



Revelation 13

The Dragon and Two Beasts:

The Beast from the Sea
The Beast from the Earth
UNHOLY TRINITY

Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

(v. 6)



Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

“And now you know...”

We wish we DID know! Wish these Thessalonians did NOT know, so Paul would just tell us! Thousands of hours, hundreds of trees and reams of paper, and endless debate could have been spared. Instead, he makes interesting comments and hints about it, but never fully identifies first the “it” and then “him.”



Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

- “*...what is restraining...*” ΚΑΤΈΧΩ
katéchō to hold down (fast) hold (fast),
keep (in memory), let, possess, retain,
seize on, stay, take, withhold
- Have been told Day of the Lord cannot
begin until Lawless One is revealed, and
he cannot be revealed until restrainer is
removed. Logical that Day of Lord cannot
begin, either, until restrainer removed.
- Paul presents order of events very
clearly.

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WHO or WHAT is the “Restrainer?”

- Identity of “restrainer” debated for millennia.
- Thoughts wide ranging, none conclusive.
- Debated until the Messiah actually returns.
- Various ideas about Greek construction, even distortions of words.
- Main controversy around exact meanings of words/phrases *“what is restraining,”* *“He who now restrains...”* and *“is taken out of the way.”*
- Debate about change from an “it” to a “He.”

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“He,” or “what?”

“And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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 2:6-7)

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Some
common
ideas about
identity of
the
“Restrainer”



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(1) The Roman Empire

(or in general, human government, obviously since antichrist did not come after breakup of Roman Empire....or has it really gone away???)

Roman Empire is both an “it” and “he” personified in Roman Emperor. Some say Greek *katecho* means more of “possess, occupy, and hold sway” rather than “restrain or hold back.” Rome was evil, considered “mystery of lawlessness” in power.



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- When Roman empire officially ended in 5th century, no end time events occurred
- so thought is changed to **include all human government**, which merely due to its laws, kings, dictators and such, has the ability to somewhat restrain full force of evil.



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(2) Preaching of the Gospel

Restraining force is proclamation of gospel...

Strength of this idea is compatibility with Mark 13: 10, which says "*the gospel must first be preached to all nations*" before Messiah's coming and, apparently, before appearance of "*'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong [i. e., in the temple]*" (Mark 13: 14)

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- Preaching of gospel enabled by God. Because of God's plan, this in itself is a "restraining force" holding back the end times until this is done. Somewhat weak argument. *Where is the "He?"*
- Thought says when this mission is complete, at very end of the age, God will remove the restraining force (?), and "all hell will break loose" (as described in 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-4, 8-12)



**THIS IS TRUE,
BUT DOES NOT
EXPLAIN HOW
THIS IS A
"RESTRAINING
FORCE"**

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(3) Satan

- If the enemy, or any of his fallen followers are the restrainer, would assume a contest between two forces of evil (*between restrainer and ultimate evil human ruler*).
- Making one evil force go away only to have another one come on the scene seems very unlikely.
- No real concrete evidence or support for this thought.

NOT LIKELY!

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(4) **the providence of God**

No explanation, just that God is restraining in whatever way He chooses, and HE is the restrainer Himself. May be through an angel, or other tool He chooses.

While this is true, still does not explain restraining force, which Paul seemed to think the Thessalonians knew of. God's sovereign will is always at work, not just here.

Divine Will

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(5) **the Jewish state**



- Reasoning not very clear.
- Those who hold this position are replacement theology supporters, which is not scriptural, lie from the enemy.
- Does not explain itself, assumes “Church” has replaced Israel in covenant relationship with God, and therefore as long as Israel survives, the end will not come.
- **Depends on a LIE – *cannot be true.***

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(6) **the Church**

- States “the Church” is restraining, merely by its presence.
- However, Church, by itself, is not able to restrain evil. This can only be enabled by one Person, and this fact is central issue of these explanations of the “restrainer.”



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(7) Michael (archangel)

- Only reason for this is from Daniel 10 (*where angel was delayed in reaching Daniel because of battle with “Prince of Persia” indicating warfare in the heavenlies*) and from Revelation 12 where Michael battles enemy before he is thrown out of heaven.
- No real reason given for this thought, and doesn't seem relevant in this application.



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(8) False teachers

- Say *katechon* means "seize" rather than "restrain." Imply false teachers trying to "seize control" of believers to lead astray.
- Say it relates to the "falling away" (apostasy) caused by false teachers.
- Each teacher is also a person, and their teaching is a power, which would seemingly solve "it" and "he" problem.
- Again, no real weight behind this thought.

