

## The Blessed Hope -- Second Thessalonians & the Rapture

From the time Paul first took the gospel to the Thessalonians, they had been suffering persecution and affliction. The preaching which had won them to Christ had been carried out in the midst of much conflict and opposition (1 Thess. 2:2 NASB -- with the marginal reading). They had "received the word in much tribulation" (1 Thess. 1:6 NASB), and Paul had told them in advance they were going to suffer further tribulation (1 Thess. 3:4). After he left Thessalonica, he became concerned as to how these young believers would stand up under this persecution, and sent Timothy to encourage them in the faith (1 Thess. 3:5). Timothy returned to him with good news. In spite of the afflictions which came (as Paul had predicted) they were standing fast in the Lord (1 Thess. 3:6 - 8). In his joy over them, and to further instruct them, he wrote First Thessalonians.

After Timothy left the Thessalonians to return to Paul, their sufferings evidently became much more intense. To add to their problems, someone apparently claimed to have received revelations from a spirit and/or a letter from Paul teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived (2 Thess. 2:2 NASB). The intensity of their persecution made it easy to believe this. While Paul had warned them that they would have much tribulation, he had told them they were not appointed to go into the Tribulation period, the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:9). But if this new message was true, and they were already in the Day of the Lord, they were faced with two very disheartening possibilities: either Paul was wrong in what he had already taught them -- or the Rapture had taken place and they had missed it. No wonder they were "shaken from [their] composure" and "disturbed" (2 Thess. 2:2 NASB).

As soon as Paul heard of this development he penned Second Thessalonians to correct the false teaching and settle the problem of their relationship to the Day of the Lord. Risking the accusation of "begging the question," it does seem to us that the evidence in this little epistle indicates Paul was the first one in church history to defend what is now called the "Pre-Trib" position.

### **1:5. "- That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."**

Paul does not say their suffering will continue right up until the *millennial* kingdom is ushered in, but that their suffering is for the kingdom of *God*. The two expressions are not interchangeable in Paul's terminology.

This distinction is important, for the Post Tribulation view is supported partly by this verse linked with Acts 14:22. There Paul said "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." They interpret this to mean, "We must go through the Tribulation (the seventieth week of Daniel nine) to enter the millennial kingdom." If Paul meant this, he himself didn't make it into the kingdom of God, for he died before the Tribulation even began.

While the expression "kingdom of God" is often used in the Gospels in relation to the millennial kingdom, it is not used this way by Paul, either in his epistles or the book of Acts. Luke says Paul was "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern

the Lord Jesus Christ" during the two years he was awaiting trial in Rome (Acts 28:31). We have an extended sample of what he was preaching and teaching during that time in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. These epistles will be searched in vain for teaching about the millennial kingdom. Even if Eph. 5:5, Col. 1:13 and 4:11 have the millennial kingdom in view, which they do not, this theme would be quite incidental, not characteristic of his entire message at that time. Rather than force our concept of the "kingdom of God" upon Paul we need to see HIS use of this expression as it is unfolded in his epistles.

None of the allusions to the kingdom of God in Paul's epistles can be clearly related to the millennial kingdom, and two of them serve to identify his use of the expression. In Rom. 14:17 the kingdom of God is not a political theocratic monarchy in the future, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" now. Similarly, 1 Cor. 4:20, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," relates to the power (or lack of it) of the Corinthian leaders at that time, not the power of God establishing His rule over the governments of the world in the future.

As we have previously seen, both the Body of Christ and the believers in the millennial kingdom are evidently part of the much more extensive "kingdom of God," but this does not equate them to one another. Both Washingtonians and New Yorkers are Americans, but Washington is not New York. When I say I am an American I am not saying I am a New Yorker. When Paul speaks of us being in the kingdom of God he is not saying we are (or will be) in the millennial kingdom.

