False prophets were disseminating false news about the Day of the Lord.

And then there is: Word. There is a spirit, word, and the term word is the classic Greek word *logo* or *logos* as it's determined by its grammatical conjugation, which in a variety of contexts, the message itself, the actual content itself that is being preached or in a teaching perhaps, maybe a discourse, but it is actually the word or the content itself. And so they were receiving content, words that were false.

And there was another means that's very disturbing, and that is letter. One of the primary ways that people would communicate in that world at that time was through epistles and through letters. And there were many fake epistles and fake letters using the good names of the apostles to gain a hearing. I have to laugh because here at Behold Israel, I think on a weekly basis, we are finding counterfeit Behold Israel sites, counterfeit sites about my brother-in-law, Amir. And to shut some of these things down is generally a straightforward process, but it can be painstaking. But what really is painstaking is a lot of people are duped and fooled. And these sites, some of them actually appeal for money, or teach something that we don't. And then we get all of the mail of concerned people. Well, there you go; you don't need internet to have that effect. These people had it 2,000 years ago. So they're upset, they're frustrated. In fact, at the very end of this epistle in chapter 3:17, Paul says this: **[2 Thessalonians 3:17] "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write."** He's giving that information to them so that they know this isn't a fake. This is authentic.

So my friends, our first point today is that there is going to be a surge in false teachings. And they were experiencing them as far back as the first century. I had oil leaks, but there was a



There Will Be a "Great" Apostasy and the Antichrist Will Be Unveiled

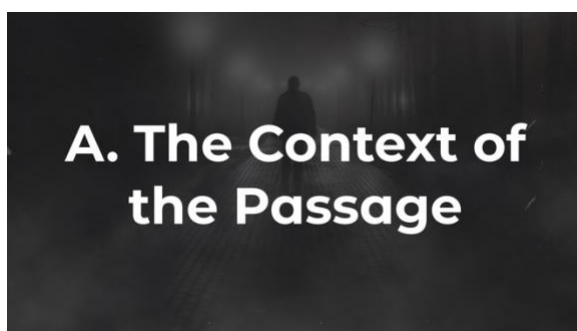
time there would be a massive oil leak. And I want to come to now point number two (2), which is there will be a great apostasy and the Antichrist will be revealed. Here in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**, it says, **³ Let no one deceive you in any way.**

For that day... That's the Day of the Lord and us meeting Him, **"will not come, unless the rebellion comes first,..."** And I'm using the ESV here. There are different renderings of that, and I'm going to get to that in a minute. Unless the rebellion comes first, **"...and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."** Well, if it's not obvious, that is the Antichrist. Now here is where you really going to see the dilemma. They thought they were in the Tribulation, but the great apostasy, or rebellion, had not happened yet. It was very similar to the past. Not only that, but the lawless man hadn't been revealed. So they're looking around trying to see "Who is it, who is it? If we're in the middle of the Tribulation, then we should have seen this by now." And they had forgotten this. Paul had been there teaching them. He wrote the first epistle of Thessalonians covering many of these themes which will look at later. And there they were, and Paul reminds them, he's saying, "If you were in the Tribulation period, then where is the great apostasy, and the man of lawlessness? Remember? This has to take place. There has to be a massive apostasy and the revelation of the Antichrist." And he's real piece of work, believe me. Look what he does: he opposes, exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, takes a seat at the temple,

proclaims himself to be God. And of course, that will happen in the middle of the Tribulation. But we know that he's going to make a peace treaty with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation. So he has to have at least been obvious, but they didn't see him. So how could they be in the Tribulation? He's doing them a kind of shock treatment to say, "Hello, wake up, wake up, you're *not* in the middle of it. You've been misguided." On some of our forums on Behold Israel when we do some of our teachings, sometimes people say we're already in the Tribulation. So you can see that the same thing that we struggle with—some of us today—is the same thing that the Thessalonians struggled with.

Now I want to get to this word that he refers to here, at least in the translation I'm using, *rebellion*. Other translations say falling away or departure. And the Greek word here is actually *apostasía* in Greek, *apostasía*. And I want to throw this up on slides right now. I want to walk you through this. And I want to demonstrate and make a case for why I believe this actually means apostasy. Why *apostasía* means apostasy, which means a turning away, a departure, or in this case an outright rebellion saying, "No, I don't want anything to do with that. I'm going the opposite direction, even in a protest."