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(9) **Holy Spirit**

Many believe Holy Spirit is Restrainer. Those who hold to pre-tribulational “catching up” of believers believe that because Church (all believers) is Temple of God in this age, and if the Holy Spirit resides in believers and will never leave them, then

“Restrainer” will be removed along with believers at this time.

Where the Holy Spirit goes, believers go.



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- By taking word form of *ginomai* (translated as “taken away” in many versions) to mean ***“he comes from the midst”*** (or “leaves the scene”; he is taken out of the way).
- If correct, Church will most definitely “leave the scene” if the Holy Spirit “comes from the midst” (of the world).
- Verse 7 could easily be translated *“only until the one who is now prevailing is out of the way”*

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- **Before Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), believers were not indwelt by Holy Spirit.**
All true believers today are temples of the Holy Spirit.
- He (*not it!*) does not come and go. Once He comes, He stays. If He comes “out of the midst” of the world, so do believers.
- However, Holy Spirit will still be very much present and at work during Tribulation, just as He was in OT times.

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- Can also be argued Holy Spirit has effectively restrained ultimate evil on earth *(to a point, though spirit of lawlessness is at work)* by Church's work for God here.
- There is a "limit" to boundaries of evil. God will allow evil until "fullness" is achieved.
- Holy Spirit of God is the ONLY force that can restrain evil fully.

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COMMENTARY: Ultimately a decision as to the identity of the restrainer will be made on the basis of answering the question, **Who is powerful enough to hold back Satan?** The obvious and only answer to that question is God. Therefore, the restrainer must be God Himself.

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In this view, the neuter (*the “what” and “it”*) used in verse 6 would remind us of the power of God in general, and the masculine in verse 7 would point to the person of God.

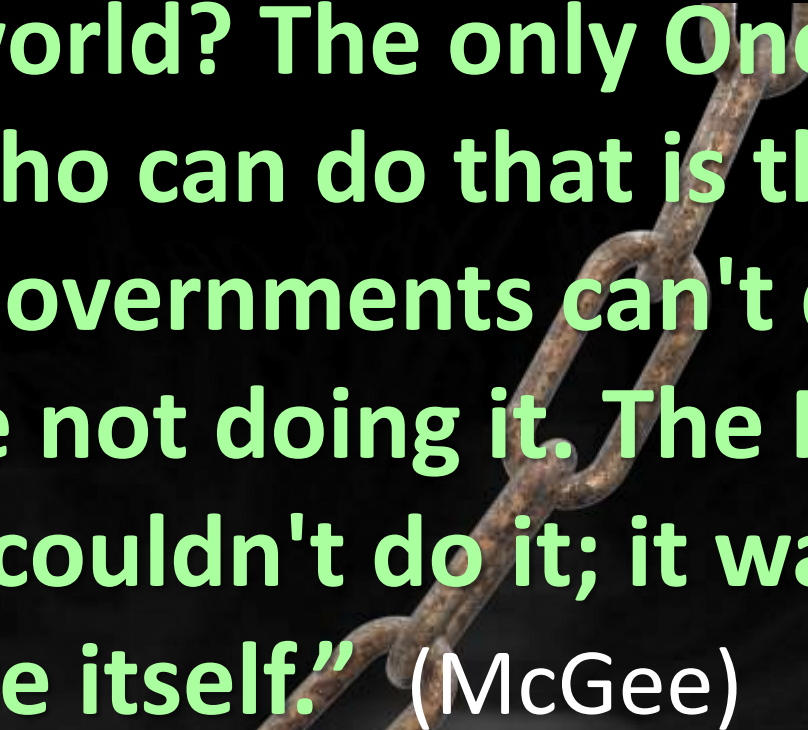
The fluctuation between neuter and masculine is typical of how the Holy Spirit is spoken of. Either gender is appropriate, depending on whether the writer speaks of the Spirit as a person, or as a power, and the fact that the Greek word “pneuma” is neuter in proper Greek grammar.

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- Whatever now restrains final world ruler from being revealed, must be more than human or even angelic power.
- The power that holds back Satan from bringing final apostasy and unveiling of his false Messiah must be **divinely supernatural**. Only God's power can restrain Satan and the fullness of evil.
- The man of sin, the son of destruction, won't be able to come until God permits it by removing the restraining power.

