

As in the Days of Noah

(Living Faithfully While Awaiting the King's Return)

"The Mystery of Lawlessness"

September 27, 2026

Pastor David Bardowell

*"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work."
(2 Thessalonians 2:7, CSB)*

Big Idea:

The spirit of lawlessness is already preparing the world for the coming Man of Lawlessness..

Kingdom Response:

Joyfully submit to Christ's authority.

Series Heartbeat:

The return of Christ is not an escape from the mission—it is the motivation for the mission.

I. Faithful Disciple-Makers

Already at Work (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7)

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction." (2 Thessalonians 2:3, CSB)

Key Truth:

The spirit of lawlessness prepares people to reject God's authority before it prepares them to follow the Man of Lawlessness.

II. Faithful Disciple-Makers

By Holding Tightly to the Truth (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12)

"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie," (2 Thessalonians 2:9, NIV)

"They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved." (2 Thessalonians 2:10, CSB)

Key Truth:

The greatest defense against spiritual deception is not knowing everything about the Antichrist—it is knowing and loving the truth of Christ.

III. Faithful Disciple-Makers

(2 Thessalonians 2:8; Daniel 7:13-14, 26-27)

"The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will bring him to nothing at the appearance of his coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8, CSB)

Key Truth:

The answer to a world of increasing lawlessness is a people increasingly surrendered to King Jesus.

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Small Group Questions — Week 3

The Mystery of Lawlessness

Texts: 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12; Romans 13:1–7; 1 John 4:1–6

Start Here — Reflective Question

When you hear the word **lawlessness**, what comes to mind? Where do you see a growing resistance to authority, boundaries, or accountability in our culture?

Read the Passage

Have someone read **2 Thessalonians 2:1–12** aloud before discussion.

As you listen, notice what Paul says about the “**mystery of lawlessness**,” the coming “**man of lawlessness**,” and the ultimate victory of Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. RECOGNIZE THE LAWLESSNESS ALREADY AT WORK — 2

Thessalonians 2:3–7; Romans 13:1–7

Paul says: “**For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.**”

The Man of Lawlessness will be revealed in the future, but Paul says lawlessness was already at work in his own day.

- What do you think Paul means when he says the “mystery of lawlessness” is **already at work**?
- Lawlessness is more than simply breaking a particular law. At its heart, it is a rejection of rightful authority. How do you see that attitude expressed in our culture?
- Romans 13 teaches that governing authorities have a God-given role in maintaining order and restraining wrongdoing. How does that broaden our understanding of lawlessness?
- Human government is not the highest authority. When human authority conflicts with God's authority, we must obey God. How do we hold together respect for legitimate human authority and ultimate obedience to God?
- The spirit of lawlessness ultimately says, “**No one has the right to tell me how to live.**” Where can that same attitude subtly appear in our own relationship with God?

2. REFUSE DECEPTION BY HOLDING TO THE TRUTH — 2

Thessalonians 2:8–12

Paul warns that the coming Lawless One will be accompanied by powerful deception. He says those who perish “**did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved.**”

- What is the difference between **knowing the truth** and **loving the truth**?
- Why do you think people can be attracted to something that is false even when the truth is available to them?
- What voices in our culture compete most strongly for the authority that belongs to God and His Word?
- How can followers of Jesus become more discerning without becoming suspicious or fearful of everything around them?

- What practices help you remain grounded in God's truth when the beliefs of the surrounding culture are moving in another direction?

3. LIVE UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE TRUE KING — 2

Thessalonians 2:8; 1 John 4:2–4

Paul tells us that lawlessness will eventually culminate in the Man of Lawlessness. John similarly says that the “**spirit of the antichrist**” is already in the world.

Both point toward rebellion against the authority of Christ.

But Paul also tells us how the story ends: Jesus will overthrow the Lawless One at His coming.

- Why is it important that our focus in biblical prophecy remain on **Christ** rather than becoming consumed with the Antichrist?
- What is the difference between reluctantly obeying Jesus and **joyfully submitting to His authority**?
- Are there areas of life where Christians can confess “Jesus is Lord” while still wanting to retain final authority for themselves?
- How does knowing that Christ ultimately triumphs over lawlessness affect the way we live in a culture that increasingly rejects His authority?
- What is one area of your life where Jesus may be asking you to trust His authority more fully?

Disciple-Making Connection

The Kingdom Response this week is: **Joyfully submit to Christ's authority.**

- Why is our own submission to Jesus important if we are going to help someone else become His disciple?
- How can we have conversations about truth, morality, and authority without simply arguing with people who disagree with us?
- Instead of beginning with, “Here's what you're doing wrong,” what kinds of questions could help someone think about **who or what has authority over their life**?
- The spirit of lawlessness says, “**No one rules over me.**” The disciple of Jesus says, “**Jesus is Lord.**” How could that contrast open a meaningful spiritual conversation with someone?
- Who has God placed in your life with whom you could have a conversation about what it actually means to follow Jesus as Lord?

Series Heartbeat

Throughout this series we return to this truth: “**The return of Christ is not an escape from the mission—it is the motivation for the mission.**”

How does knowing that lawlessness is already at work—and that Jesus will ultimately triumph over it—change the way we engage the people around us?

How can we live with both **confidence in Christ's victory** and **urgency for people who do not yet know Him**?