## **2 Thess. 1:6 - 10.**

**6. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;**

**7. And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,**

**8. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:**

**9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;**

**10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.**

The Thessalonians were being severely persecuted. Paul assures them that a time will come when the situation will be reversed. A day will dawn when it will be those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel (v. 8) who will be undergoing tribulation. Their tribulation will lead to everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord when, at the culmination of this time, Christ will come in flaming fire, pouring out His vengeance. During this time of tribulation upon those who have spurned the gospel, the true believers of this age, as a Body, will be resting with Paul (v. 7), their troubles all past.

Evidently "them that trouble you" refers to a *class* of people rather than specific individuals living at the time, for those personally responsible for the trouble in Thessalonica died without ever seeing the threatened Tribulation. Their successors in the last time will not fare so well!

During the seven years of tribulation and the return of Christ in glory, we will be in heaven with Paul and the rest of the Body of Christ. The idea that we will return to the earth with Christ does not fit with verse seven. Paul specifically says He will come with His mighty *angels*. First Thessalonians 3:13 does not refer to our participation in the coming in glory but to the Rapture, as the next chapter indicates (1 Thess. 4:14). Colossians 3:4 does not have the return of Christ to the earth in view either. It tells us that when He calls us to be with Him, and we see Him face to face, we will be with Him in glory (heaven) and have a body like His glorious body (Phil. 3:20, 21).

The "saints" who will come with Christ according to Jude 14 will probably be angels. Angels are referred to in Scripture as "saints" or "holy ones." Eliphaz once said, "He put no trust in His servants, his *angels* He charged with folly; how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay" (Job 4:18, 19). Later he rephrased the thought in the words, "He putteth no trust in His *saints* . . . how much more abominable and filthy is man?" (Job 15:15). If men *are* in view in Jude 14, surely the Old Testament saints (raised to life in Rev. 11:18) fit the picture better than the members of the Body of Christ.

While those accompanying Christ are said to be "clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:14), and "fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8), it is also said that at least seven angels are "clothed in pure and white linen" (Rev. 15:6). Those returning with Christ are the "armies which were in heaven" (Rev. 19:14), but the war fought in heaven earlier was between Satan's hosts on the one hand and Michael and his *angels* on the other (Rev. 12:7). This indicates who the armies in heaven are located.

Both during the tribulation to befall the unbelievers and the war fought against their armies we will be resting with our apostle in glory.

Our entering into rest from affliction precedes the coming in glory. So the coming in glory precedes, and results in, a time when the millennial believers will look at all of the redeemed of this age of grace and glorify Christ for what He has done in them. (2 Thess. 1:10, 11) The coming in glory itself is a revelation of His wrath against the sinners, not a display of His work in the saints. Once the judgments are past, however, it would indeed be most fitting if He brought His heavenly people from the place where they have been resting, and where they have their citizenship, and introduced them to the millennial population. Their presence there would be evidence of what He has been doing during the past 2,000 years, while the program of prophecy was in abeyance.

This would not compromise our heavenly position, or the location of our eternal home, in the slightest. It would, instead, demonstrate that when the world was watching the course of "church history," and sneering at the weakness and waywardness of the "church," they were looking at the wrong church. They were looking at Christendom instead of that often-small minority of people within it who are truly born of the Spirit. Much of the "Church" of church history will have missed the Rapture and gone on to the judgment it deserved. The mystical church, the Body of Christ, will have gone from triumph to triumph and arrived -- every member of it -- safely in His presence, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:27)! The

world has been ridiculing the "Church" for centuries. But those who live through the Tribulation and are present in the millennial kingdom will gaze in awe and wonder, and glorify Him, when they finally see the Body of Christ in all the perfection produced by His loving care and glorious power.

**2:1, 2 (NASB)**

- 1. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,**
- 2. That you may 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.**

Now that they have been comforted concerning their *many tribulations* and trials which are to be characteristic of this whole age, Paul turns his attention to their exemption from the "GREAT Tribulation" which takes place only in the Day of the Lord. They will be given rest from the former, but will never taste of the latter. For *them* tribulations will have an end, but they will not even see the beginning of THE TRIBULATION.

