

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

“Three ‘Tells’ Of The Great Tribulation”

Confusion & consternation; concern & trepidation were creeping in on the believers of Thessalonica... Let’s remember that when the apostles would teach the *word* of God to the *people* of God, they’d teach out of what we refer to as the O.T. The N.T. was still being written much less being widely circulated around the known world. So as Paul would preach & teach, not only was He careful to point out the prophecies that dealt w/the 1st coming of Christ & show how Jesus fulfilled it. He would also teach on the prophecies that pointed to His 2nd coming, & world conditions that would surround that event.

We touched on it in our study of 1st Thessalonians just a few weeks ago, how that the O.T. is filled w/passages that speak about “The Day of the Lord”. A day that begins in darkness (proverbially speaking) & ends in the light. A season whereby God will pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. A time when God will be involved in the goings on of planet earth in a much more direct, dramatic & drastic fashion than ever before. It begins w/what we refer to as the “rapture” of the church & ends after the 1,000 yr reign of Christ upon the earth.

Now; in his 1st letter Paul wrote w/resounding clarity, regarding the reality of the rapture of the church. He went on to underscore his position by affirming, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (deliverance) through our Lord Jesus Christ,”¹

However; since Paul’s departure from the region, persecution against them had grown rather intense. & Because of what appears to be false prophecies, fake news & a forged letter, they were being led to believe that the Day of the Lord was upon them. This (understandably) worried them because it meant that either: A) God had changed the program (& what Paul taught them initially wasn’t true), or: B) They’d missed the rapture & were in the throes of the Great Tribulation. Either way, they were freaking out!

So, as to where in Ch 1 Paul corrected their views concerning *persecution*, here he looks to calm their hearts & stabilize their faith concerning *prophecy*. Essentially; he tells them, “You’re not in the Great Tribulation. The Day of the Lord isn’t upon you & you can know that because these 3 “tells” (3 things) haven’t been made manifest *before* you.”

Vs 1-2

Just FYI, If your bible, (like mine) references, “the Day of Christ”, that’s ok, but more accurately it should be rendered, “The Day of the Lord.”

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Th 5:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He's referencing that outpouring of the wrath of God upon the earth who has *rebelled* against Him & *rejected J.C.* as spoken of throughout the O.T.

But because he taught them of the rapture when he was w/them & then reiterated it in his 1st letter *to* them, here, he essentially just mentions it in passing so as to get to the main thrust of what he wants to clarify. He says, "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord J.C. & our gathering together to Him," Ladies & gentlemen, the reference to our gathering together to Him (that is to Jesus) is a reference to the rapture of the church that Paul (it would seem) presumes upon as a given in the text.

& Listen, I know that some folks are adamant in their stance against the rapture. & Believe you me they can be *passionate* in their position. & That's ok, because you know me; I've always respected anyone's right to be wrong 😊.

& Truth be told you don't have to agree w/me & we can still have wonderful fellowship because our position on this particular doctrine isn't a salvational issue. I'd just encourage you to believe what you believe, not because it's what I've said, not because someone else who had scholarly letters behind their name taught. **But because you've done the research, you've contextually established your position & can demonstrate it throughout the totality of scripture. It's dangerous to isolate one Vs out of context, or to have a position & then look for scripture to support it rather than allow scripture to form your position.**

But they may say something like, "Jesus only comes twice. Once in Bethlehem & once when He judges the earth & establishes His kingdom". To which we would say, "We agree, that Jesus only comes twice to the earth." However, there is another event, whereby Jesus *doesn't come to the earth*, (but meets us in the air) that the Bible speaks of all too clearly.

Even here Paul makes a distinction between the *coming...* & our *gathering together unto Him*. & Ultimately, they're still classified as one event w/2 distinct aspects to it. 1st we are gathered to Jesus (we meet Him in the air, 1 Thess 4:17), then (at the end of the 7 yr period of time that constitutes what the bible refers to as the "Great Tribulation") we will return with Jesus when He puts down the rebellion & establishes His kingdom upon the earth.

One commentator, (Hiebert) shows how the grammar of the ancient Greek in 2nd Thess 2:1 shows this: "The government of the two nouns under one article makes it clear that one event, viewed under two complimentary aspects, is thought of."

But as much as our, "There is no rapture" friends are passionate (& admirably so) about their position. There is a complexity to maintaining it.

Because the bible demonstrates in multiple places that there must be 2 aspects to this event, & these aspects are separated by some appreciable period of time.

For instance: if you were to turn (you can write it down & review it later) to Matt 24:37-42 & compare that passage to say Matt 24:21 or Rev 6:15-17 you would note 2 *very different world conditions* in play at the return of Jesus.

In one passage Jesus says, “For as it was in the Days of Noah, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man.” People were just eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage... it was just pretty much business as usual (nothing particularly supernatural to take note of) on planet earth.

