

No Revival in the Tribulation



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A brief excerpt of the study: The aim of this study is to address one of the main prevalent misinterpretations in the Book of Revelation. That is, the expectation many have of a Great Revival that will take place on earth during the Seven years of Tribulation. So, in this study we hope to dispel this misunderstanding by approaching the subject as it relates to the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Two witnesses, and the man of lawlessness. The main purpose of which is that we may have a full understanding of the finality of the period we are living in.

We will begin with a prayer: We thank you, Lord, for this opportunity, our prayer is for your word to go out in the power of your Spirit so that it might bring repentance to the knowledge of the truth to those who hear, we pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The main text of our study is from 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 7 to 8, which reads, “For the mystery of lawlessness is working already; **there is only the One at present restraining it, until He might be gone out of the midst.** And then **the lawless one will be revealed,** whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the breath of His mouth and will annul by the appearing of His coming.”

Now, before we begin, we need to set the context in which Paul made the statement of the main text of our study. The chapter begins with, “Now we implore you, brothers, **by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him,** for you **not quickly to be shaken in mind,** nor to be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as if by us, **as that day of the Lord is present.**” 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 1 to 2. So from the opening statement of Paul, we can see he is trying to alleviate the anxiety of the believers by addressing the day of rapture, that is, the catching away of the Church, which is a subject he himself had previously written to inform them about, in 1 Thessalonians 4 verses 15 to 18. In that, some were misinformed, that day had already taken place, as a result many of the believers were troubled.

So, in order to prove his point that the day of the Lord has not yet come, Paul chose to point them to the fact the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed. And this point has a significant bearing to our study, because from Paul's perception of the timeline of events, the catching away of the Church is immediately followed by the reign of the man of lawlessness, when the world will be cast into utter darkness. And Paul attributes the reason why this man is not yet revealed to be the work of one defining Entity, saying, "**There is only the One at present restraining it, until He might be gone out of the midst.**" We have now come to one of the main controversies in respect to this statement, in that, who is the One Paul is speaking about? In regards to which many have claimed he is referring to the Church, while others point to the Holy Spirit. The error people make is that they try to distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the Church, as if they are two separate entities. We have to bear in mind the Church was born on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the disciples of the Lord as described in Acts 2, where at the preaching of Peter, 3000 people were received into the assembly. The Church does not exist without the Holy Spirit, and where the Holy Spirit is, we find the Church.

We have to realise we are living in the Age of the Spirit, which Paul refers to saying, "**the ministry of the Spirit.**" 2 Corinthians 3 verse 8. The Church is simply the desired outcome, for which reason the Holy Spirit is engaged in the act of restraining evil, purely for the purpose that He may gather those that are appointed to life. Though God has chosen to do this work through the body of Christ, we should never lose sight that the power is of the Holy Spirit, and not of the Church as the Lord said, "**For apart from Me you are able to do nothing.**" John 15 verse 5. Evil is not restrained because we deemed it so, but it is restrained because we lifted up our voice in agreement with the will of God. The Lord said, "**If I cast out the demons by the finger of God,** then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Luke 11 verse 20. The finger of God is a reference for the Spirit of God. And Isaiah also says, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, **The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.**" Isaiah 59 verse 19.

And the fact that the masculine verb is used to describe the One who is doing the restraining, should give us the idea that Paul is making reference to the Holy Spirit, and His dwelling is in the Church! As Paul says, "Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is increasing into a holy temple in the Lord,** in whom you also are being built together **for a habitation of God in the Spirit.**" Ephesians 2 verses 20 to 22. And again he says, "Do you not know that **you yourselves are God's temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?**" 1 Corinthians 3 verse 16. Now, as the Holy Spirit is masculine, the Church is always referred to in the feminine, because she is the bride, the body of Christ. [Ephesians 5 verses 25 to 27.] Therefore, if the One holding back the tide of lawlessness is removed from the midst of the earth then we can expect the Church will also be removed along with Him, and this is the catching away. So, in the context of Paul's teaching which is in reference to "our gathering together unto Him," the implication is that, as the Church is caught away, the Holy Spirit Himself is also taken out of the midst of the Earth.

And this point can be best illustrated in the teaching of Pastor Joseph Prince, where he drew the analogy of the unnamed servant of Abraham, sent out to find a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's relatives. And the servant finding Rebecca, he lavished the gifts of his master on her and brought the young woman to meet Isaac. [Genesis 24.] The idea is that the unnamed servant is a representation of the Holy Spirit, as one who never speaks of Himself. [John 16 verse 13.] Likewise, the Holy Spirit is also sent with one main task, that is to take out from the world a suitable bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. And when He has accomplished that task, He will be taken out of the midst that He may present the Church to the Lord. And the next event that follows the catching away of the Church is the

Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as John writes, “**And I heard something like the voice of a great multitude**, and like the sound of many waters, and like a sound of mighty thunders, saying: ‘**Hallelujah! For the Lord God our Almighty has reigned.** We should rejoice and should exult and will give to Him the glory, **because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in bright, pure, fine linen.**’ For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Revelation 19 verses 6 to 8. What we have to bear in mind is that, during the Seven years of great joy in heaven, the earth is steeped into the turmoil of utter darkness.

