

## Chapter Seven

### The Chronos and Kairos

We can now return to our study of Paul's letters to the church at Thessalonica. As you may recall, we left off here:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will 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. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1Thes. 4:13-18)

Paul had just responded to the church concerning their dead loved ones who shared the faith of Christ. Paul had taught them about the "catching away" and they began to have questions. Their apparent fear was that those who had already died would be at a disadvantage when Jesus reappeared to gather His church up to Himself. But, Paul reaffirmed what he had previously revealed to them and added a note of comfort concerning the dead in Christ. Paul states that this whole scenario - the instantaneous change from corruptible flesh to immortality, Jesus descending, calling out, the sound of the trumpet, the rising of the dead and the ingathering of the believers up into the clouds forever - was something he had learned from Christ directly; "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord."

Unfortunately, the next thing we see in the text is a chapter division; which is not in the original manuscript but which gives the impression that Paul has changed subjects in his narrative. That's not the case! He is continuing the same line of thought and expanding his theology concerning the events surrounding the "catching away."

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. (1Thes. 5:1)

Why was there no such need for addition writing? Obviously Paul had already shared this information with them in person. But, fortunately for us, he provides

an encapsulation of the “times and the epochs.” The word translated “times” in this phrase is the Greek term “*chronos*.” In essence, it denotes the succession of events in a timely order and it is the root of such English words as “chronograph” and “chronology.” The word “epochs” is the Greek “*kairos*” and it denotes a specific moment in time during which a specific task is ordained to happen, whether it is a convenient time or not. So, the subject of Paul’s immediate text is the chronology of events and tasks that are determined to happen at specific moments in time – “the times and epochs” -- “the *chronos* and *kairos*.”

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1Thes. 5:2-3)

We are familiar with all of this now. The day of the Lord is the time of God’s wrath and it bursts on a world that is unprepared and not watching for it. They will believe they are safe and at peace, then sudden destruction will descend upon them and the onslaught of pain will be like a woman in labor. But, no one present will escape the trouble.

Notice Paul’s use of the terms “they” and “them.” He is creating a dividing line. He contrasts the words “they” and “them” with “we believe that Jesus died and rose again,” “we who are alive and remain,” and “so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This is a vital part of Paul’s development of his “*chronos*.”

So, when will the “thief in the night” destruction begin? After we have gone to meet the Lord in the air. The sudden destruction is overwhelming and no one will escape who does not expect the thief. But, is that us? As the church of Christ, are we caught unawares? Not at all!

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (1Thes. 5:4-8)

The contrast is enormous. Despite the fact that no one present will escape agony of those events concurrent with the Day of the Lord, Paul’s brethren, his fellow believers in Christ, are characterized utterly differently:

- The brethren (*you*) are not in darkness
- The day of the Lord will not overtake them (*you*) like a thief
- *You* (the believers) are all sons of light and sons of the day
- *We* are not of the night or darkness

- *We* do not sleep as others do
- Let *us* be alert and sober
- *We* are of the day
- So let *us* be sober
- *We* have put on the breastplate of faith and love
- *We* have as a helmet, the hope of salvation

That's the complete opposite of those who are asleep and drunk. On *them*, as *they* say "peace and safety," sudden destruction comes upon *them* and *they* shall not escape.

Believers are not in darkness! The glorious light of God indwells us. We walk in the day and watch for His appearing. We do not slumber, thinking that our Lord is taking too long to return. Consequently, the Day of the Lord and its attendant destruction does not fall on us. The breastplate of faith and love protects our hearts and our minds are shielded by the hope of salvation.

As we read in the epistle to the Hebrews:

So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him. (Heb.9:28)

The sudden destruction may fall on them, like a thief, but it does not catch us unawares. Why? We are not here when it happens! We cannot fall under the judgment of God and we will not be subject to the "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16).

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. (1Thes. 5:9-10)

### **A brief theological consideration**

This may be the perfect place to ask a few difficult questions. These are questions I pose to every student of theology who suspects that the Church may actually go through the tribulation.

*What was Christ accomplishing as He hung on the cross at Calvary?*

He was paying the penalty of sin for those who have faith in His finished work of redemption.

