

'TWO Signs That You Waited TOO Long' (How to know the 'rapture' happened & you were left behind) 2 Thessalonians 2

The Thessalonian believers had a problem; they thought the severe persecution they were encountering was the beginning of the 7-year Tribulation Period (called 'the Day of The Lord'). Since they had previously understood the apostle Paul to have taught that believers would be evacuated from the earth (the rapture) prior to the Tribulation they were quite perplexed. Had they misunderstood Paul's teaching when he had been with them? Or maybe they had been left behind for some reason after the rapture; and if so, why? Their faith in Christ and love for each other was intact, but their 'blessed hope' was severely shaken.

Upon his return from Thessalonica, Timothy reported the situation to Paul, who quickly wrote this letter and sent it back to the church family in Thessalonica. *2 Thessalonians* may have been the first letter Timothy delivered describing God's coming wrath on their persecutors as soon as Christians were safely at rest (raptured) with the Savior (*1:5-7*). Paul goes on to describe the coming vengeance to be delivered by God's holy angels (*v. 8*) (this must be referring to the Tribulation Period, because angels deliver God's wrath throughout the Tribulation (*Revelation chapters 8-18*). However, Christ Himself delivers the knock-out blow to sinners all on His own at His second coming (*Revelation 19:15-16/* no angelic participation). Not only will sinful humanity be devastated by angelic vengeance during the Tribulation, but upon Christ's return they will also suffer 'everlasting damnation' (*v 9*). Concurrently with Christ's judgment of the lost to 'eternal destruction' (*Revelation 20:11-15*), will be His adoration by 'the saints' (Church Age believers returning with Him/ *Revelation 21*) (*Romans 9:22-23*). Chapter 1 of *2 Thessalonians* ends with Paul's encouragement to them while they await Jesus' pre-tribulation rapture of them:

1. His (and Silas and Timothy, too) prayers for **their 'sanctification'** (*v 11a*)
2. For **their fruitfulness** and blessing as they serve under trials (*v 11b*)
3. And for **Christ to be glorified** by them as draw upon God's grace (*v 12*)

In *Chapter 2* Paul further persuades worried believers that the rapture has not happened and that the Tribulation has not begun. The **two phases of Christ's second coming** are very clearly set forth in *verse 1* as two separate events;

1. "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (His second coming to earth) and
2. "our (Christians) gathering together to Him" (the rapture of the Church to Him 'in the clouds')

In *verse 2* the period of time separating the two totally different prophetic events is named, "***The Day of The Lord/ Christ***"). Christians are told here to not worry about being left behind in the Day of The Lord/ The Tribulation, because two very obvious things that happen at the beginning of the Tribulation have not yet occurred. If these were happening, then, yes, they would have been left behind, but they hadn't, so they were to relax and wait with hope for the rapture as they were originally taught. Christians are told to not let false teaching from any source dissuade you from the pre-tribulation rapture 'hope'. Don't be troubled by other theories that may come:

1. **"by spirit"** (probably someone misusing the gift of prophecy (*1 John 4:1-3*),
2. **"by word"** (probably someone abusing the 'word of wisdom' gift (*1 Corinthians 12:8*), or
3. **"by letter as if from us"** (probably someone misusing the 'apostle' gift (*1 Corinthians 12:28*). Anyone contradicting previously received apostolic information is to be rejected (such teachers were to be seen as infections to the body of Christ, heretical and to be avoided (*2 Timothy 2:15-19, 2 John 7-11, Revelation 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21*).

The TWO Signs that You're TOO Late (The 'rapture' happened and you were left behind, if...)

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day (v.2 Day of the Lord or Tribulation) will not come unless the 'falling away' (apostasy) comes first and...”
2 Thessalonians 2:3a

...IF there is a sudden massive, global desertion to one primary world religious group that gathers all faiths with one main religious leader (the false prophet – Religious 'Babylon' / Revelation 13:11-18 & 18:1-24)

“AND” (both events happen concurrently / Revelation 17:1-6)

“..and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing that he is God.”
2 Thess. 2:3-4

...IF there is a sudden rise to power in Europe of a charismatic politician who is adored by the world and followed by Israel and many nations (the anti-Christ – Political 'Babylon' / Revelation 13:1-10 & 17:7-18)

Verse 4 gives a general overview of the anti-Christ through the middle of the Tribulation. It is clear that this sinister world leader from Europe gradually asserts himself upon all nations as global conditions decline, the trumpet judgments fall and the temple in Jerusalem is finished.

Paul doesn't go into further detail because he had done so recently when he “*was still with (them)*” / v5 (as an aside, it is curious Paul doesn't mention the longer letter to the Thessalonians in this matter – however it is not strange if the longer letter had not indeed been written or sent yet because it was the second letter about this(?)). When present with them he had elaborated on events related to the start of the 7-year Tribulation. No doubt he taught them the timetable of *Daniel 9:24-27* (Israel in the land, Jerusalem under Jewish authority, a peace treaty between Israel, Europe and numerous other nations for 7 years, etc.).

Summation: The primary prophetic evidence when the rapture occurs and the 7-year Tribulation begins is that the political-social-religious evil Empire of prophecy ('Babylon, Babylon') will be allowed to start under Satan's control (*Revelation 13 & 17*). It will be a wicked 'trinity' of anti-Christ/'the beast' (political), the false prophet/ 'associate beast' (social-religious) and Satan (wickedness). It is clear from other scriptures that the removal of the Church saints and the treaty between anti-Christ and Israel will be the events causing this satanic rise to power of these diabolical European politicians. However, this clearly was not the situation during the time of the Thessalonian concern, nor has it been the situation at any time in history since. Until the Church is removed, she is 'the salt of the earth' being used by the Holy Spirit to hold back for now the coming corruption and rottenness that will abound globally once we believers are removed.

God's Holy Restrainer (What's holding back evil, the devil & the Day of The Lord?) 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

“And now you know what is restraining, that he (anti-Christ) 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. And then the lawless one will be revealed...”
2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

- God's restraint of evil:**
- 1) the human conscience/ Romans 2:15-16
 - 2) the Law/ Galatians 3:19; human government/ Romans 13:1-5
 - 3) preaching of God's Word/ Hebrews 4:12-13
 - 4) born-again believers/ Matthew 5:13-16
 - 5) God's prophetic plan/ Acts 17:31
 - 6) Satan's restriction/ 1 Peter 5:8-9
 - 7) the Holy Spirit/ 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7