And again the concept that the Holy Spirit is taken up with the Church is also illustrated in the parable of the Ten Virgins. First a distinction is made between the foolish and the wise virgins, saying, “**For the foolish, having taken their lamps, took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in vessels with their lamps.**” And the consequence of the choice they made is described as, “And at the middle of the night, there was a cry: ‘**Behold, the bridegroom! Go forth to meet him!**’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. **And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’** And the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest it might not suffice for us and you. Go rather to those selling, and buy for yourselves.’ And **while they are going away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those ready went in with him to the wedding feast. And the door was shut.**” Matthew 25 verses 3 to 4, & 6 to 10. Here, it must be pointed out that, anyone who believes the truth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that has redeemed us from sin once and for all, has the Holy Spirit. For which reason all the lamps of the Ten Virgins had light. However, when the day comes for Christ to receive His bride and the Church is taken up, then the light of the foolish virgins will go out. Please consider, when the Bridegroom came, only those whose vessel was full of Oil went in with Him, while those left outside were the ones without Oil. Oil is a representation of the Holy Spirit, meaning, as the Church that is full of His presence is taken, so is the Holy Spirit. That is to say, when the Church is caught away to meet the Lord in the air, this in itself is a signal that the Holy Spirit Himself is no longer on the Earth.

The implication of this fact is that, in the days of tribulation that are to follow there will not be a sweeping great revival as many expect, but an utter darkness that will cover the whole earth. And in this regard the Lord said, “**It behooves us to work the works of the One having sent Me** while it is day; **night is coming, when no one is able to work.** While I shall be in the world, **I am the light of the world.**” John 9 verse 4. And in the present age, the Church is the light of the world in whom the Lord by the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling. So, when the Church with the Holy Spirit is taken up, it is a signal that night has fallen, the outcome of which is that, “no one is able to work.” And this point is illustrated in the fact that when the One doing the restraining is removed from the midst, Paul says, “[**The lawless one**] **coming** is according to the working of Satan, **in every power, and in signs, and in wonders of falsehood, and in every deception of wickedness unto those perishing**, in return for which **they did not receive the love of the truth in order for them to be saved.** And because of this, **God will send to them a working of delusion, for them to believe what is false.**” 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 9 to 11. The point Paul is making is that the work that will be multiplied upon the earth is not that of the wondrous work of God, but the great deception of the enemy. In that, the atmosphere that follows after the Holy Spirit is taken out of the midst, is not one of enlightenment and recognition of truth, which is a requirement for a revival, but of utter darkness and delusion.

And Paul gives the reason why those that are left are in this state of delusion, saying, “**they did not receive the love of the truth in order for them to be saved.**” Now, the main target of Paul's statement are the Gentiles, since this period we are in is called “the times of the Gentiles.” [Luke 21

verse 24, Romans 11 verse 25.] Therefore, Gentiles who refused the offer of life that came through the Lord Jesus Christ during this time of Grace, will be given over into the hands of the enemy that will deceive them with lies. And the state of the hardness of the heart of the Gentiles during this period of tribulation is portrayed in the writing of John, where he repeatedly showed how they vehemently rejected God saying, “**they blasphemed the name of God**, the One having authority over these plagues; and **they did not repent to give Him glory.**” Revelation 16 verses 9, 11 & 21. Meaning, there is no great evangelisation of the world towards God, in fact, it is quite the opposite, in that demons are sent out into all the world to bring them for the cause of the evil one, because it is the hour of the man of lawlessness. [Revelation 16 verses 13 to 14.] In which respect John writes, “**And authority was given to it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all dwelling on the earth will worship it**, of whom their names have **not been written from the founding of the world in the book of life of the Lamb having been slain.**” Revelation 13 verses 7 to 8. The consequence of which is that, during this time there will be no new salvation from among the Gentiles, since the Holy Spirit is not on Earth, and without repentance there can be no revival.

And there is only one place that is exempted from the dire state of darkness that will encompass the whole earth, and it has to do with the children of Israel. As it relates to the ministry of the Two Witnesses of the Lord described in Revelation 11, which Zechariah 4 prophesied about. These two witnesses that will come in the likeness of the ministry of Moses and Aaron, are tasked with gathering the children of Israel from the nations. And this is illustrated in the covenant the 2 spies of Joshua made with Rahab the harlot, saying, “We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, **you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down**, and unless **you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home.**” Joshua 2 verses 17 to 18. The 2 spies of Joshua are a foreshadow of the 2 witnesses that are yet to come, as are the 2 angels that were sent out to rescue Lot out of the midst of Sodom. In which respect, John also says to the children of Israel in regards to Babylon, “**Come out of her, My people**, so that you may not have fellowship in her sins, and so that **you may not receive of her plagues.**” Revelation 18 verse 4.