The very topic of the opening verses of chapter two is the evacuation of the Body of Christ from the earth. The place of the meeting, and the manner of gathering the believers to it, was described in First Thessalonians 4:13 - 17. How quickly it will happen is mentioned in First Corinthians 15:52. This event is looked at in four ways in Second Thessalonians. As it relates to the "mystery of lawlessness" it is a *removal*. We will be taken out of the way (2:7). In connection with the Tribulation taking place on earth it is an *absence*. We will not be here, but resting in glory (1:7). The world will see it as a *departure* (2:3), but as it relates to our Lord Himself it is an *arrival* -- a gathering together to Him (2:1). By establishing this as Paul's topic in these first eight verses of chapter two we are given help in interpreting the passage correctly.

It is important that we know the meaning of the expression "the Day of the Lord" (not, "the Day of Christ" as in the King James Version) in verse two.

Those holding the Post-Tribulation view must insist it refers to the events taking place upon the arrival of Christ from heaven. Not even judgments from God immediately preceding the actual coming of Christ can be admitted as part of the Day of the Lord. Otherwise, even if believers are caught away to meet Christ on His way down to the Mount of Olives, they would have gone part of the way though the Day of the Lord before that meeting was consummated. Can the phrase in question have this greatly restricted meaning in this passage?

As noted in detail earlier, the Day of the Lord is not thus restricted in Scripture. The use of the expression in Second Peter (3:10) extends it on into the future, to the destruction of the heaven and earth, at least 1,000 years after Christ's return. In the book of Revelation, John, in spirit, is transported into the "Lord's Day" (an equivalent expression referring to the same time) at the very beginning of the book (Rev. 1:10). Thus all of the events taking place during the last week of Daniel's prophecy, and described in the first eighteen chapters of Revelation, are in the Day of the Lord.

If the "Day of the Lord" refers only to the closing hours, or even days, of the seven-year period, then an exchange of letters about the matter would be pointless. With correspondence taking months to deliver, there would not be time for word to get to Paul, and an answer back, before it would be evident to all concerned that they could not be in the Day of the Lord. If they were, it would all have been over before the letter was well on its way. But if they were told they had entered into a seven-year period of tribulation, there would be reason for, and time for, an exchange of letters.

Also, if the Day of the Lord is a time when God is pouring out His vengeance personally, how could the Thessalonians imagine they were going through it? The tribulation they were experiencing was at the hands of MEN (1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4, 6). If this was their mistake, how easily Paul could have answered the teaching! By merely pointing out the source of their troubles they could be shown their error. Evidently the "Day of the Lord," as he used the words, at least in its opening days, will involve the kind of troubles they were going through -- so he had to use a different approach to solve their problem.

If they understood the Day of the Lord as being restricted to the closing events of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, as described in Luke 21:25 - 27, why were they shaken in mind and troubled? In that case they should have been looking up and lifting up their heads thinking the seven year period was nearing its conclusion and their redemption was drawing nigh (Luke 21:28).

Both of the things that must take place before the Day of the Lord (the "departure" and the revelation of the man of sin) are to happen at the very beginning of the seven years. If the Day of the Lord comes at the close of this time, why didn't Paul use events nearer the time in question to warn of its approach?

We conclude that the Thessalonian believers were puzzled and deeply disturbed because they were being told they had entered the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:27).

### **2:3 - 8 (NASB)**

**3. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition,**

**4. 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?**

**6. And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may 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.**

**8. And 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.**

### **The "mystery of lawlessness."**

The almost universal assumption among expositors is that the mystery of lawlessness

("mystery of iniquity" in the KJV) has to do with the extent, or seriousness, of wickedness and sin in the world. They envision the restrainer of this mystery as one (usually identified as the Holy Spirit) who keeps the world from being as wicked as it otherwise would be. The context does not have the *extent* of *lawlessness* in the world in mind, but the *revelation* of the *man* of lawlessness.