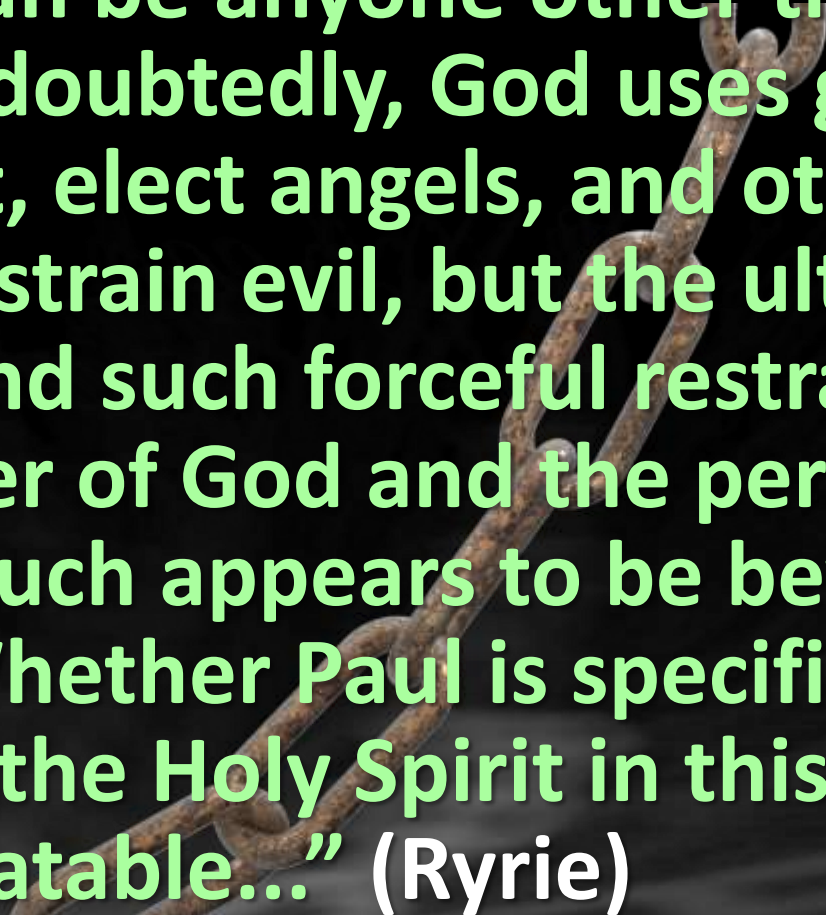
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“What [or who] can withhold evil in the world? The only One I know who can do that is the Holy Spirit. Governments can't do it—they are not doing it. The Roman Empire couldn't do it; it was an evil force itself.” (McGee)



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“It is really impossible to see how the restrainer can be anyone other than God Himself. Undoubtedly, God uses good government, elect angels, and other means to restrain evil, but the ultimate power behind such forceful restraint must be the power of God and the person of God. This much appears to be beyond question. Whether Paul is specifically referring to the Holy Spirit in this passage may be debatable...” (Ryrie)



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Reason for restraint so that man of sin is revealed at God's appointed time and no sooner, just as when Yeshua was revealed.

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

God is Sovereign!

Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

“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.” (v. 7)

COMMENTARY: [The mystery of lawlessness] ...is the spirit of lawlessness already prevalent in society (cf. 1 John 3:4; 5:17), but still a mystery in that it is not fully revealed as it will be in the one who so blatantly opposes God that he blasphemously assumes the place of God on earth which God has reserved for Jesus Christ. The spirit of such a man is already in operation (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3), but the man who fully embodies that spirit has not come. *(MacArthur)*

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- Jesus also taught that this “lawlessness” would be present all the way until He returned. It was present in His time on earth, and has been present since the beginning, even now. **It just hasn't yet been fulfilled in one single enemy-empowered human being.**
- We can find bits and pieces of most standard arguments about the restrainer and lawlessness in His words to disciples when they asked about these end times...

Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.

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⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:4-14)

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- Jesus' main point that no one mislead his followers about his second coming.
- He predicts that before He comes many antichrists will come.
- These “antichrists” are types/semi-fulfillments (forerunners) of final predicted “opponent of Messiah” (*literal meaning of “antichrist”*).
- Same false prophets referred to in 1 John 2:18 ***“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.”***...and throughout 2 Thessalonians.

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- In Matthew 7:21-23 He says some regarded as teachers in the church will be judged as false teachers, unbelievers, at the final judgment.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

- Refers to them as ***those who practice "lawlessness"*** (*anomia*), same word Paul uses in 2:7 in phrase "the mystery of lawlessness."

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- If the “restrainer” is indeed the Holy Spirit indwelling in the hearts of all believers, when He is removed, the Church is removed.
- While the spirit of lawlessness has already been at work in the world, **can you imagine how that lawlessness will explode once the restrainer and the Church have been removed?**

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- The restrainer is not only restraining the revealing of the final world ruler, and the “Day of the Lord” ...
- The restrainer is restraining inconceivable evil that will explode when God removes those who are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

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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.

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No discussion about what happens after the final world ruler is revealed....only that he will be destroyed. Paul skips immediately to the most important part – the END.

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“...consume with the breath of His mouth...”

