

Why Should We Be Here During the Tribulation?

For part one of this brief series, [click here](#).

On the subject of when the Antichrist being revealed, much discussion has centered in the statement of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8: “And now *you know* what is holding [the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist] back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but *the one who now holds it back* will continue to do so *till he is taken out of the way*. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming” (emphasis mine).

Paul states that there is a restraining one. According to verse 6, the Thessalonians knew the identity of that one; but unfortunately we today do not. Some suggest it is the Holy Spirit; others suggest it is the church, or the Holy Spirit in the church; and yet others believe the restraining one is the archangel spoken of in Daniel 10, and so on. Actually, the restraining one *could be any one of these possibilities*.

Those who believe that the restraining one is the church see the rapture of the church in the statement about the restraining one being “taken out of the way.” But we need to inquire what Paul’s statement means: “the one who now holds back [the power of lawlessness] will continue to do so *till he is taken out of the way*.” “Taken out of the way” is how the KJV, the NIV and the MEV translate the Greek phrase that Paul used. Other translators translate that phrase “until he [the restraining one] is *removed from the enemy’s path*,” or “until the restraining power is *removed*” or “he who now restrains will be *set aside*.”

The Greek expression used here is also used by Paul himself in Colossians 2:14, declaring that God “took away” the written code that was against us. And for us, consequently, to try to read a rapture of the church into the Thessalonian statement, “taken out of the way” can only be done at the expense of sound exegesis. The restraining one is simply *taken out of the way, removed from the enemy’s path, set aside*, but not raptured into heaven, *per se*. And with his removal, the lawless one will be revealed or made manifest.

One of the main concerns among those who hold to a pre-tribulation rapture is a valid biblical concern—that the church will not endure the wrath of God in the closing days of time. Indeed it will *not*, for “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9). Powerful examples are given to us in the Holy Scriptures of how God kept His own in the hour of His outpoured wrath.

For example, the children of Israel were preserved during the plagues that fell on Egypt. Many of those plagues are *identical* to the ones that will yet fall in the great tribulation—but God’s people were safely “kept by the power of God.” And God’s promise is as true for us today as it was for them back then: “*No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt*” (Ex. 12:13, emphasis mine). Further examples of God’s keeping power in the midst of great tribulation are Daniel being kept safely *in* the lion’s den and the three Hebrew sons kept safely *in* the fiery furnace.

But Exactly *Why* Should We Be Here?

The question, “*Why* should we be here?” has a most wonderful answer. First of all, only a pampered, effete Western Christianity can afford to believe in an end times that is tribulation-free. The millions who suffered tribulation, even unto death under atheistic communism and now under radical Islam, did not have that luxury!

And should some of the saints suffer martyrdom at the hands of godless men in these last days, it will only be out of love for our Lord Jesus that they will willingly lay down their very lives for Him! (They may endure man's wrath, but will not endure *God's wrath*!) The reason for being here—the real reason for our actually *wanting* to be here—is that these last days are ordained by God to be days of unparalleled outpouring of the Holy Spirit and days of unprecedented harvest among the nations. And simply stated, God has promised to take care of us in these days if we will give ourselves to carry out His purposes of worldwide apostolic evangelism!

Just note these promises—"In *the last days*, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people ... *before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" (Acts 2:17-21, emphasis mine). And "see how *the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn [early] and spring [latter] rains.* You, too, be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near" (James 5:7-8, emphasis mine).

An end-time outpouring and harvest just prior to Jesus' coming is promised. As a result of this plentiful rain from heaven, John could testify: "I looked and there before me was *a great multitude that no one could count*, from every nation, tribe, people and language. ... These are they who have *come out of the great tribulation*; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9, 14). Who would not want to participate in such a glorious outpouring and harvest, right in the midst of the great tribulation?

Scripturally, God's plans for the climax of the ages are clear—an unparalleled end-time outpouring of His Holy Spirit accompanied by an unprecedented harvest of souls, including the restoration of Israel, and all of this accompanied by the protection of God's people from His wrath on the ungodly and finally Jesus' glorious Second Coming. Jesus' coming includes

our mustering, our gathering together to meet the Lord in the air and then, as His assembled army, to return with Him to reign over all the earth (Rev. 19:11-16).

There is nothing more awesome for us to give ourselves to than these great and wide purposes of God in these last days.

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