Satan has been trying for the past 2,000 years to put his man in charge of the kingdoms of the world. At the beginning of Christ's ministry, in diabolical blasphemy, he tried to get Christ to defect from obedience to His Father and be that man! "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8, 9). Christ did not dispute Satan's authority in this area for, in the garden if Eden, Adam had relinquished to him his God given dominion over the earth. At the time of Christ's temptation the restrainer of 2 Thess. 2:6, 7 had not yet appeared on the scene. Satan failed of his sinister purpose only because Christ, of course, utterly refused the offer.

Down through the centuries this mystery has been at work. Satan has never turned from his purpose to openly rule over the whole earth. Many men have come and gone on the pages of history who seemed to be good candidates for the position refused by Christ: Nero, Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler, to name but a few. Some, at least, would have been willing to grant Satan the worship he demands in order to "get the Job." As recently as April 25, 1982 the announcement was made in full-page newspaper displays around the world, "The Christ is now here!" The ads promised that within two months he would make himself known over worldwide television and radio broadcasts.<sup>1</sup> Yet this imposter has not come. Why not?

Ever since Paul's day something -- some ONE -- has hindered, and still does, the working of the mystery of lawlessness, and Satan has not been able to accomplish his purpose. When the hinderer is removed, THEN the man of lawlessness will be revealed and put firmly in charge of the kingdoms of this world, having given Satan the worship he demanded (2 Thess. 2:9).

**The "apostasy"** ("falling away" in the KJV).

The Greek word translated "apostasy" (2 Thess. 2:3 - NASB) means simply "departure." Most conservative Bible teachers, and almost all translators, take for granted that the apostasy is a departure from the faith. However, the verb form of this word is used in 1 Tim. 4:1 where it states, "Some shall *depart* from the faith." If the word "depart," in itself, means to depart from the faith, the sentence is redundant. It would be saying, "Some will depart from the faith from the faith." The NASB does not really translate the word, but takes the Greek word over into English, "unless the apostasy comes." The Revised Standard Version translates it "rebellion;" the New English Bible, "the final rebellion;" and Phillips puts it, "a definite rejection of God." However, the Amplified Bible, after putting the word "apostasy" in the text, has a footnote suggesting, "A possible rendering of *apostasia* is 'departure' (of the church)."

John F. Walvoord remarks, "A number of ancient versions such as Tyndale's, the Coverdale Bible, the version by Cranmer, the Geneva Bible, and Beza's translation, all from the sixteenth century, render the term (apostasia) 'departure.' He [E. Shuyler English] therefore suggested the possibility of rendering Second Thessalonians 2:3 to the effect that the departure

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<sup>1</sup>"The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow" by Constance Cumbey, pages 14, 15.

must 'come first,' i.e., the Rapture of the church must occur before the man of sin is revealed. If this translation be admitted, it would constitute an explicit statement that the Rapture of the church occurs before the Tribulation."<sup>2</sup>

If, as is indicated above, the word can be translated "departure," in the sense of departure from a place instead of departure from truth, then we must consult the context to see which way Paul used the term.

Paul could hardly be referring here to the departure from truth revealed in 2 Tim. 3:1 - 5, for these verses were written years later, after it became evident the age of grace was going to last longer than Paul at first anticipated. In 1 Thess. 4:15, 17 he expected to still be alive at the Rapture, While in 2 Tim. 4:6 he knew he was soon to die. He could hardly expect the Thessalonians to know Second Timothy, which had not yet been penned, and it is not likely this topic had been taught by word of mouth at the beginning of Paul's ministry and not put into writing until its very end. The only great departure from truth mentioned in the context of 2 Thess. 2:3 is found in verses 9 - 12. But there the departure from truth does not take place *before* the revelation of the man of lawlessness, but *following* his appearance and because of his satanic influence.

Departure from the faith has been in progress since apostolic days and, even though it will be greatly accelerated as the end of the age approaches, it would not be a clear time marker. It is a gradual process and not an event. One would never know just how far the falling away must develop before 2 Thess. 2:3 could be considered fulfilled. The spiritual apostasy reached abysmal depths during the "dark ages," yet the man of sin did not appear. When I was a young believer, over sixty years ago, teachers were saying, "The Great Apostasy is upon us. It can't get any worse." They were using this argument to prove that the Lord must come very soon. But He hasn't come yet -- and it has become worse, much worse! As bad as conditions are in the professing church today, we would have no way of knowing whether "the apostasy" has finally arrived or not.

