



Seized Before the Day

"Restraining Ordered"

You might be shocked at the extent of lying in our society. Research has shown that the average person tells a lie every eight minutes. Let's put that into context by calculating the frequency:

- That is seven lies per hour.
- One-hundred twelve lies a day if you sleep eight hours.
- Forty thousand eight-hundred eighty lies per year.
- 2.8 million lies over a seventy-year lifetime.

Lying on a grand scale originated in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve they could eat the fruit of all the trees except one – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He further told them that "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

Along came Satan. Lying to Eve, he said "God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Adam and Eve believed the lie and mankind has been deceiving and being deceived by lying ever since.

Lying is going to get even worse in the future. In our text we read of a time when "lying wonders" will be performed; a time of "unrighteous deception"; a time of "strong delusion" when mankind will "believe the lie." That time is the seven-year Great Tribulation that is coming upon the earth.

The believers in the city of Thessalonica had been lied to. They had been told that the seven-year Great Tribulation had already begun and that were enduring its judgments. This letter – and especially this chapter - was written to dispel that lie.

2 Thessalonians 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

The word for "coming" is *parousia* and was used by Paul in First Thessalonians 2:19 and 4:15 of the time when the church would be taken to be with Jesus before the Great Tribulation begins.

"Gathering together" is a word unique in its usage of the church and here is referring to the believers of the entire church age congregating in the air to meet Jesus at the resurrection and rapture of the church.

This verse is a summary of what you learned in First Thessalonians 4:13-18. Jesus is "coming" to "gather" His Church from the earth to heaven in what is called the rapture. If you are a Christian you could be caught-up to Heaven at any moment.

The Thessalonians believed that they could be caught-up to Heaven at any moment. But they were enduring intense persecution for their faith in Jesus. While they were trying to put all of it into perspective, someone or some group lied to them. In verse two you read,

2 Thessalonians 2:2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

A better, more accepted, translation of the final phrase is, "that the Day of The Lord is now present." They were being lied to by being told they were in the Great Tribulation.

The word "shaken" could be used of an earthquake; "troubled" means *frightened*. It was like a spiritual earthquake had hit and now they were still feeling its aftershocks. Someone had told them "the Day of Christ" had come.

The "Day of Christ," or the Day of the Lord, is the time of God's judgment upon the earth that includes the Great Tribulation. It is a time of unprecedented global tribulation that will last seven years. Technically it also includes the entire Millennial Kingdom that follows the Great Tribulation up to, and including, the Great White Throne judgment that precedes eternity.

They were being told it had already begun - meaning they were in the Great Tribulation.

The lies were in three forms - by "spirit," by "word," and by "letter as if from us..."

1. "Spirit" is probably referring to the utterance of a prophecy during a meeting of the church.
2. "Word" probably refers to a rumor that Paul and other apostles and teachers were now claiming that the Great Tribulation had begun.
3. "Letter" probably refers to a false document with a forged signature.

In verses three through seven Paul listed three events which occur before the Great Tribulation can begin which show the church will must be raptured ahead of time.

First, the falling away must come:

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first...

Some say that the "falling away" refers to the rapture. If so, case closed, because it must occur before the Great Tribulation.

It's not referring to the rapture. "Falling away" is *apostasy*. It is an active departure and deliberate abandonment of biblical Christianity by those who profess to be Christians.

There have been deceivers and apostasy throughout the history of Christianity. A modern survey of groups professing to be Christians reveals large-scale departure and abandonment from biblical Christianity. Groups like us and other Bible-believing churches are ridiculed most by liberal churches that reject things like the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God... the virgin birth of Jesus... and His bodily resurrection from the dead.

Does that mean we are already in the Great Tribulation? Not at all! There will always be apostasy, but this identifies "**the** apostasy," a unique falling away in the end times.

It is associated with what Paul next mentions – the revealing of a certain historical person. His revealing is the second event which must occur before the Great Tribulation can begin. In fact, his revealing is what marks the beginning of those seven troubled years.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

Apostasy will become **the** apostasy when this man is "revealed." John Walvoord said, "apostasy which today is general is going to become specific. It will be headed up in the particular person mentioned here."

Think for a moment of all the evil, wicked world leaders throughout history – the dictators and the despots. This man will be the worst of them so much so that he can be called "the man of sin." He will be the one who most typifies sin and rebellion against God.

He will be "the son of perdition." "Perdition" means *destruction* and indicates his ultimate fate. His ultimate fate is in verse eight.

We commonly call this man the antiChrist. He has about thirty names throughout the Bible. He is a real man who comes on the scene and enforces a treaty with the nation of Israel that brings a temporary peace to the Middle East. He will be hailed as a political and military genius... But he will be "revealed" as the antiChrist.

You cannot be in the Great Tribulation if this person has not been "revealed." He has not.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Both the prophet Daniel and the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of an event they called "the abomination of desolation." It is when the antichrist comes in to the rebuilt Temple and defiles its holy of holies demanding to be worshipped as God. It will occur in the very middle of the Great Tribulation - three and one half years into it.

Skip verse five for a moment and let's read verses six and seven:

2 Thessalonians 2:6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 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.

I said that there were three events which occur before the Great Tribulation can begin which show the church will must be raptured ahead of time. This is the third.

The "mystery of lawlessness" is our understanding as Christians that there is a devil who is definitely at work in the world seeking to overthrow the rule of our sovereign God. The devil's ultimate aim is exactly what he lied about to Eve in the Garden of Eden – to be like God. Satan will ultimately possess the antichrist in order to receive worship.

Both something and Someone is said to be "restraining" the antiChrist from being "revealed":

4. I say "something" because of the wording, "you know **what** is restraining."
5. I say "Someone" because this same restrainer is referred to by the masculine participle, "**He** who now restrains."

This Restrainer is both something and Someone well-known to the church whose power is great enough to hold-back the devil.

It is, in fact, God the Holy Spirit and the church as His temple on the earth.

He & it will be "taken out of the way" before antichrist can be revealed. This can only refer to the rapture of the church.

God the Holy Spirit has always been in the world and He always will. But after the resurrection of Jesus He came to believers in a new and unique way just as Jesus had promised. He came to indwell you, to live within you. You – the church – are the **something** that acts as a restraint to evil being revealed.

God the Holy Spirit indwelling you is the **Someone**. It is the rapture of the church from the earth to Heaven that removes the restraint and the Restrainer so all Hell can break loose for seven years.

During that terrible time God the Holy Spirit will still be *present* on the earth; but He won't be *resident* on the earth.

It's really very simple: The Tribulation cannot begin until the antichrist is revealed; and the antichrist cannot be revealed until the church is removed. Therefore the rapture occurs *before* the Tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

Probably they did. Still they became troubled.

Christians can be more easily troubled than we'd like to admit. No matter how mature you are in The Lord, or how intelligent you may be, occasionally some false teaching can trouble you.

It may not be a false teaching. It might be an over-emphasis on a biblical truth that gets you off track in your walk with The Lord.

We understand that there are different views on the timing of the rapture with regard to the Great Tribulation. I would point out that the view you hold - if you really hold it - will influence your behavior.

If you think that the church will go into or even through the Great Tribulation then you ought really to be preparing like a survivalist.

Instead, because you believe that the rapture is pretribulation and imminent, you have an urgency to share the Gospel and further the kingdom of God.

Keep it up until we are taken up.