

Who is “the one who restrains” in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, and why is he holding back the Antichrist?

“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.”

— 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (NKJV)

Context and Explanation:

In this passage, the Apostle Paul addresses confusion among the Thessalonians who believed the Day of the Lord (the end-time judgment) had already come (2 Thess. 2:1-2). Paul corrects them by explaining that two major events must occur first:

1. A great apostasy (falling away) — a widespread rejection of truth (2 Thess. 2:3).
2. The revealing of the “man of sin” or “lawless one” — commonly understood as the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

Paul assures the believers that this man cannot be revealed yet because someone or something is currently restraining him (2 Thess. 2:6-7). The “mystery of lawlessness” — the spirit of rebellion against God — is already active, but it’s being held back until God’s appointed time.

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Who Is the Restrainer?

There have been several interpretations throughout church history, but the most theologically consistent view — especially among evangelical and Pentecostal traditions — is that the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit, working through the Church.

Here’s why:

1. The Restrainer must be powerful enough to hold back Satan’s plans.

Only a divine being like the Holy Spirit can restrain the rise of the Antichrist and the full outbreak of evil.

Job 1:12; 2:6 shows us that even Satan must operate within boundaries God sets.

2. The restraining work is consistent with the Holy Spirit’s role.

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the One who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). The Spirit, dwelling within believers (1 Cor. 3:16; Rom. 8:11), also holds back moral decay and judgment (Matt. 5:13–14, the Church as salt and light).

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3. The removal of the Restrainer coincides with the Rapture of the Church.

Many scholars believe the Holy Spirit will not be *entirely* removed from the Earth but will cease restraining evil in the same way, as His role in the Church changes once believers are taken up (1 Thess. 4:16–17).

The Church — indwelt by the Spirit — is God’s agent of restraint on Earth. When the Church is raptured, the Antichrist will be revealed (2 Thess. 2:8).

What Happens After the Restrainer Is Removed?

Once the Restrainer is “taken out of the way,” the man of lawlessness will be revealed:

- He will exalt himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4).
- He will perform false signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9).
- He will deceive many who have rejected the truth (2 Thess. 2:10–11).

This period is known as the Great Tribulation — described in Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:21–22, and Revelation 6–19. It will last approximately seven years, divided into two 3.5-year periods, culminating in Christ’s Second Coming (Rev. 19:11–21).

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Application: Are You Ready?

This passage is not just prophetic—it’s pastoral. Paul’s message serves as a wake-up call. The restraining work of the Holy Spirit is evidence of God’s mercy, but a time is coming when that restraint will be lifted.

Hebrews 2:3 warns: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

If the Rapture were to happen today, where would you be?

Now is the time to:

- Repent and turn to Christ (Acts 3:19)
- Believe in the gospel (Romans 10:9-10)
- Remain steadfast in faith if you already belong to Christ (1 Cor. 15:58)

Conclusion:

Who is “the one who restrains” in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, and why is he holding back the Antichrist?

The one restraining evil is the Holy Spirit, working through the Church. When the Church is raptured, the Spirit’s restraining influence will be removed, allowing the Antichrist to rise and global lawlessness to unfold.

These are serious times. God’s grace is available now. Accept His invitation while the door is still open.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

— Revelation 3:22 (NKJV)

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