In the other passages you discover that the world will be in utter calamity, in a manner completely unparalleled in human history when Jesus returns... & So we scratch our heads & say, “Well which is it? Is mankind cruising along ‘business as usual’ or is there unparalleled tribulation such as the world has never seen before, no, nor ever will see again?” But the answer unfolds in these 2 aspects to the singular event. When He comes for His church, it’ll be to a business as usual world, when He comes to judge the earth it’ll be to a world in the grips of global calamity.

The bible speaks to 2 *different manners* of Jesus’ return. In 1st Thess 4:16-17, we read of Jesus meeting us in the clouds, planet earth being left in dismay. In Matt 24:27, Rev 1:7 & 19, we learn that *every eye* will see Him, that He returns w/the armies of heaven to the earth & as lightning comes from the east & flashes to the west so will be the coming of the Son of Man... So we ask ourselves again, “Which is it? Does He meet His church in the *clouds* or return w/His church to the earth?” Again, at the rapture we meet Him in the *clouds*, when He comes to establish His kingdom, we return w/Him to the earth.

We could also point out the predictability of His return. Matt 24:36 is very clear, “No one knows the day or hour...” But when you read Daniel 12:11, you’re told *exactly* when Jesus will return, down to the very *day*... So which is it? Well, regarding the rapture, we don’t know, could happen at any moment... But concerning His coming in glory w/the armies of heaven. You can know w/specificity... As soon as the A.C. breaks his peace treaty w/Israel, goes into the holy of holies, declares himself to be God & demands to be worshiped *as* God, there will be 1,290 days till this world sees Jesus in all His glory...

Now I realize that was quite the lengthy explanation, but I pray you find it helpful in sorting out some of these struggles that people have regarding the rapture & the 2nd coming of J.C. – But Paul says, “...concerning these things...”

“We ask (or urge) you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled by it by spirit, by word or by letter as if from us.” This is what I was referencing in my opening remarks. Evidently there was some false prophetic utterance being shared in the assembly. & We confess, when someone issues a, “Thus says the Lord” kind of statement, we have a tendency to be a bit more tuned in toward what’s said. Follow that up w/someone teaching it, or a letter being circulated from what you think is the apostle Paul & you’re a bit more inclined to *receive* it as authoritative!

It’s no wonder then that the Thessalonians were being, “shaken” & “troubled” as though the Day of the Lord was indeed upon them! Their fears were being triggered (& understandably so)! The word “shaken” here means to be “distressed”. Think about a ship being tossed about upon the waves of a stormy sea. That’s where they were at emotionally. They were a wreck inwardly!

Now family, think this through. This is another strong support text that Paul had taught them to hold to a pretribulation rapture position. Because we all agree that the Day of the Lord (this time of tribulation) must happen before the 2nd coming of Christ. But their confusion arose due to the fact that, rather than escape it, they thought that they were in the throes of it!

Otherwise, there’s a sense in which they would *welcome* & be *excited* about the Day of the Lord (the outpouring of God’s wrath), because it would mean that the 2nd coming of Christ was right around the corner! But because Paul had taught them that they’d escape it, they were worried that (regarding the rapture) they’d missed it.

But Paul says, “Don’t be troubled by false prophecies, false teachings or forged letters. God’s plan hasn’t been, nor will it be altered. So if someone shares w/you, or writes to you or prophecies *among* you something other than what I’ve shared w/you initially, just disregard it as ‘fake news’ regardless of how spiritual they may seem.”

Vs 3-4

Again we remind ourselves that when Paul says, “That Day will not come”, he’s not speaking about the day of the rapture, but the Day of the Lord. Concrete evidence of the Great Tribulation. How can you be sure you’ve missed the rapture? How can you know the Great Tribulation is upon the world? Paul says, “It’s not upon you unless these things are happening among you.” He says, “Let no one deceive you *by any means* (supposed prophecy, false teaching, forged letter, whatever), the *falling away* comes 1st.”

It’s a word that speaks of a departure, a defection or forsaking.

& Let me just point out that the article “the” is what makes this significant. He’s not speaking of a waxing or waning of godliness. It’s not “a falling away”. It’s “the falling away.” This is a reference to the great & final rebellion. We’re looking ultimately (it seems to me) at a one world religion that has some *thing*, some *one* other than God (through the Person of J.C.) as it’s center focus & object of worship. A “departure” from the one true living God.

& I’m open to being wrong on this point but it seems to me that he’s leading us to the idea of what he spells out in Vs 4, the worship of the A.C. (the word “anti” not only meaning “against” but also “instead of”). There will be a worship of the A.C. instead of J.C.

Paul told Timothy *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,”*² Ultimately this will find its fullness in the worship of this “man of sin”. Now, that’s not to say that no one will be saved during this time (we know otherwise). There will be a façade that makes up the “church” at that time which will reject J.C. completely. Simultaneously there will be a great awakening throughout the world spiritually. What will diminish is the neutral ground. The dividing lines will be clear, those for Jesus & those against.