And the ministry of the two witnesses will conclude after 3 and half years when the beast that comes up from the Abyss will kill them. However, three days later God will raise them up from the dead, the outcome of which is that, we find the only place where an actual repentance toward God is recorded in the whole book of Revelation, in the form of those that gave Him glory, and it has to do with the children of Israel. [Revelation 11 verses 12 to 13.] Bringing to completion the prophecies of Isaiah, which Paul used to make his point, saying, “**And so all Israel will be saved**, as it has been written: ‘The One Delivering will come out of Zion, **He will remove ungodliness from Jacob**. And this is **the covenant from Me to them, when I shall take away their sins.**’” Romans 11 verses 26 to 27.

We conclude our study by addressing the root cause for our misunderstanding of this period, which has to do with our misinterpretation of Revelation 14. The mistake we make is that we think Revelation 14 is subsequent in timeline to Revelation 13, but it is not. In fact when we think about it, Revelation 13 is the ultimate end of the period of Grace, which has its beginning in Revelation 12. And it is this point in time, where Paul in the main text of our study was pointing to, when he described the conclusion of this age saying, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, **whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the breath of His mouth and will annul by the appearing of His coming.**” So, Revelation 14 is not a direct continuation, but begins by giving a summary of the age that was described in the previous two chapters, the cumulation of which is expressed in terms of Gathering of Harvest.

In regards to which, John begins the chapter saying, “The Lamb was standing upon Mount Zion, and with Him **one hundred forty-four thousand** having **His name and the name of His Father having been written on their foreheads.**” Revelation 14 verse 1. These 144,000 whom we thought to be coming in the future, are simply those that were already described in Revelation 7, as those that were marked from all the tribes of the children of Israel. In which regard John writes, “**And I saw another angel, having ascended from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God.** And he cried in a loud voice to the four angels to whom it had been given to them to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, **until we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.** And I heard the number of those having been sealed, **one hundred forty-four thousand, having been sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.**” Revelation 7 verses 2 to 4. We have to understand, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was first sent out to the Jews, then to Gentiles. And it is precisely this point which John makes, when he describes the angel that was sent out after, saying, “**And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting glad tidings to preach** upon those dwelling on the earth, and **upon every nation and tribe and tongue and people.**” Revelation 14 verse 6. So the same structure of, “to the Jew first then to the Gentiles,” is repeated in Revelation 14 as it is in Revelation 7.

And, the fact that the 144,000 are not yet to come but have already been, is proved through two main points. The first is that they are described as those that have already received the reward, since John writes, “**having His name and the name of His Father having been written on their foreheads.**” In contrast, when the Lord is addressing us, those who are alive in the present age and are yet to receive our reward, He says, “**The one overcoming,** I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out anymore. **And I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God,** the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from My God, **and My new name.**” Revelation 3 verse 12. That is to say, unlike us, they have already run their course, having accomplished their purpose on the earth and were received up into heaven, the proof of which is that, they bear the mark of His name on their foreheads.

The second point has to do with the theme of Revelation 14 which can be described as the gathering of Harvest. In which respect John writes, “These have been redeemed out from men **as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.**” Revelation 14 verse 4. By saying they are firstfruits, the implication is that they are the first to be gathered from all of mankind, and they strictly belong to the tribes of Israel and hold a unique standing for all of eternity. The Lord Himself is described as being a Firstfruit, as Paul says, “**Christ has been raised out from the dead, the Firstfruit of those having fallen asleep.**” 1 Corinthians 15 verse 20. The word firstfruit, signifies a completion of a process. Meaning, they were sown, they grew and flourished, and were gathered up to become firstfruits of those “having fallen asleep.” Please note, Christ is not the firstfruits of those born again, but those that have fallen asleep. To fall asleep is a term that is used for Christians that die in the Lord.

So if we equate being born again to a farming terminology, it would be to be planted, but to have fallen asleep is to be harvested, having accomplished the time on earth. [Matthew 13 verses 24 to 30.] Therefore, firstfruits is not used to describe those that are still in the ground, but those that are held in hand as sheaf. That is to say, the 144,000 are the first sheaf that are gathered from the field of harvest, which is the world, and are likened to the first sheaf of the harvest that were brought in before God. As the Lord commanded saying, “When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, **then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest** to the priest. **He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf;** on the day after the Sabbath the priest

shall wave it.” Leviticus 23 verse 10 to 11. As such, these Jews that were gathered first from among all of mankind are the sheaf the Lord our High Priest waves before God. And are given a status in the house of God like no other, a song in their heart no other created being can ever sing.

The main point we are trying to make is that, the Church is caught away to the Lord, the Holy Spirit is taken up out of the midst of the earth, and the 144,000 are not yet to come, but have already been. Then, the dire strait that will fall upon the world ought to impress upon us the finality of those days. If we think there is some sort of reprieve in those days to come, we by the same measure will become that much more relaxed in our duties in the present. We have to understand, there is no hidden hope beyond that day, therefore there can be no allowance in our planning to accommodate those we live behind. The work is now, and it is final!
