

“End Times Study: The Rapture – Part 2”

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Scripture

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

“Now we request you, brethren, **with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him**”

2“**that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.**”

3“Let no one in any way deceive you, for **it will not come unless the apostasy comes first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, **so that he takes his seat in the temple of God**, displaying himself as being God.”

5“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And **you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.**”

7“**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. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

11“**For this reason, God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.**”

Last Time

We looked at John 14:1-3

John 14:1-3

“**Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.** “In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. **“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”**”

Jesus promised to come again and collect the disciples

We looked at a couple of views of that

Is Jesus speaking individually -> coming for each believer after their death?

Is Jesus speaking as a group -> we said that Thomas understood Jesus to be speaking as a group

We also looked at Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian church

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus**. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For **the Lord Himself will descend** from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**. Then **we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

The dead will be raised first when “**the Lord Himself**” descends

Those who are alive will rise next to meet the Lord in the air

These facts are undisputed -> the only question is: “When will this happen?”

Today, we’ll look at a couple of additional passages that add to the discussion

Revelation 2:9-10 (Message to the Church in Smyrna)

“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, **the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days**. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

The believers in Smyrna make up a great church -> faithful to the end -> **10 days of tribulation, though**

My belief is that the letters to the churches in Revelation are descriptive of churches everywhere and all time

Some believe the churches form a pattern over the years throughout church history:

- Ephesus is the Apostolic Church ≈ 30 - 300 A.D.
- Smyrna is the Martyr Church ≈ 100 - 313 A.D.
- Pergamum is the Compromising Church ≈ 314 - 590 A.D.
- Thyatira is the Roman Catholic Church ≈ 590 - 1517 A.D.
- Sardis is the Reformation Church ≈ 1517-1700
- Philadelphia is the Revival Church ≈ 1700-1900
- Laodicea is the Worldly Church ≈ 1900- Rapture

Revelation 3:9-11

“Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie-- **I will make them come and bow down at your feet and make them know that I have loved you**. Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also **will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth**. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

“keep you from” -> *Τηρήσω ἐκ* -> seems to indicate the removal from the testing

2 Corinthians 11:9

“in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so”

“**the hour of testing**” -> what are we talking about here? Is this the Tribulation?

Testing is the Greek word *peirasmos* which means “a trial or temptation”

Of the 21 times it is used in Scripture, 17 of these are translated as “temptation”

Whatever it is, it definitely will be a worldwide event:

“**that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth**”

Could it be that the Antichrist’s government would persecute believers and force them to deny Christ or die?

Jesus could mean He will protect them for the temptation to deny Him to save their own or their family’s lives

The Greek word for Tribulation is *thlipsis* which is used in many places in the Bible

Jesus uses this in **Matthew 24:21**

“For then **there will be a great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.”

Since Jesus prefaces this with a statement about the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15)

We know this is the last 3 years of the Tribulation period

Jesus uses the word in **Matthew 24:9**

“Then **they will deliver you to tribulation**, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.”

So, we cannot say that the letters in Revelation definitively exclude believers from the entire Tribulation

We know that believers are alive during the Tribulation and they come from all nations:

Revelation 7:9-14

“After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude** which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” Then **one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”** I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.””

We have to have some believers on the earth to populate the Millennial Kingdom, too

More on that next week when we discuss that 1,000-year period of time

Let's look at another passage I believe answers some questions

Comforting the Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”

The Thessalonian church was concerned about missing the Lord's coming

It is a primarily Gentile church

We see that in the first letter from Paul

Paul reassures them that they have not missed it as we covered earlier this evening

In Paul's second letter, he refers to false teachers or evil people spreading lies about the Rapture

Paul wants to reassure them about **“the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him”**

They have been falsely taught:

- 1) The Lord had already come
- 2) The Rapture had occurred (our gathering together with Him)

This could be in a single event (A & B at the same time) OR multiple events (A + B at different times)

Regardless of which one they have been told is true, Paul needs to set the record straight

He asks the church **“not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed”** by this teaching

What teaching? -> that **“the day of the Lord has come”**

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for **it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, **so that he takes his seat in the temple of God**, displaying himself as being God.”**

Paul says **“Let no one in any way deceive you, for **it will not come unless the apostasy comes first”****

What is the “It”...?

It must be the Day of the Lord -> The Lord's return-> the KJV records “that day shall not come” in brackets

The Day of the Lord will not come **“unless the apostasy comes first”**

What is the apostasy?

The Abomination of Desolation that Jesus refers to in **Matthew 24:15** referencing **Daniel 9:27**

This event will happen at the 3½ mark of the Tribulation according to Daniel

Paul is speaking of a specific event, not a general “apostasy” or “rebellion” (ESV) or “falling away” (KJV)

“the man of lawlessness is revealed” -> the Antichrist

“who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, **so that he takes his seat in the temple of God**, displaying himself as being God” -> he takes over the temple and demands worship

Paul continues:

2 Thessalonians 2:5-6

“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And **you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.**”

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he told them of these prophecies prior

“And **you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.**”

The evil one is being restrained at that time-> he is still being restrained in our time

But “**so that in his time he will be revealed**”

Paul goes on:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-10

“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. **Then that lawless one will be revealed** whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

Lawlessness was at work then (and still is now)

“he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”

Eventually, the Spirit that restrains will be taken out of the way

The “**lawless one will be revealed**” whom the Lord will eventually eliminate

We see the Antichrist and the False Prophet banished into the eternal fire in **Revelation 19:20**

We see the Devil banished in **Revelation 20:10**

They will have “all power and signs and false wonders - all the deception of wickedness for those who perish” during the Tribulation, however

Many people of the Tribulation will be deceived:

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

“For this reason, God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.”

God will allow them to be deluded

However, some will see His Light and be rescued during the Tribulation

So, what are we left with for the Rapture?

We know that the event will occur

We don't know when it will occur

We know that believers are alive during the Tribulation

We know that both Jews and Gentile believers will be alive during the Tribulation

We know that Paul left three event markers with the Thessalonians

- 1) Day of the Lord
- 2) Believers being gathered to the Lord
- 3) The apostasy (Abomination of Desolation)

We know that 3) happens before 1) and 2)

We know that 3) happens at the 3½ mark of the Tribulation

Questions:

- 1) Why would Paul tell them specifically about the Abomination of Desolation unless it possibly could have happened in their lifetime at happening before the Lord's return and the Rapture
- 2) Is it possible that the Rapture and the Lord's return are at a single point in time (post-Tribulation viewpoint)
- 3) Is it more likely that the Rapture occurs right after the Abomination of Desolation 3½ years in?
- 4) Could there be multiple Rapture events (some believers raptured pre-Trib and others afterward)?

We do not know answers to these questions

But it seems pretty clear that both Jews and Gentile believers are alive during the Tribulation

So, a complete pre-Tribulation rapture of all believers does not seem to be supported from Scripture

Prayer

Benediction