*What was that penalty?*

The wrath of God which we deserved, but He bore.

*So, can we, being redeemed and “perfected forever” (Heb.10:14) be made to suffer the consequences of our sins in judgment?*

Well, no! That’s like “double jeopardy”. Christ paid that price “once for all” (Heb.10:10). His salvation is a complete salvation and the consequences of our sins were removed from us and placed on Him. As well, the memory of those sins is cast “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps.103:12)

*What is the tribulation?*

It is God pouring out His wrath for sin on all the inhabitants of Earth.

*So, can the church be here to suffer under that wrath?*

Of course not. That’s to say that what Christ did on the cross was insufficient to help or protect us; to wit, it was not a complete payment for our iniquity. We would be constructing a doctrine that Christ’s body was punished once on Golgotha and will be punished a second time in the Body of Christ: the Church. But, such a concept is contrary to all sound, historic Christian teaching.

### **Back to 1Thessalonians 5**

Knowing that Christ intends to “catch away” His church, it is only logical, and theologically consistent, that He would do it before He and His Father begin to pour out their vengeance. As the wrath falls, which we are not ordained to suffer, nor appointed by God’s eternal decree to live through -- “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” -- we are saved out of it by Jesus. We are caught up to be with Him in the clouds prior to the “Day of the Lord.” That is all the more obvious from Paul’s reference to “whether we wake or sleep,” the subject of this entire treatise. First the dead in Christ rise, then we who are alive and remain are caught up with them, then the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night, bringing sudden destruction on every worldly inhabitant, to which we are not appointed or destined.

That’s Paul’s “*chronos and kairos*”. But, should we expound this theology to each other. Is this acceptable doctrine for the Church?

Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing. (1Thes. 5:11)

Yes! Not only does Paul declare “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord,” he equally says that it will bring comfort and will edify the body. The Thessalonian church had already adopted the practice of teaching these things, to their credit. The promise of Christ’s return and our gathering to Him, removing us from the wrath to come, is a great comfort and edification to every Christian.

## The Departure

The church at Thessalonica was full of questions. So much so that Paul wrote a second letter that included further details of his eschatology. The church was enduring a great deal of persecution, not only at the hands of unbelieving Jews, but also from the increasingly torturous Roman Empire. In Rome's effort to stamp out this new "way" of Christianity, innumerable believers were murdered.

Knowing that both Paul and Christ had spoken of a coming time of momentous trouble, some of the saints apparently feared that they were living in the Great Tribulation, which would mean that they had missed the "catching away" altogether. Rumors abounded and false theology flourished. For instance, when writing to Timothy, Paul went so far as to name a couple of men who had particularly upset the saints by teaching that the events they were anticipating had already come to pass --

But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some. (2Tim. 2:16-18)

Paul barely had time to address his second letter the church at Thessalonica before he dove right into the controversy, assuring them that God would reward them for patiently enduring the affliction and He would also recompense their enemies for the evil they did. They were not to consider their persecution as a judgment from God, but rather an indication that they were counted worthy of God's kingdom --

Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. (2Thes. 1:4-9)

Paul stated plainly that while God was taking vengeance on the unbelievers, the believers would have relief. We will not be running and cowering, or seeking refuge in caves and dens of the Earth. We will be at rest in Christ as He is

revealed with his warrior angels, loosing the fiery wrath, commencing the punishment of those who rejected His gospel.

Then, beginning at Chapter 2, Paul addressed their immediate concern:

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, 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. (2Thes. 2:1-2)

Paul's teaching was under attack from several sources. Counterfeit letters had circulated, claiming to be from Paul but contradicting his doctrine. False teachers had infiltrated the church, preaching contrary to the Pauline gospel. Even the demons wanted this word of comfort and reassurance destroyed, so "familiar spirits" and people claiming divine revelation attempted to convince the Thessalonian believers that they were living in the day of God's wrath and Christ's vengeance (the very subject Paul referenced just 7 verses earlier).

