

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

The Prerequisites for the Tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5)

Paul's request regarding the relationship between the Rapture and the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:1)

- Paul had just finished discussing the Second Coming of Christ in judgment, so now he moves on to discuss the relationship between the Rapture and the events of the Tribulation that precede the Second Coming.
- He starts with a "request" (which he does not finish until the next verse). This is an urgent plea.
- The topic related to his request is "the coming (*parousia*) of our Lord.
- Which coming of the Lord is this? The Greek grammar makes it clear that this "coming" is the one during which we (believers) will be "gathered together up to Him" (*episunagoges*). This phrase is similar to the "snatching away" Paul had discussed earlier in 1 Th 4:17. Here Paul is referring to the Rapture or resurrection of Church-age saints.
- Paul had clearly taught that the Rapture would happen before the Tribulation period (see 1 Th 4:13-5:10). So he had already answered the question of which comes first: the Rapture or the Tribulation. In theological terms, Paul had taught the doctrine of the "Pretribulation Rapture." The Thessalonians knew that even if they died for their faith, they would not miss out on the Rapture of Church-age believers.

The three-pronged attack on the truth (2 Thess. 2:2)

- Paul is requesting that the Thessalonians not be quickly shaken or disturbed. This tells us the *mental* and *emotional* state of the Thessalonians.
- Mentally, they were being shaken from their *mind*. They were unable to keep their wits about them in order to discern truth from error.
- Emotionally, they were in a continual state of nervous excitement. The only other place the word for "disturbed" (*throeo*) is used is when Jesus Himself warns His followers not to be troubled by any disturbing events which precede the Tribulation period (see Mt 24:6; Mk 13:7).
- What was causing this disturbance? There was false teaching that was coming from three sources:
 1. A spirit = This refers to some form of false prophetic utterance; some claim of speaking with the authority of divine revelation (2 Pet 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-2). But God does not contradict Himself!
 2. A message = This refers to someone claiming to have a conversation with Paul or hearing a private remark from Paul; a claim to assert the authority of the apostle based on an unverifiable remark.
 3. A letter = Someone claimed to have a letter written by Paul; this involved the crime of forgery.
- What was the false teaching? The Thessalonians were being told that the Day of the Lord had already come, that these believers were already experiencing the Tribulation. In theological terms, the false teachers were advocating anything but a "Pretribulation Rapture" -- the two most common alternatives are called the "Midtribulation Rapture" (Rapture in the middle) and the "Posttribulation Rapture" (Rapture afterward). But according to this passage of Scripture, all of the alternatives are *wrong!* The only view that aligns with Paul's teaching is the "Pretribulation Rapture."
- In order to defeat the false teaching that the Tribulation had already begun, Paul focused on the preconditions for the coming Tribulation and showed that they have not happened.

The two prerequisites for the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:3)

- Paul gives a strong command: "Do not let anyone deceive you in any way!"
- The Tribulation will not come until two specific events happen:
 1. The Apostasy = The first (*protos*) thing that will happen before the Tribulation is a departure from the faith. Several other Scriptures also describe that this will begin to take place at the close of the dispensation of the Church (1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 4:3-4).
 2. The "Man of Lawlessness" = Then the "man who is without law" or the "man who is above the law" will be unveiled.
 - This clearly indicates that he will be a human male (not an institution or a people-group). Some have tried to identify this man with a figure in history (such as Antiochus Epiphanes or Caligula), but Paul is writing *after* the death of both of these men, yet he indicates that this "man of lawlessness" has not yet appeared!
 - This man is discussed in other Scriptures where he is called the "Antichrist" (see Dan 7:8, 20-25; 9:26; 11:36-39; Mt 24:15; 1 Jn 2:22; Rev 13). Paul also calls him the "son of destruction" which shows that his essence and inheritance are destruction. His destruction is assured (see Rev 19:20).

Two additional characteristics of the "Antichrist" (2 Thess. 2:4)

1. He opposes AND exalts himself above everything that is held in religious esteem (both in pagan and Christian religion). This could also indicate that he "overpowers" or takes over every religious system of his day.
2. He takes his seat in the Temple of God and publicly declares himself to BE God (see Dan 9:27; 12:11; Mt 24:15).
 - The article ("the Temple") points to the specific Jewish Temple of God in Jerusalem, but which of the Jewish Temples is this?
 - The Five Jewish Temples of History:
 1. Solomon's Temple (966 - 586 BC)
 2. Zeubbabel's Temple (516 - 20 BC)
 3. Herod's Temple (20 BC - AD 70)
 4. Tribulation Temple (Dan 9:27; Mt 24:15; Rev 11:1-2)
 5. Millennial Temple (Ezek 40-43; Rev 20:2-4)
 - Since this occurs at the time of the Tribulation, this verifies that there will be a Jewish Temple in existence during the Tribulation period.
 - This further demonstrates that the "man of lawlessness" cannot be any historical figure after AD 70, because there has been no Jewish Temple in existence since then. Therefore, the Antichrist cannot have been men such as Adolph Hitler, etc.

Truth is the antidote to fear (2 Thess. 2:5)

- In this entire section, Paul has been reminding the Thessalonians of the things he had already taught them personally. This shows that the subject of "future things" was a major doctrinal emphasis in Paul's teaching.
- Paul is trying to calm them down and resettle their minds about these truths.
- What is it in this section that forms the basis for Paul's initial request (2 Th 2:1-2) that they not be shaken or disturbed? The answer is "THE TRUTH" -- they must know, bring to mind, and cling to the truths they have been taught. The only antidote to fear is the Truth!

Points of Application:

- Even believers who are well-instructed can succumb to deception. We must constantly be on our guard, and we must validate the "messages" we hear against the infallible Word of God.
- The Apostasy is coming, and we should do everything we can to teach sound doctrine, encouraging believers to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Let us be "truth-sharers" who are able to dispel the fears and uncertainties of those around us!

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High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)