Importantly, we do have in the context of 2 Thess. 2:3 references to a departure from a *place*. As noted before, our gathering together to Him (v. 1) necessitates a departure. The very *topic* of this section has to do with the departure of the Body of Christ from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. Verse seven is very specific and clear. Someone (the "what" in verse six is modified and particularized by "he" in verse seven) has been in the world since Paul's day and is still here. He must be taken out of the way -- a departure -- before the man of lawlessness can be revealed and the Day of the Lord begins. The context, then, favors taking the word *apostasia* as meaning departure from a place.

Having determined the meaning of the terms used, we must now identify the one who departs -- who is taken out of the way. Since it is a person ("he"), and since he was hindering in Paul's day and is still hindering today, most able expositors identify him as the Holy Spirit. Some of the arguments advanced to prove this are as follows.

1. The Holy Spirit is the only *person* who has been here since Paul's day.

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<sup>2</sup>"The Rapture Question" by John F. Walvoord, pages 67, 68.

2. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to restrain the sinfulness of the world, and the activity of Satan. The wickedness of men is restrained both through the influence of Spirit filled men, and directly by the Spirit Himself. (Isa. 59:19-b; John 16:7; 1 John 4:4).

3. Since (according to these teachers) this age began with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, it seems likely that it will close with the departure of the Spirit.

There may be other proofs offered but these are the main ones. Are they valid? Let us examine them, in the order listed above, to see if they will stand.

1. There is another *person* who has been here since Paul's day. He is the "one new man" of Ephesians 2:15. He is the mystical -- but nevertheless real -- Body of Christ. He is given a name that emphasizes his personality and reality. He is called "the Christ" in 1 Cor. 12:12. This is not a reference to the Lord Jesus personally, otherwise the verse would only be telling us His physical body is similar to ours. Verse 13 rules out this meaningless interpretation.

2. The passage is not saying the restrainer is limiting sin in the world, but that he is holding back the revelation of the man of sin (and hence the judgments during and following his brief reign). It is not the godliness or spirituality of the Body of Christ which restrains, but the very fact that "he" is HERE.

We have two outstanding examples in the Old Testament of men who restrained prophesied judgments by their very presence. We know nothing about the personal life of Methuselah. We have no record that he believed or preached like his father, Enoch, or found grace in the sight of the Lord, as did his grandson, Noah. All we know is that he was THERE. But his name meant, "When he is dead it shall be sent" (The Companion Bible - marginal note at Gen. 5:21). The flood came upon the earth the very year Methuselah died, but *not until he died*.

Lot was told by the angel, "Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there" (Gen. 19:22 NASB). Lot was a righteous man, evidently by faith (like Abraham-- 2 Pet. 2:7 - 9), but he was selfish, worldly, and had no testimony. He held back the pending judgment, not by his godliness and influence, but by just BEING THERE.

So the Body of Christ holds back the event which introduces the Day of the Lord simply by "his" presence in the world. As long as we are here God cannot resume the prophesied program which was interrupted by the beginning of the age of grace. When this age has been terminated, and God is free to turn His attention back to Israel, one of the first events will be a covenant between the Beast and Israel, evidently allowing the Jews to rebuild their temple. While many will be deceived for over three years as to his true character, this treaty will demonstrate beyond doubt the identity of the man of lawlessness.

Remember that the restraint of wickedness is not the issue in these verses. The extent and degree of wickedness, both in the world and in the professing church today, is so great that restraint from any source is not very significant. In 2 Tim. 3:1 - 9 and 4:1 - 4 Paul does not foretell a restraint of wickedness, even in the professing church, but warns of the extent to which it will grow.