So, in order to correct the falsehoods, what was the unifying point around which Paul wanted the believers to rally? The coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him! That was the bedrock concept on which Paul was going to build his case.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 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. (2Thes. 2:3-4)

Regardless of what argument, what reason, or what circumstances they endured, the church was not to be deceived. "That day" -- the Day of the Lord, the Day of Christ -- will not come until several other events precede it.

First there will be an apostasy. Then "the man of lawlessness" is revealed. He is the "little horn", the one who wars against the God of Heaven and sets himself in the temple, proving to himself that he is deity. In Matthew 24:15, Christ foretold that same event, signaling to the residents of Israel to flee to the mountains. The apostasy and the unveiling of the man of sin must both occur before the Day of the Lord commences.

### ***Apostasia***

In order to fully understand Paul's chronology, we need to spend some time investigating the phrase "for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first."

There is a great truth buried in that phrase, but it is been obscured in English translations.

The King James translators rendered it, “except there come a falling away first.” The two English words “falling away” are a translation of the single Greek noun “*apostasia*”. The verb from which this substantive is derived is “*aphistemi*,” a combination of “*apo*”, meaning “from” and “*histemi*,” to place or stand. Our English word “apostasy” is a transliteration of that Greek word, “*apostasia*.”

However - and this is a very important point – the Greek term simply means “to stand or be placed away.” The equivalent English term would be “departure.” Who is departing and where they are departing from is determined by the context.

When writing to Timothy, Paul did warn that in the last days there would be those who would depart from the true faith --

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away [*aphisteōmi* - the verb form of *apostasia*] from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.” (1Tim.4:1-2)

As a result, the English word “apostasy” has taken on the meaning of falling away or departing from the Christian faith. However, to drive home the point, it’s Greek counterpart simply designates a departure. And when the noun appears by itself, without a direct reference to who or what they are departing from or to, the focus is on the departure itself, rather than the act of departing. In the New Testament, the only other occurrence of the Greek noun “*apostasia*” is in Acts 21:21 –

... and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake [*apostasia*] Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

The translator’s choice of “forsake” is equivalent with “depart” or “stand away from.” The object of the departure is the Law of Moses. But, the word “*apostasia*” designates only the departure, not the object being forsaken.

The first seven English translations of the Bible -- Wycliffe Bible (1384); Tyndale Bible (1526); Coverdale Bible (1535); Cranmer Bible (1539); Breeches Bible (1576); Beza Bible (1583); Geneva Bible (1608) -- translated the word *apostasia* as either "departure" or "departing."

The Lidell and Scott Greek Lexicon defines *apostasia* first as a defection or revolt, then secondly as departure or disappearance. When considering the context of the surrounding passages of 2 Thess. 2:3-8, we can see the word *apostasia* truly means departure or disappearance. More evidence is given by

Jerome's Latin Vulgate from around the time of 400 A.D. which renders apostasia as "discessio", meaning departure. Why was the King James Version the first to change the established translation of "departure"? There is no reason, other than reformation scholars of the time were attempting to transliterate (applying a certain meaning), which unfortunately continued in all following English translations. <sup>1</sup>

However, because the translation "apostasy" has become so well known, the common thinking is to simply assume that Paul forewarned of a falling away from the faith as a signal of the appearance of the man of lawlessness. But, the alternate translation of "departure" is well known among Greek experts and commentators. In fact, the correct translation has been the subject of debate for years.

We should be intrigued by those Greek scholars who have looked at the etymology of the word apostasia as it relates to the Greeks and the Jews. The recent English translation of the word has generally been accepted as a "falling away." Apostasia is most theologically debated when referring to 2 Thess 2:3, specifically noting events that must precede the Day of the Lord (Second Coming).

In that passage there are at least four views on the meaning of apostasia: (1) a designation for the Man of Sin (Chrysostom, Theophylact, Augustine, Alford, Moffatt); (2) the religious apostasy that will precede the Second Coming of Christ (Calvin, Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, Gundry); (3) the religious-political rebellion against Christ that will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon (Hogg, Vine, Moore, Morris, Bruce); and (4) the rapture of the Church, in the sense of physical departure from the earth (English, Wuest, House, Ice). <sup>2</sup>

So, how are we to determine which translation is correct? After all, this is a pretty big deal, especially since Paul said that this occurrence had to predate the appearance of the man of sin. It's an important indicator.

