

The Rapture

2 Thess 2

[Without a doubt, there is more confusion in our day about eschatology or Bible Prophecy than ever before. So much so that some have just resigned that they don't know what to believe and have decided to just believe nothing about what we actually look for in our future. There are many who downplay the importance of Bible prophecy. They will often note that it just isn't really all that important for the Church or for our spiritual lives. However, the truth is that your position concerning the end times will undeniably impact your understanding of the Word of God which will undeniably impact your Christian conduct from day to day. For instance,]

[1 John 3:1-3 ¹ *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* ² *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* ³ *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.]*

[What you are hoping or looking for will clearly impact the way you live your life from day to day. If you believe that everything in the Bible has been fulfilled and this is the New Heaven and the New Earth then this is all there is and you had better just live so as to enjoy everything to its fullest, because this is it and who knows what comes next.]

[However, If you believe that we are still looking for the end of the Church Age, and our Lord Jesus Christ is yet to come, and there is a judgment to come for Christians and non-Christians alike, then you had better live your life in a way that will please your lord when He comes. Your perspective concerning the end times will mold the way you handle the Bible and the way you live your life, right here, right now!]

What Bible Believing Christian's Need To Know About the Rapture

- A. **Contemporary Beliefs Concerning the Rapture** [- There are five varying beliefs concerning the Rapture of the Church and the end times that dynamically shape the way people handle their Bible.]
 1. **The No Rapture Theory** (Rev 20.6; 21.1-3) [- This is the normal

position of Amillennialism. Also known as Preterists in our day. These do not believe in a literal millennium or the 1000 year reign of Christ. Preterists hold that the prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled and we are either living in the millennium or are living on the New Heaven and New earth right now. The major problem with this view is that in either the Millennium or the New Heaven or New Earth God promises the Physical reign of the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus is not with us now!]

[Revelation 20:6⁶ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.]

[Revelation 21:1-3¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.]

2. **The Partial Rapture Theory** (Eph 1.13-14; John 14.16; 2 Thess 2.7-8) [- In this theory only those who are watching will be taken. This leaves those who might be classified as carnal Christians here on earth to endure the Tribulation Period. A major problem with this position is that God promised to seal every born again Christian with His Holy Spirit,]

[Ephesians 1:13-14¹³ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.]

[Jesus promised that once one receives the blessed Holy Spirit He will be with them for ever more.]

[John 14:16¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you

another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;]

[This means that carnal Christian's and spiritual Christian's all have the Holy Spirit. Yes, there are carnal Christian's and spiritual Christian's, but they are all Christian's. The Bible also reveals that the Holy Spirit will be removed from this world at the beginning of the Tribulation Period, before the anti-christ is revealed.]

[2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 ⁷ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. ⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:]

[Hence, those left behind of the Body of Christ would be without the Holy Spirit and the promise of Christ would be a lie. This just cannot be, the whole Church will be raptured and the Body of Christ is removed from this world. Yes, there will be those left who called themselves Christians, possibly as many as 70 percent of Christian Church members. They are left, not because they were carnal Christian's, but because they never were Christians at all.]

3. **The Post-Tribulation Rapture Theory** (2 Tim 3.12; Matt 24.21-22; cf. 2 Thess 2.7-8) [- This position holds that the rapture will occur after the tribulation period and teaches that the Church will go through the Tribulation Period and suffer the severe persecution described in the book of revelation and in many other passages. These hold that God does not promise to rescue the Church from persecution but instead promises persecution upon the Church. After all the Bible says,]

[2 Timothy 3:12 ¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.]

[When it comes to their arguments concerning the persecution of Christians, indeed we are told we will suffer and suffer wrongfully, as the Church has since our Lord Jesus Christ. However, God does promise to save the Body of Christ from the

Tribulation Period,]

[Matthew 24:21-22 ²¹ For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.]

[And again, when the Holy Spirit is removed from this world, prior to the appearance of the anti-christ the Body of Christ, the Church, must be removed with Him, for the Believer will never, ever be left without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.]

4. **Mid-Tribulation Rapture Theory** (cf. 2 Thess 2.7-8) [– This position holds that the rapture occurs in the middle of the tribulation period. Those holding this position again argue that the Church is promised persecution. But they add that the Church will be removed before what they call the Great Tribulation. Some refer to this as the Pre-Wrath rapture of the Church. Again, the Holy Spirit must be removed from this world in order for the anti-Christ to be revealed, and his revelation is clearly the beginning of the tribulation period. We are also reminded again that Christians will never be left without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of God.]

[Prophetic Scripture references in our day – I honestly believe that those who hold to these various rapture positions, excepting the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position, hold them because they like to point out how various current events tie into the various Bible prophecies concerning the end times and especially those linked to the Tribulation Period. Multitudes of Bible prophecy books have been written, published, and purchased over the years. Many have prospered greatly from such publications, and there are many Christians and non-christians who love to read their opinions. But in the end they have all been proven false and inaccurate, why because the events and time frames clearly outlined in scripture will inevitably prove them wrong.]