So (a), one of the first reasons I believe that this is an actual apostasy is the context of the



passage. Look, we've already established that they were deceived and misled, okay? If they didn't get it right after the first letter and after personal conversations with Paul, we talked about them getting a slap in the face with this rebuke. And

maybe it's too harsh to say rebuke—maybe a harsh reminder—that wait a minute, these are the events that are going to transpire within the Tribulation: a great apostasy and the revealing of the

Antichrist who will start it. If you're in the middle of it, then you would have known that already; you would have seen that. But since you don't, then you aren't. Later on, in verses 9-12 which we'll look at, because of the context, this is talking about a massive deception. In the same chapter, verses **[2 Thessalonians 2]:9-12** he talks about the deception. In fact, I'm just going to go there and read that to you. **"⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."** That's where we can get the translation *rebellion*; it actually works. **"¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion,..."** because they made that choice, **"so that they may believe what is false, ¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."** So the context here is demonstrating that it is an apostasy.

Now let me pause real quick. There are those who are my brothers in the Lord—I love them, we hang out, we go bowling, we do activities together—who actually believe *apostasía* means simply departure. And instead of falling away or rebellion, they believe it is the Rapture. Now I'm a pre-Tribulation rapture guy, and it would be exciting to be able to say that this word—would be exciting for me to say if this word actually meant Rapture. See what the logic is, is that if it means departure, you could say that the church is departing before the revelation of the Antichrist and then the Tribulation. You could see how that fits, right? Now as much as a "pre-Triber" as I would love to interpret it that way, I can't with good conscience. And you already know the first reason which is the context of the passage is talking about deception, lies, being duped, and a massive resistance to the truth later on as revealed through the Antichrist. Now I respect that view. I can see how they would come to that conclusion. But it's not the only reason of context why I believe that *apostasía* means apostasy.



B. "Apostasia" in Other Places

Letter (b), *apostasía* occurs in other places, by the way, not only in the Bible, but also in some other documents that I want to quote here. First, of course, the Greek New Testament in Acts Chapter 21:21, the word *apostasía* occurs there. And the apostles were being accused by some of the Jews that they were teaching people to forsake the law of Moses, which wasn't true. And that word *apostasía* was to depart from, or to move away from the teachings of Moses, to resist, to fall away even, to go against. That's the only place besides here that the word *apostasía* occurs in the Greek New Testament. However, it's interesting that if you look at the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible in the Old Testament the word *apostasía* is actually used. And there in the Septuagint, in Joshua 22:22 — it's interesting



in this passage of Joshua 22:22, if you read it in Greek in the Septuagint, it talks about the outright rebellion; it uses the word *apostasía* to translate the Hebrew word for rebellion. And in 2 Chronicles King Ahab resisted the utensils of the Lord while they were trying to have a revival. And they're saying these are the utensils that he resisted, and they were bringing them back. In the Greek in the Septuagint, it says *apostasía*.

And we even find in **Jeremiah 2:19**, it says, **“¹⁹ ‘Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you....’”** And he's translating it as a resistance, falling away from the Lord. And interestingly enough because the Septuagint actually originally did have the apocrypha; they're not Scripture, but they are historical books. And in 1 Maccabees it says in 2:15, it's the word *apostasía* they used at that time. This was about 200 BC when they wrote the Septuagint. It

says, “And they that were sent from King Antiochus came thither to compel them that they were fled into the city of Modine to sacrifice and to burn incense and to *depart* from the law of God.” And that again shows you from at least the Septuagint, the way the word is used in Greek and the Greek New Testament. Friends, also there is not only that, but also Greek literature. If you go to *Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon of Classic Greek* and you look up the word *apostasía*, it simply says—its first definition—is actually revolt or defection. As if again, there is a truth, and you’re turning away from it, you’re departing. Now departure is not a false or bad translation. It’s a great word and it’s used as well in different places with different translations. But departure is also a secondary definition in *Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon*. *Lampe’s Patristic Greek Lexicon* also defines it as a revolt or a defection.

And so, we have the context of the passage, we have *apostasía* appearing in different places, and then just interesting, (c) the Latin word *discessio*, which is in the Vulgate, which was



C. The Latin Word “Discessio” in the Vulgate

a Latin translation a few 100 years after Christ.