3. The church which is Christ's Body did not begin with the coming of the Spirit, but with the unbelief and casting away of Israel (Rom. 11:12, 15), and the raising up of Paul so he

could be entrusted with this age of grace (Rom. 15:16; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). Considering Pentecost as the "the birthday of the church" clouds the picture and leads to false conclusions. The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost was not to indwell the Body of Christ (though He graciously does so today). I was to prepare the remnant of Israel for their testimony during the day when God "will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." This will take place "before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (Acts 2:19, 20).<sup>3</sup> Both the prophecy in Joel, and Peter's use of it, clearly indicate this interpretation.

Would it not be strange indeed if the Spirit, who came for the express purpose of vitalizing the ministry of the remnant during the days of the Tribulation, should be removed from the scene just before that time began? That He is not absent during the Tribulation is proved by Zech. 4:2 - 6. Describing the ministry of the two Olive trees, the two witnesses whose ministry takes place during the Tribulation (Rev. 11:3 - 12), the angel says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT saith the Lord of hosts."

Marvin Rosenthal has strongly and dogmatically set forth another view as to the meaning of 2 Thess. 2:7. He writes:

*"Speaking of this one who will hinder the Antichrist, Paul said, 'only he who now hindereth will continue to hinder until he be taken out of the way' (2 Thess. 2:7). The word hindereth means to hold down, and the phrase taken out of the way means to step aside. Therefore, the one who had the job of hindering the Antichrist will step aside; that is, he will no longer be a restraint between the Antichrist and those the Antichrist is persecuting.*

*"The Bible is explicit that the archangel Michael is the personage who will step aside. Daniel records that event this way: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time".<sup>4</sup> (He conveniently omits the rest of the verse, "-- and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.")*

Commenting on the passage in Daniel he says:

*"But what does the Hebrew word for stand up (amad) mean? Rashi, one of Israel's greatest scholars and one who had no concern regarding the issue of the timing of the Rapture under discussion in this book, understands stand up to literally mean stand still. The meaning, according to one of Israel's greatest scholars, would be to stand aside or be inactive. Michael, the guardian of Israel, had earlier fought for her (Dan. 10:13, 21), but now this one "who standeth for the children of thy [Daniel's] people" would stand still or stand aside. He would not help; he would not restrain; he would not hold down. The Midrash, commenting on this verse, says, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Michael, 'You are silent? You do not defend my children?'" (His emphasis) ... The archangel Michael will step aside, he will desist from helping Israel. That is why this period is called "the time of Jacob's trouble." (His emphasis)<sup>5</sup>*

But does the Hebrew word "amad" mean, "step aside" or "desist"? This word (number 5975 in Strong's Concordance) is found over 140 times in the Old Testament and is translated in

<sup>3</sup> The expression "Great and notable Day of the Lord" (in acts 2:20) may well refer to the final climax of judgment at the close of the Tribulation.

<sup>4</sup> "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church" by Marvin Rosenthal, page 257.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Pages 258, 259.

at least 25 ways in the KJV.

While there are some places where the meaning of this word might be "step aside" or "desist," let us bypass the "authorities" and see how the word is used elsewhere in Scripture.

Here are a few examples for consideration -- and they are not isolated instances. Try reading the following verses inserting "step aside" or "desist" in place of the underlined words.

"And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians" (Exodus 9:11).

"You are not to act against the blood of thy neighbor" (Lev. 19:16 - NASB).

" -- The God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, . . . to stand before the congregation **to minister** unto them?" (Numbers 16:9) See also Deut. 10:8; 18:15.

" -- Who can stand before the children of Anak!" (Deuteronomy 9:2).

There are many others passages equally strong against brother Rosenthal's definition of the word, but the most important consideration is how Daniel uses this word. It is found 23 times in his short prophecy. Reading carefully all of these passages I do not find even one instance where the word could be translated "step aside" or "desist." To give us a good look at the matter I will quote in full the verses where the KJV translates the word "stand up."

"Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall **stand up** (*step aside, desist?*) out of the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist ?*) . . . He shall also **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand" (Dan. 8:22, 23, 25).