Well, I finally came to my conclusion on the basis of context. Context determines meaning and this is one of those places where carefully considering the immediate context and larger landscape of Paul's ministry can help tremendously in clearing up the confusion.

In the first two verses of Acts 17 we read that Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica and Paul reasoned from the Scriptures in the local synagogue. Among them were also God-fearing Greeks. Some of them, both Jews and Greeks, were converted to faith in Christ. Being devout men, they would have been steeped in the Scriptures, or in the Old Testament, most likely in the Greek Septuagint translation. In extra-biblical Greek literature, the word "apostasia" was used to describe political revolts, or in the Old Testament it was employed to describe how Israel would "go away" from God and follow after idols. In other



words, it was not merely a “falling away” or a tendency to drift off. The word designated active rebellion, standing away, or utterly departing.

In the immediate context of 2 Thessalonians, Paul had just appealed to his readers “with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him.” Consequently, in Kenneth Wuest’s expanded translation of the New Testament, he considers the force and direction of Paul’s argument to determine the particular meaning of the word “*apostasia*.” Here is Wuest’s translation of these verses, verbatim, including the parentheses:

“Do not begin to allow anyone to lead you astray in any way, because that day shall not come except the aforementioned departure (of the church to Heaven) comes first and the man of the lawlessness is disclosed (in his true identity), and exalts himself above everyone and everything that is called a god or that is an object of worship, so that he seats himself in the inner sanctuary of God, proclaiming himself to be deity.”<sup>3</sup>

There is continuity between verses 1-2 and 3-4. And there is a similar consistency as Paul continues his argument. In verses 3-4 we read that first comes the departure. Then the man of lawlessness is revealed, who then sets himself up in the temple, showing himself that he is God. That is the order -- the *chronos* -- according to Paul.

In verse 5 he reminds his readers that he had already told them these things when he was present among them. Then, in verses 6-8 he forms another *chronos*, another set of events that happen in order.

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. 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. 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. (2Thess. 2:6-8)

In this instance, the order of events includes: the restrainer is restraining and will do so until the restraint is removed, or taken out of the way. After that removal, then the lawless one is revealed. Then the Lord will appear and slay him.

So, when we compare the events listed in verses 3-4, they parallel the events in verses 6-8. In each case, the man of lawlessness is revealed after the departure and/or the removal of the restrainer. As we saw above, the most direct referent to the departure is the gathering of the church mentioned in verses 1-2. In that case, the departure of the church is synonymous with the removal of the restraint that is holding the mystery of lawlessness at bay until his set time. The context is consistent. As Dr. Wuest explains --

The English word *departure* certainly fits the context (or coherency) of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8. Most post-tribulation theologians refuse to address the entire context as it is given, and thus insist the lexical evidence does not suggest a physical departure. But that is exactly what the lexical evidence does suggest. Dismissing the obvious coherence in those passages would be simple ignorance or a stubborn refusal to consider the Scriptural evidence. Remember, if we take a word out of context and apply a dissimilar meaning, we have then created a new pre-text. Likely that happened in the translation in the King James and later versions. <sup>4</sup>

Now let's return to the text at hand - 2Thessalonians 2:3.

When we read the phrase "for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first" Paul is only telling us that there will be a departure prior to the man of sin being revealed. To conclude that the departure Paul's referencing is a departure from the faith is to read into Paul's words meaning that he did not intend. Who is departing and what they are departing from is established by the larger context.

Remember that the primary point of Paul's treatise is to unify his audience around "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him." First he assured them that they should not be persuaded by any means that the Day of Christ was at hand. As his first proof he reminded them that that day could not come until there was first a departure and then the man of sin was revealed. The object of the "*apostasia*," then, can only be church as it departs to meet the Lord in the air, removing the restraining that is keeping the mystery of lawlessness at bay until his appointed time.

