



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

The Rapture of The Church

Part 7

December 20, 2020

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

As we close our study of The Rapture, we are going to look at the Work of The Holy Spirit as The Restrainer. We must start by learning about the church at Thessalonica which Paul founded during his second missionary journey. In The Book of Acts, Luke recorded that Paul preached for three Sabbath days to the Jews in the local synagogue: ***They took the road south through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, where there was a community of Jews. Paul went to their meeting place, as he usually did when he came to a town, and for three Sabbaths running he preached to them from the Scriptures. He opened up the texts so they understood what they'd been reading all their lives: that the Messiah absolutely had to be put to death and raised from the dead—there were no other options—and that "this Jesus I'm introducing you to is that Messiah."*** (ACTS 17:1-3 The Message Bible)

Most scholars believe Paul spent about three months, rather than three weeks with the Thessalonians, because he would have had to have been there long enough to receive more than one offering from the Philippian church which we learn from reading PHIL 4:15-17 (The Message Bible): ***You Philippians well know, and you can be sure I'll never forget it, that when I first left Macedonia province, venturing out with the Message, not one church helped out in the give-and-take of this work except you. You were the only one. Even while I was in Thessalonica, you helped out—and not only once, but twice. Not that I'm looking for handouts, but I do want you to experience the***

blessing that issues from generosity. Do you see the importance of comparing scripture to scripture as we study God's Word?

Now, Paul's ministry in Thessalonica obviously touched not only Jews but also Gentiles as well. Many Gentiles in the church had come out of idolatry, which was not a particular problem among the Jews of that time. Paul wrote about this in his first letter to the Thessalonian Church: ***You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you, and determined to live that way yourselves. In imitating us, you imitated the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word, you were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit!—taking the trouble with the joy, the joy with the trouble. Do you know that all over the provinces of both Macedonia and Achaia believers look up to you? The word has gotten around. Your lives are echoing the Master's Word, not only in the provinces but all over the place. The news of your faith in God is out. We do not even have to say anything anymore—you're the message! People come up and tell us how you received us with open arms, how you deserted the dead idols of your old life so you could embrace and serve God, the true God. They marvel at how expectantly you await the arrival of his Son, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescued us from certain doom. (1 THESS 1:5-10 The Message Bible)*** Notice Paul's reference to The Rapture when he writes, ***"the arrival of his Son."***

Now, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from the city of Corinth around AD 51, just a few months after having preached in Thessalonica. When he left Thessalonica under force, he traveled to Athens by way of Berea along with Silas and Timothy. But after a short time in Athens, Paul felt the need to receive a report from the newborn church in Thessalonica, so he sent Timothy back to serve and minister to the new believers there. Paul wanted to check on the state of the Thessalonians' faith, for fear that false teachers might have gotten to them. But Timothy soon returned with a good report, prompting Paul to write both Books to the new Thessalonian believers.

2TH 2:1-2 (New International Version) is a good example of Paul's concern for false teaching about our subject – The Rapture: ***Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.*** The Thessalonians were concerned that The Rapture had already taken place, and that ***"the day of the Lord"*** was already there. The persecutions which they were enduring at the time had made them come to this false conclusion. In fact, one of the major themes of First Thessalonians is persecution as we saw in **1 THESS 1:6-10** (above) which records Paul commending the Thessalonians for persevering and encouraging them to continue to do so.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in order to make sure that they knew that it was NOT AT ALL POSSIBLE that The Rapture had taken place: ***Now, friends, read these next words carefully. Slow down and do not go jumping to conclusions regarding the day when our Master, Jesus Christ, will come back and we assemble to welcome him. Don't let anyone shake you up or get you excited over some breathless report or rumored letter from me that the day of the Master's arrival has come and gone. Do not fall for any line like that. Before that day comes, a couple of things must happen. First, the***

Apostasy. Second, the debut of the Anarchist, a real dog of Satan. He will defy and then take over every so-called god or altar. Having cleared away the opposition, he will then set himself up in God's Temple as "God Almighty." Don't you remember me going over all this in detail when I was with you? Are your memories that short? (2 THESS 2: 1-5 The Message Bible)

Paul wanted to be absolutely sure that the Thessalonians understood that The Rapture could not take place until certain things happened. The first part of this important lesson is found in his words "**the Apostasy**" which in the original text is the Greek word *apostasia*. *Apostasia* refers to a departure. It could either refer to a departure from the faith or it could refer to the departure of all believers. The departure of all believers is translated as when "**we assemble to welcome him**" in **The Message Bible** translation of **2 THESS 2:1-5**. It's translated as "**the time when we will go to be with him**" in the **New International Reader's Version** of the same verse.

In **1THESS 4:17 (The Message Bible)**, Paul taught that we meet Our Lord Jesus Christ in a cloud: **Then the rest of us who are still alive at the time will be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Master**. That certainly describes a departure. The departure from faith will certainly be evident as well – once things are in place for The Rapture to occur.

The second part of Paul's lesson in **2 THESS 2: 1-5** is his reference to "**the debut of the Anarchist, a real dog of Satan.**" Paul describes him in **2TH 2:3-7 (New International Reader's Version)** this way: **Don't let anyone trick you in any way. That day will not come until people rise up against God. It will not come until the man of sin appears. He is a marked man. He is headed for ruin. He will oppose everything that is called God. He will oppose everything that is worshiped. He will give himself power over everything. He will set himself up in God's temple. He will announce that he himself is God. Don't you remember? When I was with you, I used to tell you these things. Now you know what is holding back the man of sin. He is held back so that he can make his appearance at the right time. The secret power of sin is already at work. But the one who now holds back that power will keep doing it until he is taken out of the way.** Note that "**the man of sin**" is being held back and cannot appear until the right time. The Restrainer must be taken out of the way. In other words, someone is preventing Satan from coming to complete power at this time! The Restrainer is The Holy Spirit! He is the one Who keeps on restraining Satan.

The church is The Holy Spirit's Temple as we learn in: **Don't you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is in you, and you have received the Spirit from God. You do not belong to yourselves. (1CO 6:19 New International Reader's Version)** and as long as The Holy Spirit is resident within the church, His Restraining Work will continue. Of course, The Holy Spirit works through believers to accomplish this. The church, indwelt by The Spirit of God, has always been part of what holds society back from the swelling tide of lawless living. The Holy Spirit will be "**taken out of the way**" when the church leaves the earth at The Rapture. The Holy Spirit will still be present in the earth, of course, but He will be taken out of the way in the sense that His Unique Sin-Restraining Ministry—through God's people—will be removed – because they will be removed.

So, the removal of The Restrainer's Influence will come before the revealing of the Antichrist. Paul warns us what will happen once this happens as soon as The Rapture takes place, and The Tribulation begins: ***The man of sin will show his power through all kinds of signs and wonders. These signs and wonders will lead people astray. (2 THESS 2:9)***

Evil is restrained right now but once the Church-Age ends, the hindrance to evil will be removed, and Satan's rebellion will seem to be winning; but the ultimate doom of evil is certain: God wins in the end!! And the judgment meted out to Satan and his minions is final and irrevocable according to ***REV 20:10 (New International Reader's Version): The devil had caused them to believe lies. He was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. That is where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will all suffer day and night for ever and ever.***