"And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*), that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*), his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. . . . But out of a branch of her roots shall one **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. . . . And in those times there shall many **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) against the king of the south. Also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. . . . Then shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. And in his estate shall **stand up** (*step aside / desist?*) a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries" (Dan. 11:2, 3, 4, 7, 14, 20, 21).

In light of the above can we translate Daniel 12:1 as follows? "And at that time shall Michael **step aside / desist**, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." How could this translation be valid when the verse tells us that Daniel's people (those written in the book) shall be **delivered**? It is important also to notice that, before Daniel's day, Jeremiah specifically prophesied the time of trouble, and he also spoke of Israel's deliverance.

"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; **but he shall be saved out of it**" (Jeremiah 30:7).

Also, if Michael has been busy protecting his people until Dan. 12:1, when he finally steps aside -- he has surely been very ineffective during the past 2,000 years -- as witness the holocaust!

We must conclude that the Body of Christ, by its very presence in the world, prevents the occurrence of the opening events of the final week of Daniel's prophecy. Not until "he" is taken out of Satan's way, departing in the Rapture for the meeting in the air, can the Day of the Lord begin. Paul has proved the Thessalonians were not in the Day of the Lord and, in doing so, has proved we today, as members of the Body of Christ, will not, yea cannot, be in it either.

### **2:8 - 12 (NASB)**

**8. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord shall slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;**

**9. That is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,**

**10. And with all deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.**

**11. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false ["the lie" -- margin],**

**12. In order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."**

Paul has taught that before the revelation of this man of lawlessness the Rapture must take place. Now he discusses what will follow that revelation, after the church is gone.

This wicked dictator is headed for sudden destruction when Christ comes in glory. The Body of Christ has been taken out of the way so he can begin his evil career; now that career will be terminated as Christ Himself stands in his way (v. 8).

Paul sounds a warning: escape from the Day of the Lord is only for the true believers. Those in the last days of this age of grace who have sat under the preaching of the gospel time after time but have had no love for the truth, preferring the pleasures of unrighteousness, will find themselves in the Tribulation.

They will not find it easier to believe then -- even though they have seen the truth of Scripture graphically demonstrated in the catching away of millions of true believers. Rather, they have not loved the truth, so God will give them an alternative, a strong delusion through the activities of the man of lawlessness with his satanic powers. They have not loved God's truth and will end up believing Satan's lie. They would not receive Him who came in the Father's name and will, instead, receive him who comes in his own name (John 5:43).

This principle is at work, to a degree, even today. We are seeing a generation of educated people, who scoffed at the miraculous content of Scripture as mere superstition, now swallowing the occult -- and even downright Satanism -- hook, line and sinker.

Some advocates of the New Age movement, busy preparing for a one world government and religion, are already suggesting a plausible explanation for the disappearance of believers at the Rapture. They say enemies of their movement must be removed, hinting broadly of a supernatural element in that removal.

Constance Cumbey tells of the activities of New Age leaders using hypnosis to condition people to accept the New Age agenda. They are told, when under hypnosis, that "a cleansing action will have to occur before the New Age can begin." (Their "New Age" is Scripture's Tribulation period). She writes further, "The ease with which some seemed to 'go under' suggested that they had been subject to prior conditioning. It was chilling to watch hundreds of intelligent adults give a standing ovation to the prospects of 'false teachers about the Christ' (i.e. fundamentalist Christians) DISAPPEARING" (her emphasis).<sup>6</sup> She tells of source books for the New Age movement, "Alice Bailey, David Spangler, Agni Yoga, Theosophical, Rosicrucian, H. G. Wells writings" where one sees "cold plans for a near future 'cleansing action.'" She continues, "Reading that all who express recalcitrance towards the New Age 'Christ' will be released from physical embodiment and sent to 'another dimension than physical incarnation' [physical death] certainly does nothing towards giving the reader warm feelings about the writers and their followers -- the New Agers."<sup>7</sup> Immediately following the Rapture, these and similar New Age prophecies could be quoted, explaining the event as a clear fulfillment of their predictions -- and not the intervention of God on behalf of His people.