Isn’t it interesting that they do have this word *discessio* and it’s a voluntary action in Latin, which means to depart from, to depart from, to go, to leave. And it’s not a passive occurrence like you

would find in the Rapture. With the Rapture, we get the idea that we’re living our lives and then “boom!” All of a sudden, we’re taken. It’s not necessarily something that we choose to do. It’s something that happens to us. So this word seems to be far more active than passive. And I’m just saying that even in the Vulgate you have these occurrences. And of course, *discessio* translates Acts chapter 21:21 as *discessio* from the Greek, and also here [1Thessalonians 2:3] it does as well.



D. Early English Translations

(d) English translations that predated the King James Version; because it the King James Version that was the first major English version that uses the phrase falling away directing the interpretation of going against established

teaching. And so fair enough, these English translations that do contain the word departure, such as the Geneva Bible and many others that went before the King James Bible used the word “departure”. And those who believe that this is referring to the Rapture will say, “See here; these English translations that predate the King James actually used the word, ‘departure.’” But it is interesting; I just said that the Geneva Bible was one of those, and it has actually a note, and I’ve seen it, of course, and you can actually look at this yourself. In the Geneva Bible, it has a side-note that says that the believers at the time that they translated this understood departure to mean falling away. They did not use an incorrect word; departure is a correct word. It’s an active departure from good teaching.

So friends, that’s some of the things that I wanted to throw out there of why I believe this is a great apostasy. Now why do I spend so much time on this? What’s at stake? What’s at stake is this, and I want to come back to the leak in my car. We could always say there’s been apostasies and people walking away from the faith. I mean who amongst us doesn’t know somebody that started out well, and they were walking, and all of a sudden, they changed their mind and they moved, the devil snatched the seed, or it wasn’t planted in good soil, or whatever, and then they departed from the faith. Some of them even outright rebelled. Because I think, folks, that we’re already seeing the beginnings of this, just like I saw the beginnings of an oil leak. But I don’t think we’re at the great apostasy yet. And although I believe with all my heart that the church will be

taken out before all of this, I believe there will be a day when the church is taken out, where there's no restraining force of the Holy Spirit in the church, on all levels of social strata, where the world, like my car, will just go all in with fake, false teaching. It will pave the perfect platform for the Antichrist who will have a heyday, so much so that he will get to conquer Jerusalem and erect himself as God at the temple in Jerusalem that they will build. And the Thessalonians were thinking they were already in the Tribulation, and Paul's saying, "The proof that you aren't is there hasn't been a great apostasy or the revelation of the Antichrist." These events were critical to understand. I mean even Jesus warned the believers right at the end of His ministry in **Matthew 24:4-14**. [Mike: I want to throw that (slide) up on the screen.] It says, **"4 And Jesus answered them,..."** because they were wondering about the end times, **"... 'See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of birth pangs.'" And He goes on in verse 9, "9 'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.'" You see? "11 'And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.'" I believe Jesus is telling this to people everywhere, not just to the apostles, not just to you and me, but to the whole world. The Bible will**

stand in the Tribulation. The Bible will be read in the Tribulation. There will be salvations in the Tribulation. I believe that this is going to happen within the Tribulation period.

Do I believe the church will be there? No, because He's addressing any believer in that period of time that can see these things going on. But we know from the teachings of Paul and also Jesus later on, that the Rapture occurs first. Because if we were in the Tribulation, then we would have fallen into the deception of what Paul is speaking to the Thessalonians against. But the events will occur, and notice that in the Tribulation, the great falling away, I mean he really unpacks that. Jesus gives us a vision of what's going to be happening in the Tribulation. So let the reader understand. Paul reiterated this, by the way, in **1 Timothy 4:1** where it says, **"¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons."** And he continues.

So my friend, there will be in my view a great apostasy. I believe there are many false teachings right now leading up to that—just like my oil leak—but there will be a time after the church is removed, "Boom!", where there will be false teaching and people will embrace it everywhere, even so-called believers. You even see that today. Look how many churches today are selling out to cultural values and beliefs. We are taking the Bible and we're dissecting it and taking only those verses we like and leaving the ones that we don't, and claiming "No one knows for sure what that means. There are many interpreters that believe this way or that way." Things like moral issues, sexual confusion, ethical issues, giving people a license to do things that were never there before. And instead of experiencing freedom in Jesus, now we're in bondage and we're calling that freedom. It's a deception. So my friend, I believe that there will be a great apostasy and leading up to that, many, many false teachings.

