

The Apostle Paul Taught Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Compiled/Formatted By Tom Stephens

It is important to reveal Paul's diligence in teaching the Thessalonians that the rapture of the Church *would precede* the revealing of the antichrist and the Great Tribulation period.

During the short period that Paul stayed in Thessalonica, he founded a Church and taught the Thessalonians the doctrines of salvation and sanctification, the Trinity, the nature of man, repentance, and *the Day of the Lord*¹ He continued teaching them after he left with his first letter, written from Corinth in 51 AD, in which he introduced the doctrine of the rapture:

¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18- KJV).

A small point: Why would Apostle Paul encourage the Church to *comfort one another with these words* if the Church was appointed the wrath which is included for "all those who dwell on the earth"?

Shortly after that, the Church at Thessalonica received *another* letter *appearing* to be from him, announcing that the Day of the Lord is at hand/eminent—at any time.² They reacted with doubt, fear and confusion, and immediately sought clarification.

Then Paul responded to the deceptive letter referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:2. It's clear *that* letter had been a forgery, sent by someone *pretending* to be him and designed to frighten the Church. It worked. The *deceptive* letter had contradicted Paul's teaching and had caused confusion among the church in Thessalonica. Reading 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 we see that the forgery must have disputed Paul's teaching on events leading up to the Day of the Lord. This is *the* logical explanation for his 2nd letter to the Thessalonians.

A bigger point:

¹Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ²That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. ³*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;* ⁴*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* ⁵*Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?* (2 Thes. 2:1-5: KJV)³

Notice that right from the beginning Paul separated the coming of the Lord from our being gathered to Him. That's because they're two different events. We can't tell their relative timing from this, but we can tell they're not the same thing. One is when He comes back down to Earth, while from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 we know the other has us going up to meet Him in the air and continuing to Heaven. The 2nd coming will be witnessed by everyone (Matthew 24:30), but the rapture is an instantaneous disappearance (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) that happens without warning.

⁴*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* This quote from Romans 15:3 tell us that Paul wasn't just writing to the

¹ **The Day Of The Lord.** This is the full 7-year Tribulation Period; the 70th week of Daniel. These can't be divided.

² **Is At Hand.** The Day of the Lord can be computed from antichrist's revealing. But *only The Rapture is imminent.*

³ **Italicized verse 3.** Confirms Paul's teaching the *impossibility of the revealing of antichrist prior to the Rapture.*

Thessalonian believers. He was also writing to us. Think about it. *The Day of the Lord* is a term that always refers to the End Times and most often to the Great Tribulation. If Paul had taught them to expect a post-tribulation rapture would they have been agitated and frightened upon receiving the forgery? No! It would more likely have made them think the 2nd coming was only a few years away and many of them would live to see it.

The only justification for their fear and confusion would be if Paul had taught them a pre-trib rapture. In that case a letter telling them the Day of the Lord had come would mean they had missed the rapture, and that would mean they weren't saved. Now we can see how they would be agitated, angry and afraid. Imagine how you would you feel in a situation like that.

Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8, promised a restrainer is currently holding things back. After the restrainer is taken out of the way the anti-Christ will be revealed. This restrainer is the Holy Spirit, sealed within the Church. After the rapture, the Church will be out of the way, *much greater* rebellion will take place, the anti-Christ will be revealed and the tribulation will begin.

These things cannot happen before the church is raptured.

Most likely, the anti-Christ will already be known as a great statesman and leader, but by declaring himself to be God he'll be laying claim to Planet Earth. This claim will kick off the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21; Revelation 6—the seven Seal Judgments) and will be accompanied by all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders that will deceive those who reside, or *dwell on the earth*. But in reality they will have rejected the truth and embraced a lie. At the end of the Great Tribulation the Lord will return with the Church—His bride—to over throw the antichrist and destroy him by the splendor of His coming. Those who believe the lie will perish. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

In his letters to the Thessalonians Paul didn't reveal the actual timing of the Rapture except as it relates to other events. However, we do know that only The Father knows when this event will occur; and by carefully studying passages describing the coming Day Of The Lord, we can “know the times and seasons” and understand the correct sequence of events. Paul criticized the Thessalonians for not figuring this out back then (2 Thessalonians 2:5) and would even more strongly criticize the church today for the same reason.

Tom & Linda Stephens

Blessings from: www.christsbondservants.org