It is important to notice that the working of Satan, with all his power, signs and wonders, is "for those who perish" (v. 10). There is no warning by *Paul* to the true believers of *this* age against this activity of Satan at *that* time, for *they* will not be objects of his attacks -- they will be safely with the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

### **3:10 - 12.**

**10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.**

**11. For we hear that there are some, which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.**

**12. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.**

There seems to be more to this problem than mere laziness on the part of some of the believers. With the general theme of these two epistles as a background, a possible source of their behavior suggests itself. With Paul teaching them that the Rapture could take place at any time, and perhaps very soon, some of them may have yielded to the temptation to set at least approximate dates for the event. They felt no need to plant and water crops when they did not expect to be there to harvest them. Several groups, in the years since, who thought they knew when Christ was coming, have indulged in this kind of behavior. Paul calls upon them to lead disciplined lives. They are to expect Him at any moment, but plan and work as though His coming is years away (as it has indeed proved to be).

<sup>6</sup> "The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow" by Constance Cumbey, pages 184, 185.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Page 185.

<sup>8</sup> The "elect" in Matt. 24:24 and Mark 13:22 are the elect of Israel.

If Paul had told them the Rapture would be at the close of the seventieth week of Daniel nine, he could have sent them back to the fields by reminding them that His coming was at least seven years in the future. If he had taught the Post-Tribulation view they probably would not have adopted this lifestyle in the first place. This does not justify the Post-Trib view, however, any more than the misunderstanding of grace by the antinomians justifies legalism.

While this interpretation, in itself, does not prove the Pre-Tribulation view, the verses take on vital meaning in light of it.

Sadly, the first major doctrinal problem to require an answer in Paul's epistles is still with us. Many believers today think they have been appointed to "the wrath." Tragically, they are being robbed of their blessed hope by adopting Post-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, or "Pre-Wrath" eschatology, just as the realization of that hope appears to be at the very door!

## Conclusion

A missionary tells of entering an area that had never so much as heard one word of Scripture. The whole village gathered in avid curiosity to hear this white man who could speak their language so well. As he led them from the creation, through the fall of Adam, the highlights of Old Testament history and prophecy, and the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, they gave him wide-eyed attention. Tired after several hours of teaching, he closed his message, intending to give them a time of rest before continuing. They looked perplexed and one man asked, "Is that all? Is that the end of the story?"

"No" he replied, "He is coming back again to take those who love Him to be with Him in heaven." Their faces broke into smiles and they gathered in small groups discussing the wonderful things they had heard. Even at the first hearing, the story was not complete without the Rapture.

When Paul penned his epistles to the Thessalonians they were very young Christians, yet Paul had already taught them about the Rapture, and they were waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10). Not content with that, he gave these babes in Christ further details about the Rapture in his first letter to them, and defended the teaching against error in his second. Obviously, eschatology was not too heavy a diet for new believers. It was one of the first things they needed to know.

Not only did Paul make the Rapture the outstanding topic of his first two epistles, but also he mentioned it from time to time in the rest of his writings.<sup>9</sup> However, the subsequent passages must be referred back to the definitive revelation in the Thessalonian epistles to be fully and rightly understood.

But, important as it is to be clear in understanding what Scripture teaches about the Rapture, is this enough?

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<sup>9</sup> Some of these passages are: Rom. 8:18, 19, 23; 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 16:22; 2 Cor. 5:1 - 5; Eph. 2:7; 4:30; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 3:20, 21; Col. 1:5; 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.

As a very young pastor I once asked an elderly brother, whose theology was not known to me, "Do you believe Christ will come again and take us bodily home to heaven?"

He looked at me for a moment and then replied softly and reverently, "My dear brother, I'm **looking** for Him!"

We all remember how thrilled we were when we first heard of Christ's coming in the air for us -- to bring our salvation to its glorious consummation. But it is nearer to us now than it was then! "**Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed**" (Rom. 13:11).

The Rapture question is merely academic if it does not turn the eyes of our heart heavenward in joyous anticipation and expectation that He **could**, that He **might**, come **TODAY**.  
**Maranatha!**