Now; this “man of sin”, the “son of perdition” has several names throughout the bible. “The lawless one”, “The beast”, “the king of fierce countenance”, “the willful king”, the “one who comes in his own name” (& more). John is the only one who referred to him as the A.C. but that’s the one that (for whatever reason) has stuck.

But Paul says, “You can know you’re not in the Great Tribulation because, #1 The falling away hasn’t happened. & #2 The man of sin (this individual who’s essentially the embodiment of sin hasn’t been revealed.”

Now, do I believe this guy is alive today? Probably. Any inclination who he might be? No. I’m not looking for the A.C. I’m looking for J.C. By the time this guy is revealed, we’ll be out of here.

But how could one put their finger on who he (this son of perdition, doomed to destruction) is exactly? – He will oppose & exalt himself above all that is called God, over every object of worship, so that he himself sets *as* God, in the temple of God, showing himself that he *is* God.

Ok. This tells us a couple of things. #1 It tells us that there will be a temple rebuilt in Jerusalem (they have all the articles, all the priestly garb, all the plans ready to go right now).

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Ti 4:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In Daniel Ch 9 we're told that he will enter into a 7 yr peace treaty w/Israel, but 3 ½ yrs into it he will break the agreement. He will enter into the Holy of Holies in the temple, defy all that is worshiped or called God, declare himself to *be* God & demand to be worshiped *as* God.

& This has been Satan's agenda from the moment he rebelled against God. To be worshiped in the place of God. Isa 14, *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"*³

& When this happens (he enters the temple, claims to be God, to be worshiped as God) it's what Daniel (& Jesus) referred to as the abomination that causes desolation & all hell (literally) will break loose on planet earth & persecution of the Jews will be unleashed in a manner the likes of which this world has never seen... Paul says here, "You see that; you're in it."

Vs 5-8

Paul reminds them, "I told you guys all these things when I was w/you. God hasn't changed the scheme of things." As for the 3rd thing that needs to happen? That which is restraining his revealing will be taken out of the way.

One would be prone to think; since Satan has this master plan of deception *in* the works, & the mystery of lawlessness is presently *at* work... why not just punch it forward. Why hold back, why hold off? -- Because he's being "restrained", that he might be revealed "in his own time".

In other words, there is a divine timeline that God has established for the consummation/finalization of all things & there isn't anything that's going to throw it off track. But when "He who now restrains" is taken out of the way, *then* (that is, following that event) he will be revealed.

So the question becomes, who is "He who now restrains"? Family what's in view here is the Person of the Holy Spirit in the presence of the church. Jesus made us a promise. He said, *"I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*⁴ But once the Holy Spirit's restraining power through the church is removed (a.k.a. the rapture), the A.C. will make his move...

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 14:12-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 16:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& This is more affirmation of a pretribulation rapture position because the restrainer will be taken out of the way before the man of sin is revealed.

Now; when you study the book of Rev, you'll find Ch's 2-3 all about the church. Ch 4 Vs 1 Jn is "raptured", caught up to heaven (the church never mentioned again until returning w/Jesus toward the end of the book). The remainder of Ch 4 & Ch 5 is a "heavenly happening". Ch 6 picks up "Meanwhile on planet earth". In Vs 1 the Lamb opens one of the seals & in Vs 2 the A.C. is revealed...

Let me also say this. When we say, "The Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way." That doesn't mean that He will no longer be present on planet earth. God is Omnipresent, all places & all times. The work of regeneration is something only God can do... But His purpose, His mission will revert back, similar (if not the same) as it was during the O.T. period. No longer will the church be present, God will pick up where He left off, turning His prophetic attention back to Israel, fulfilling the 70th week of Daniel Ch 9.

Then "the lawless one" will be revealed. – When you hear the phrase, "lawless one" don't think of, "I can't drive 55" as if he has no respect for the law of the land (though that may be true). What this is revealing is that this man will have zero regard, zero respect, will not recognize in any way the Law of God. He will set *himself* up as God & demand to be worshiped *instead of God*.

By all appearances he'll be unstoppable (& as far as anyone on the earth is concerned, he will be). But Paul flashes forward w/a spoiler alert here. For all the power he will wield over man, he's absolutely powerless in the presence of Jesus... The Lord will consume him w/the breath of his mouth (Isa 11:4), the Lord will just speak the word & his reign will be brought into ruin, "& destroyed w/the brightness of His coming." *The word "Destroy" doesn't speak of annihilation, it speaks of rendered inactive, put out of commission. His day will be done & he will be thrown alive (Rev 19:20) into the lake of fire.*

So in the words of Joshua, *"...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*⁵ Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for the ready assurance of Your word. That our hope doesn't lie *in* this world, nor the leaders *of* this world, but in Christ alone. Help us to stand strong in the Lord, & in the power of His might. Be glorified in our lives, to the praise of Your name.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jos 24:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus said, "He who is not w/me is against Me, & the one who doesn't gather, scatters abroad." There's no neutral zone before Christ. We either accept His rule, or we reject it. We either trust *in* Him, or turn away *from* Him. Choose this day, whom you will serve. I would implore you, believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.