And we come to point number three (3), and this is where I'm going to make a case for the Rapture, and that is that the Restrainer, quote unquote, will be taken out beforehand. Let me pick



The Restrainer Will Be Taken Out Beforehand

up right where we left off in **2 Thessalonians 2:5–8**, **“⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”** I kind of like his Jewish manner here. I can just see him if he was there in person. [Hebrew accent] “Do you no

remember? That when I was with you, I told you these things? How could you forget? How could you forget, I mean, there's a lot at stake.” Verse 6, **“⁶ And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.”** What is restraining him? Who's restraining the lawless one? What is it? **“⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work....”** Of course, we know that; Satan's always been the prince and power of the air, he's always been on the move. **“⁷ ...Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.”** So Paul does not specifically identify who the restrainer is, but he assumes that the reader does. **Verse 6: “⁶ And you know what is restraining him...”** he says. [Hebrew accent] “You know we talked about it.” What power is strong enough to restrain Satan? I mean, he's very powerful. Look how he is manipulating nations and leaders, the education system, political system, social systems. Look how he's manipulating the entertainment industry. Various views have been put on the table for this. Some people have said, “Well, it's the Roman government, that was the restrainer.” The Roman government was no saint and often very, very pagan. And maybe Roman laws, do you really think a human government is

more powerful than Satan? It just doesn't add up, and it doesn't contextually contribute to the final equation here of Jesus.

Some people say it's the gospel preaching. Well, certainly the gospel preaching is part of a restraining force, but that alone is only the method. But I'm looking for the actual Restrainer, the person. Some have said it's a kind of ethereal-binding of Satan, but from whom, from what? Some people say it's the Jewish state. Well, wait a minute, if it was the Jewish state, we know that the lawless one will betray them halfway through the Tribulation, and you will have more power over them until Jesus comes back. I mean you could make a case for these but isn't it — if you just take a plain view of this in context with other passages around the Scriptures, isn't it more plausible to say the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit indwelling, the body of Jesus here in this land? Think through this. Remember, if the Spirit of God who is more powerful than Satan, living in the believer that is connected to every level of social strata. Believers are in the military; they're in the government; they're in educational systems; they're in politics; they're in shops; they're in communities; they're in homes. Believers are everywhere, in every country, in every language group, in every level of social strata giving the society influence: sharing the gospel, voting for their conscience and their values, advising educational system what works best, advising financial people of what works best, believers are in every level of social strata. If you were to take that away, poof, it's gone, you can see how a great apostasy would immediately occur. I believe the church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that alliance, the Holy Spirit using the body of Christ is the Restrainer. I think he's simply just reiterating what he said in 1 Thessalonians that the church has to be taken out before the great apostasy and the lawless one. ⁷ **...Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.** ⁸ **And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill...**

I'm excited about that because if that is true, and I believe it with all my heart that it is, we can expect a lot of false teaching, we always have. But the next thing to expect is to be taken out. Our eyes should be focused on Jesus, now, and in the air. Because once He comes and all the believers are removed from the Earth, the military won't have any more believers. Politics won't have any more believers. The medical institutions won't have any more believers. The financial system won't have any more believers. I could go on all day. Poof! They're gone.

Now you can see why a great apostasy is going to occur. People will embrace whatever; they're going to be desperate. They're going to run after the most charismatic, comfort-giving, ... Christ-like person. That's why we call him the Antichrist, the lawless one; lawless because everything goes. "If you want to live your life like that, great. If you want to live it like that, great. You have control over your life as long as you worship me." Lawlessness.

Well, point number four (4), and as we start to draw this to some final conclusions; number four (4): the power behind the deception is actually orchestrated by Satan himself. Now we pick



The Power Behind the Deception is Orchestrated By Satan Himself

up in verse 9 [of **2 Thessalonians:9–12**], which really gives you the context of the passage: **“⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”** There's that rejection, there's that rebellion, right? **“¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion,...”** because they made their choice, **“so that they may believe what is false,...”** He gave them over as it says in Romans, **“¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”** Now you look at all those words and it contributes to the

context of a great apostasy after the Restrainer is removed and he could do what he wants, he is the lawless one. He does what he wants. Who's going to regulate this guy? He regulates himself and he has no boundaries.