5. **Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory** [- This position, the only correct position, teaches that the rapture occurs at the beginning of

the tribulation period. Which marks the end of the Church Age, and the beginning of what Bible prophecy calls the Tribulation Period which will last seven years, and will be marked by,

- a. The removal of the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2.7)
- b. The revelation and reign of the anti-christ (2 Thess 2.8; Rev 6.1-2)
- c. The seven seal, vial, and trumpet judgments of Revelation. Which is referred to as the worst time this world has ever seen in its history.

[Matthew 24:21²¹ For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.]

B. **The Case for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture** (2 Thes 2.1-8; 1 Thess 4.13-18) [- Compelling scriptural evidence for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.] The Bible speaks of:

1. **The Saints Reunion (vs 1)** [- Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, - Now, we know that the Word Rapture never appears in Scripture. But the meaning of the word often appears.]
 - a. [Rapture – To be carried away or taken out. In a traditional Christian sense it is the carrying away or removal of the Church from this world. **In an accurate Biblical or theological sense** it is the removal of the Holy Spirit, or the restrainer, from this world which requires the necessary removal of every Christian from this world as well.]

[**What the Rapture is Really All About** - I believe that many of the misunderstanding concerning the rapture and its timing are based on wrong presuppositions concerning what the rapture really is and means. **The rapture is removal of God's restraint from this World.** When God removes the Holy Spirit and His supernatural restraint from this World

then God is essentially turning mankind over to his choices, namely the rejection of God, God's mercy, and God's Grace. In essence God is going to say, "You want things your own way, you don't want me (God) to be in your life and world, well then, there you go." With the removal of God's goodness Satan is fully released upon mankind, and mankind will now, for the first time ever, receive the full consequences of their choice to reject God.]

[For the Born Again Christian the rapture means that God's children, those who have accepted the gift God provided through our Lord Jesus Christ, will be eternally gathered together into His physical presence. The Churches hope throughout the ages will be fully realized. The Bible states,]

[1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.]

[Clearly, the coming of the Lord referred to in our text points to the second advent of our Lord which will be when our Lord returns physically to this earth at the end of the tribulation period and at the beginning of the Millennium. Our gathering together unto Him points to our meeting with our Lord in the Clouds, or in the air as described in 1 Thess 4.13-18 (just read) and 1 Cor 15.51-58 which we will look at in few moments.]

2. **Satan's Release** (vs 3-6; Matt 24.24) [- Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. ⁵ Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ⁶ And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. – Clearly this text refers to none other than the anti-christ, as we Christians call him, but the world will call him Christ. He will be a great deceiver, so crafty in his deception that Jesus said,]

[Matthew 24:24 ²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.]

[What keeps Christian's from being deceived during this Church age? The Holy Spirit within us protects us, if we hear Him. What will keep Christian's from being deceived during the Tribulation Period, by the master deceiver himself? We won't be here, we will be with the Lord.]

[Is the anti christ alive today? – Since Satan is not omniscient and does not know when the rapture will occur and when the Tribulation will begin, then the devil must have an anti christ ready at all times. It is probable that he has many who would qualify always ready, just in case one doesn't work out, this helps us to understand the frequent references to many anti christ's in the New Testament and the phrase that begins verse 7 of our text, For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: . . .]

3. **The Spirit's Removal** (vs 7-10; John 16.7-11; cf. John 14.16-18 ;Heb 13.5) [- For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. ⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. -

The Holy Spirit will never leave a child of God. God, who cannot lie, promised to give His Holy Spirit to those that are His and promised that they would always know His blessed presence. The presence of the Holy Spirit is a restraining presence in our world in numerous ways. The most obvious includes:]

- a. [The Holy Spirit's spiritual conviction – The Holy Spirit himself continuously pricks at the hearts of lost men seeking to bring them to a point where they will realize their desperate need and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. The Bible states,]

[John 16:7-11 ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. ⁸ And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me; ¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; ¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.]

- b. [The Holy Spirit's Compulsion within Christians – The presence of the Holy Spirit within Christians drives them to share the love and salvation of God with all of those around them. Born Again Christians have come into the love of God which is unlike any other love. As a result they find themselves compelled to tell others about their incredible Heavenly Father.]

[Hence, the only way that satan will be able to do what he must do during the tribulation period is for the Holy Spirit and those who know His intimate influence to be removed from this world. Why would God allow this to happen?]

[2 Thessalonians 2:10 . . . because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.]

[Because people demand to have things their way. It will be the result of your choices'.]