That being true, then the "catching away" of the church must precede the arrival of the Beast on the stage of world history. And, since the Beast will be made obvious by the seven-year pact he makes with Israel, beginning Daniel's 70th Week, the church must depart before the commencement of the 70th week.

### **The Restrainer**

As we mentioned above, Paul continues his argument by writing:

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. (2Thes. 2:5-6)

The man of lawlessness will be revealed at the time God has foreordained for his appearance. And, to guarantee that he will not jump the gun, there is a force in the earth that restrains and withholds him, which must be removed before he can begin his evil reign.

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. (v.7)

There is a spirit that drives the Beast, the lawless one. Paul refers to it as “the mystery of lawlessness.” It’s active in our world, working, deceiving nations and people. But, he cannot be revealed in his earthly incarnation until whatever is restraining him is “taken out of the way.” As I’ve stated above, contextual consistency points to the church as the restrainer that must be removed.

Historically, three possible candidates have been offered who might fill the restrainer position. But when we examine them we will find that only one answer really makes sense.

- 1) God. This is the most untenable of the interpretive explanations for this verse. To conclude that God, Himself, can be taken away is to imply that there is some force larger than God that can exert sufficient authority to draw Him away. But, if we believe in the omnipresence of our Creator, it is impossible for Him to be absent from somewhere, especially the earth, as His divine plan is being carried out. And certainly, given the horrors that will ensue on this planet, God’s absence would be catastrophic. As well, we know that God is intimately involved in the last day events and is present as He pours out His wrath and shortens the days. So, this explanation leaves too much to be desired.
- 2) The Holy Spirit. Oddly enough, this theory is expounded primarily by those who teach that the church will go through the Great Tribulation and endure much of the same wrath that the unbelievers undergo. The scenario they inadvertently create is the church left to the wiles and wickedness of the Beast without the preserving, protective power of the Holy Spirit. Certainly no one could withstand the siege and maintain their faith without the Spirit’s influence. Without the Spirit there would be no faith and no salvation, so Christians subject to the wrath of Christ without the Spirit’s help is a frightening notion, indeed!

As well, during the first three and a half years of the “little horn’s” reign, he is troubled by “two witnesses” who testify of Christ, do miracles, and bring plagues. How do they accomplish such feats if the Holy Spirit absent?

Another more tenable version of this explanation agrees that the church is gone, and after the two witnesses are “taken up” the Holy Spirit also departs, leaving the “little horn” to be possessed by the Dragon, and go into perdition. This is much more agreeable; however, this reasoning is also dependent on the church being off the planet as part of that “restraint”.

- 3) The Church. The final explanation of this verse is that it is referring to the “catching away,” making the church the restraining force that holds back

the Beast's appearance. This idea is strengthened by the lesson Christ taught when he declared, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Mat.5:13). Salt is a preservative, used in ancient civilizations to keep meat from spoiling too quickly. Likewise, the Church of the Elect, the Faithful in Christ, will continue to preserve this planet until we are taken away, allowing the Wicked One to be revealed at God's set time and begin his seven year reign.

This third explanation makes the most sense, both logically and theologically. It does no harm to the text, or the overall tenor of Scripture. And, it follows perfectly with the progressive weight of Paul's argument. To wit:

Don't be troubled or deceived, the Day of the Lord (which follows the reign of the Beast) will not come except first there is a departure, and then that man of sin will be revealed, the son of Satan. He's the one Daniel spoke of who opposes and exalts himself above everything Godly and sets himself up in the temple, demanding worship as a god. Remember I told you all this when I was there? And, remember that I told you what was holding him back so that he would be exposed on the world stage at his appointed time? Even though the "mystery of iniquity" is already at work in the world, and you're being persecuted under the evil influence of that mystery, that restraining force of the church will continue to hold the final evil ruler back until it is removed from the earth, and then --

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; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2Thes. 2:8-12)

### **Is the Church He or Her?**

A concern that is sometimes voiced in opposition to the notion that the church is the restrainer is that the church is normally referred to in feminine form. Yet, Paul wrote of the restrainer, "only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." Let's quickly address that apparent conflict.