The end of AC will be rather anticlimactic. All Yeshua does is open His mouth. He speaks things into existence, and speaks them out of existence. He speaks, and the universe obeys. This person's reign of terror and evil will end when Jesus speaks. This term is only used in this one place in the New Testament. It means that one word from Jesus will be the blast that sends the evil one to the lake of fire.

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Many Jews at time Paul wrote this would have understood reference to Isaiah 11:3-4:

“His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.”

They understood Isaiah’s proclamation as referring to Messiah, how his mouth will punish and convict ungodly at the end.

Isn’t the precise engineering of the Word amazing??!

Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

“...destroy with the brightness of His coming.”

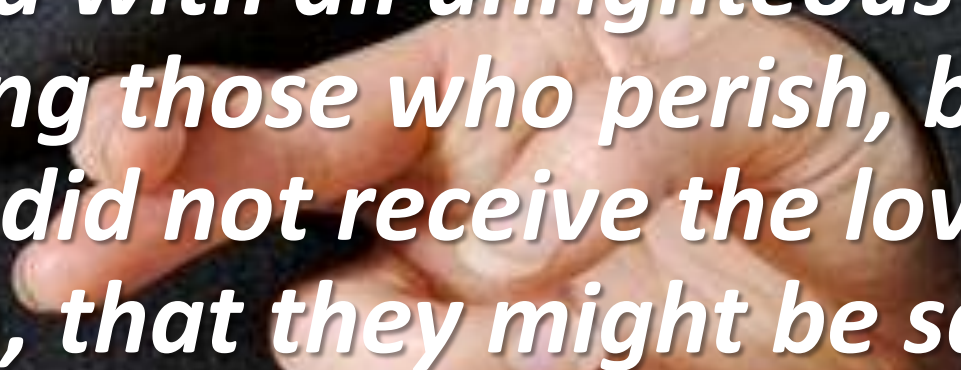
- When Jesus returns to earth in His glory, evil personified is “destroyed” by piercing Light of Yeshua. The word and glory of our risen Savior will end the final world ruler. Done.
- Note meanings of both “consume” and “destroy.” (*“consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness”*) Different words in Greek, neither one means “annihilation.”
- Remember, **we (all created beings) do not cease to exist, ever.** We exist in one of two places, either *with* God, or *separate from* Him.

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The AC is a real person, but **nothing about him is true. He is a fake leader, a fake Messiah, a fake “good guy.”** In reality, he is a counterfeiter, a copycat who seeks to be something he is not (*and do what he cannot*), and will use every deception and lie possible to do it. It is critical everyone understands that this time will be loaded down with so much deception, lying signs, evil power and deceit that it will be difficult to separate the real from the lie.

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***⁹ The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, 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.***

A close-up photograph of a hand in a dark suit jacket, with the index finger pointing towards the text. The background is dark and out of focus.

Revelation 13 + 2 Thessalonians 2

- Many descriptive words in v. 9 and 10 that provide clues about Antichrist.
- In general, his power/activity can be described as **counterfeiting**.
- He too will have a *Parousia* (an appearance, a coming), as will the Messiah (v. 9).
- He also will be empowered, similar to Yeshua being filled with Spirit during His earthly ministry (Luke 4:1). AC power, however comes from Satan (Revelation 13:4).

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- He will perform counterfeit miracles.
- These will be **“in power”** (Luke 4:36); they will **have meaning**, (for they are called “signs” [John 2:11]); and they will **be seen as “wonders”** (John 4:48; Acts 2:22), things that cannot be explained.

These will promote evil deception on those who are perishing, simply because they would not receive the truth and be saved. How widespread and how powerful will be this evil man’s might to counterfeit the truth that is in Christ and His Gospel. (Ryrie)

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“...all unrighteous deception...” Or
“deceivableness of unrighteousness.” (KJV)

The Greek words are *apate adikia*.

Deception and delusion by deceit, through wicked, sinful and wrong deeds and ways and words.

apatē - delusion: - deceit (-ful, -fulness),
deceivableness (-ving).

adikia (legal) injustice (properly the
quality, by implication the act); moral
wrongfulness (of character, life or act): -
iniquity, unjust, unrighteousness, wrong.

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- ***“Among those who perish...”*** Those deceived by man of sin **are perishing** (*apollymenois*, pres. part.; noun “destruction” [*apōleias*] **because** they refused to love truth of God and accept His gift of salvation.
- Their **choice** brings their condemnation. In spite of saving truth of the gospel, unbelievers refuse it. To love truth of the gospel indicates true acceptance and adherence to it. Nothing else is required.
- Truth contrasts lies of the man of sin. “Consequence” of believing and loving Truth is salvation.