4. **The Sinner's Rebellion** (vs 11-12; 2 Cor 6.2) [- And for this cause God shall send them **strong delusion**, that they should believe a lie: ¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. – Some of you look smugly upon the rapture and the sermon I am preaching right now, but watch out for the choice you make right now may be more important than you could ever know. These two verses reveal that all who have clearly heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ before the rapture and have chosen to reject Him will have no opportunity to receive Him as their savior after the rapture takes place. Notice in these verses,]

- 5.
- a. [Strong - energeia (gk) - 1) working, efficiency. 1a) in the NT used only of **superhuman power**, whether of God or of the Devil]
 - b. [Delusion - plane plan'-ay (gk) - 1) a wandering, a straying about. 1a) one led astray from the right way, roams hither and thither. 2) metaph. 2a) mental straying.]

[Hence those who make a clear choice to reject the Lord Jesus Christ before the rapture and survive until after the rapture will find that the dispensation of grace has passed and no other opportunity will be afforded them. They made their choice. Yes, many people will be saved during the Tribulation Period, but none of them will be those who purposefully rejected Christ before the rapture of the Church. Hence, you need to hear,]

*[2 Cor. 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, **now is the accepted time**; behold, **now is the day of salvation**.)]*

C. **The Conversion in the Rapture** (1 Cor 15.51-58) [- Consider these verses carefully,]

[1 Corinthians 15:51-58 ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible

must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.]

1. **For the Christian** (vs 58) [- You have accepted Christ, be watching, be prepared, be a good Steward. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming at a time that we don't know. Be found steadfast and unmovable in your faith. As a bride adorned for her bridegroom.]
2. **For the Non-Christian** (vs 57) [- There is victory to be found in our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't risk your eternal soul in the folly and foolishness of sin and sinfulness. Sin may seem pleasant for a season, but rest assured, your sin will find you out and Jesus really is coming soon. Accept Him today!]

CrossRoads Baptist Church, Sept 7, 2008

Recently I received a request to read the attached article and give my opinion on its context. I suggest reading the article first and then reading my response.

The Article - PDF Format

I DO NOT agree with anything written within this article.

First the author is using an inferior translation of the Bible, these modern translations are poison and lead to deception. The King James correctly and accurately renders this passage,

2 Thessalonians 2:5-12 ⁵ Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ⁶ And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. ⁷ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. ⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Secondly the author denies that this passage contextually speaks of the transition from the dispensation of grace into the tribulation period and then into the dispensation of the millennium. This passage is not referring to the tribulation period but to the transition into it. Hence, the STRONG DELUSION will go into effect as the Anti Christ arises, but more notably as the one who now letteth (Holy Spirit) is removed. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts sinners of their sinfulness and lostness and He must be removed before the wicked one can be revealed and released. Hence, this Strong Delusion will accompany the removal of the Holy Spirits conviction from the lost of this world.

Thirdly, this Strong Delusion is properly defined in the Greek as,

- a. [Strong - energeia (gk) - 1) working, efficiency. 1a) in the NT used only of **superhuman power**, whether of God or of the Devil]
- b. [Delusion - plane plan'-ay (gk) - 1) a wandering, a straying about. 1a) one led astray from the right way, roams hither and thither. 2) metaph. 2a) mental straying.]

Understand, that this is no mere influence as this author's reprehensible translation implies. This delusion is supernatural and powerful and is laid on the mental capacities of human beings. This false translation purposefully misleads people into a false sense of hope and delay. To refuse the gospel and miss the rapture is terminal. One must remember that this dispensation of grace ends at the rapture and a new work of God begins, in the tribulation period a work of judgment, justice and the divine redemption (taking back) of

all creation forcibly by Almighty God takes place. So here is a fine example of the poison represented by at least, this modern translation of the Bible. I cannot imagine translating this forceful and strong word as a mere influence. This will be a **STRONG DELUSION**. FYI, I have not looked up what translation it is, that does not matter to me.

Next, notice carefully the framing of the phrase, “. . . because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” This phrase is not indicative of the future it is indicative of a past failure bringing a present consequence. The word because makes this undeniably clear. Therefore, the author is again misrepresenting the context of the passage. This author is misrepresenting this portion of the text even in his translation of the Bible, in my opinion. These people are receiving this strong delusion because they failed to believe the truth preceding this catastrophic event. The author also notes that verse eleven is future tense, which it is, but it is not speak for something future from the context of the text but future from the writing or authoring of the text. In other words the sending of the Strong Delusion will be sent in the future and the rapture is yet future in respect to the authoring of the text.

Lastly, every really good expositor that I have studied on this text agrees with the fact that this restrainer is the Holy Spirit. Most that I listen to and study agree that this passage sends a supernatural warning to all who hear the gospel in this dispensation. Do not fail to truly receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The rapture will remove your opportunity to be saved.

I will say at this point that I use nothing but the King James Bible. I understand that many of my friends use various versions of the Bible. I will always support and defend every individual's right to use the Bible they choose to use. I would also hope that they would defend my right to view modern translations of the Bible as dangerous to our understanding of the Bible. So, I do not intend to offend those of you who use other versions of the Bible when I refer to modern translations as poison in this response. However, I will always consider variations that lead to deception, like this one, toxic to the understanding of the Bible.

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