The two masculine pronouns in 2Thessalonians 2:7 were added by the translators in order to make the verse conform with English grammar. The first phrase "he who now" is a translation of the single Greek adverb "*arti*," meaning "now, present, this day." And the second phrase "he be taken" is a translation of the single Greek verb "*ginomai*," a middle voice form of a primary verb with a host of meanings and uses. The reason that the translators normally adopt a

masculine pronoun in the first phrase is that the verb, the action of restraining — the Greek “*katecho*” -- is in the masculine gender. So, since the adverb, which modifies an action, is modifying a masculine verb, they default to adding a masculine pronoun, for consistency. Then, since the second phrase appears in the same sentence and refers to the same restrainer, they add the second masculine pronoun. But, the actual pronoun “he” is not in either of those phrases.

Consequently, the International Standard Version reads:

For the secret of this lawlessness is already at work, but only until the person now holding it back gets out of the way.

Whatever it is that is holding back the mystery of iniquity, it must be taken away before that man of lawlessness can be revealed. I contend that the church is that restraining force. Some argue that the force is the Holy Spirit, but if the Spirit is gone, so is the church that is dependent on the Spirit for its existence.

### **Wrapping It All Up**

Paul’s argument to the Thessalonians was that the troubles they were living through could not be the Great Tribulation because the departure had not yet happened. And, his proof? The church was still there! Paul was still there! The restraining force was still in force! So the Day of the Lord was definitely not upon them. It’s a great argument!

And, it further establishes our *Chronos and Kairos*. The “catching away” happens first, then the man of sin is revealed. 3½ years into his 7-year pact with Israel he breaks the terms and starts a reign of terror on them. Then Christ returns to destroy him “with the brightness of His coming”, and metes out punishment on the inhabitants of the earth. We return with Christ, riding white horses and wearing white robes that we received at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And, this is all in accordance with God’s eternal plan, ordained to happen.

The ones who believe and are saved were “written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain” (Rev.13:8). As for the ones who perish: “And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” (2Thes. 2:11)

Sovereign God is in control and will be worshipped in His grace and in the severity of His judgment.

### What We Know So Far

- The Apostle Paul and our Lord both announced a future bodily resurrection for the Saints, at which time we will be changed from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal.
- Not every saint will have to die in order to be changed. When Christ returns, the dead will be raised incorruptible and the living saints will be instantaneously transformed.
- Christ will descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of authority, calling His people out of their graves and up from the earth; a particular and effectual call.
- We will all rise to meet the Lord in the air -- *harpazo* -- snatched away by an irresistible force greater than ourselves.
- Jeremiah, Daniel, and Jesus spoke of a time of trouble on earth such as never was, nor ever will be again. Jeremiah called it a time of “Jacob’s trouble.” Daniel was told that it would involve his people, Israel. And Jesus told His Jewish disciples to watch the Temple and look for the destruction of Jerusalem. So undoubtedly, the focus of the great tribulation is national Israel, although Jesus said that the trouble would encompass everyone living on Earth at His return in judgment.
- The great tribulation is also called the Day of the Lord.
- The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, unexpectedly. The rapture, or catching a way of the church, is never described as appearing “like a thief in the night.” That phraseology applies only to the Day of the Lord.
- Daniels 70<sup>th</sup> Week commences with a seven-year pact between the Little Horn and Israel, which will include the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- Prior to the revelation of this man of sin, the church -- the restraining influence on Earth -- must be removed.
- Neither that revealing nor the day of the Lord can occur until after the departure of the church.

- Thus, the catching away must occur prior to the commencement of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, the revelation of the man of sin, the seven year peace pact, the rebuilding of the Temple, or the time of Jacob's trouble.

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<sup>1</sup> Osterholm, Tim. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture: A Self-Evident Promise.  
<http://www.soundchristian.com/prophecy/#rapture4>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Wuest, Kenneth. The New Testament: An Expanded Translation. (Grand Rapids, Mi. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Reprinted 1989) p.486

<sup>4</sup> Wuest, Kenneth. Quoted by Tim Osterholm. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture: A Self-Evident Promise.  
<http://www.soundchristian.com/prophecy/#rapture4>