I want to come to this question, “the spin question,” as I call it. We know there's truth and we know there are lies. If I was to ask you how you would define truth, what would you say? If I was to ask you to define lie, what would you say? The truth, as I see it—and I'll get to the passage later which you may already be thinking, the John 14 passage—but truth is reality. Truth is everything that God is, and has done, and is clearly displayed. It is His Word. It is reality. It's real. Lies are not reality; they're fantasies constructed by anybody. They are the denial of what people may want to believe. A lot of addictions are started because of lies. If you take this chemical or you drink enough, you can escape, and you can have peace. But what you're trying to do is escape from reality. The reality may be of pain, a struggle. Trying to escape reality; we all have our mechanisms in this life. The truth is reality.

I don't know if you've ever been to some of these houses of mirrors, and some of them are wavy and you look yourself in the mirror, and you look really you know caught up. Some of them make you look really fat, some of them make you look really thin. And the church that I pastored for 17 years in the bathroom in one of our campuses has this mirror and it's kind of concave. It's a delightful mirror because every time you look into this mirror, you look thin and tall. And here I am washing my hands and I look in the mirror and I look great, I look thin, I look amazing. But then they do a video of you, and they do a promo maybe for a different ministry, and you see yourself in a video, and I see the chubby cheeks and I see the reality. I don't like the reality, so it either will force me to do something about it, or I could always go back to the un-reality and look at the mirror have a false image of myself. And this is the temptation that we all have is that the

Antichrist will offer false realities. They'll look true. They'll make sense. But they aren't reality; they're not truth.

So in concluding, let me offer a few more passages of Scripture for your consideration. We know that there are a lot of people, even now before the Tribulation, that have departed from the truth, rebelled against good, sound doctrine. And you could easily conclude that the apostasy has been going on all the time. And of course it has; the Bible talked about it as early as the first century. But I'm saying and I believe the Bible is saying there's going to be a great apostasy after the church is removed. There's going to be no Restrainer. Nothing will compare to this level of apostasy. There will be a mark of the beast; you couldn't even buy or sell without this mark. And everybody will be required to have it, or you have to go run away. What are you going to you eat, where are you going to live, what are you going to do? You can't participate unless you subscribe to the Antichrist and his teachings.

Can you imagine the pressure? I don't want you to be put in that position because you maybe have been saying no to God's truth. I want you to look at the Bible and accept the gift of eternal life and a relationship with Jesus *now* because the great apostasy is going to be a horrible thing. Christians will be singled out. We know that from the book of Revelation. It's going to end with an all-out war. In **John 14:1–7** Jesus says, “¹ **Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?’**” If it weren't so? “³ **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.’**” Verse five, “⁵ **Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’**” This is one of my favorite verses of the Bible: “⁶ **Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the**

life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Why is that? Because He is God. He is truth. He is the way. He is the life. He is somebody that is knocking on your life asking if He could come in. My friends, that is the Holy Spirit, His Spirit that comes into you and activates your salvation, your rescue, your forgiveness of sins, your status with Him as a child. I love in that passage in **2 Thessalonians 2:7**; it says, and you know what is restraining the lawless one. It’s used as a *topic*, and later on verse 7, “⁷ **...Only he...**” it’s a *pronoun*, “**who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.**” He is a Restrainer. He is the Spirit. He is Jesus. He is the way. He is the truth. And He is the life. And He is the only one. And this is distinguished from false teaching that there are many ways. He [Jesus] is the one way to the Father.

I want to add this encouragement and then we will close. Going back in time to **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**, Paul knew that they knew this because he wrote them a letter, he had a conversation with them. “¹³ **But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep,...**” I love how he terms believers that have passed away, not died, but he says asleep. They’re asleep because they will rise. “¹³ **...that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.** ¹⁴ **For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus,...**” because He’s the way, “**God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.** ¹⁵ **For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, and who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.** ¹⁶ **For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.**” All of those who are believers that have passed on will be raptured first. “¹⁷ **Then we who are alive,...**” who are left, “**will be caught up together...**” caught up, raptured together, “**with them in the clouds to**

meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ **Therefore encourage one another with these words.”** They had forgotten that for some reason, and maybe not had forgotten it, but they were thinking that they may have missed it, but they didn’t miss it. Proof of it was is that they didn’t have, they didn’t witness the great apostasy or know who the Antichrist was. So they couldn’t have.

Some of you may think you’ve missed something. Don’t miss that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; don’t miss that. That’s the thing you should worry about missing. I’m going to conclude with a prayer and those of you watching this right now, my encouragement to you is that you pray with me this prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to come clean right now and ask for Your forgiveness for my sins. And I want Your forgiveness and peace. I’m asking; I also want You to come into my life as my Savior and Lord and guide me. Guide me into all truth, show me, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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