

## **Three Critical Prerequisites Leading to the Day of the Lord, 2Thess. 2:3-8**

Paul had previously taught the Thessalonian believers about the Day of the Lord (2Thess. 2:5 and 1Thess. 5:1-11). Now, he reaffirms three prerequisites to the full arrival of that prophetic day: 1) the Apostasy/Departure; 2) the Revelation/unveiling of the Man of Lawlessness; and 3) the Removal of the Restrainer.

### **FIRST, The Apostasy: Its Meaning in the New Testament**

1. Scholars<sup>1</sup> agree that apostasia/ ἀποστασία in both its noun and verb forms in the N.T. basically means “a \_\_\_\_\_,” or “a \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. The narrower use means “a departure” or “removal” from the truth.  
  
The broader and more predominant use means “a departure” or “removal” spatially. Only twice is the noun used in the N.T. (Acts 21:21 & 2Thess. 2:3). The verb is used 15 times, only 3 of which refer to a departure from the faith (Lu. 8:13; 1Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12). The rest refer to a spatial departure or separation.
3. Question: When Paul states that “the departure”, “the falling away” (KJV & NKJV) must precede the Day of the Lord, what precisely does he have in mind?
  - Either, the final departure of Christendom from the \_\_\_\_\_ of God’s Word, i.e., spiritual apostasy;
  - Or, the physical departure of the Church: The \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Answer: Contextually, The Rapture fits best.
  - Because the \_\_\_\_\_ article (“the” apostasia) means that Paul is referring to a specific, distinctive event. Spiritual apostasy is not distinctive; in fact, it is a norm in church history. It existed in Paul’s day and continues in our day.
  - Because the definite article (“the” apostasia) can be properly understood as “the article of previous reference;” i.e., it refers to “our gathering together to Him” in v.1, which is clearly a reference to the Rapture.
  - Because Paul had already so taught the Thessalonians in 1Thess. 4:13-5:9, a context in which the Rapture precedes the Day of the Lord. He reminds the Thessalonians of this when he writes, “Do you not remember that I taught you these things when with you?” 2Thess. 2:5.
  - Because the context demands “the removal of the Restrainer” before “the Man of Lawlessness” (“the Man of Sin,” KJV) can be revealed. In other words, the removal or departure of the Restrainer (the Church empowered by the Holy Spirit) is a reaffirmation that the Rapture must occur before the Day of the Lord arrives.

<sup>1</sup> Liddell-Scott; Kittel (Heinrich Schier); Mouton-Milligan; Arndt-Gingrich.

## SECOND, The Restrainer of 2Thessalonians 2 Removed

### 2Thessalonians 2:6-7

KJV

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

NASV (1977)

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of [the] lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

A number of postulations exist for the identity of “The Restrainer” in this passage. Rather than rehearsing them, let me point out some exegetical considerations in establishing its identity.

1. Note two descriptive substantives (both articular participles) for “The Restrainer”
  - a. v.6 “now you know ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ **restrains**’” = to katechon/ τό κάτεχον = a present tense, neuter participle, hence “that which restrains” or “that which holds down.”
 

Paul clearly states in this verse that the Thessalonians knew (oida) objectively and precisely what he was referring to.
  - b. v.7 “only ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ **now restrains**’ will do so until he is taken out of the midst” = ho katechon/ ὁ κάτεχον = a present tense, masculine participle, hence, “he who keeps restraining,” (as in both the KJV and NASV), or “the one who restrains.”

In v.6, Paul has in mind the principle or thing that restrains; in v.7, the embodiment of the principle or thing that restrains.

2. Note two facts about The Restrainer:
  - a. The Restrainer (lit.) “becomes out of the midst” (NASV: “he restrains... until he be taken out of the way” (v.7)... “AND THEN SHALL THE LAWLESS ONE BE REVEALED” (v.8).
  - b. The Restrainer was/is holding down the mystery of (the) lawlessness (i.e., lawlessness toward God, God’s constituted authority) in Paul’s day, v.7.

### Identity of the Restrainer

- ❖ It existed in Paul’s day.
- ❖ It was holding down, suppressing or restraining iniquity then and now.
- ❖ It will be “removed from the midst” (taken away) before the man of lawlessness (The Antichrist) is revealed. Therefore, it cannot be civil law or a governmental system as Antichrist will have a very rigid government.
- ❖ The Restrainer is best understood as the Holy Spirit as He operates through the Church in this age.
- ❖ Removal of the Restrainer is equivalent to the Rapture.

- ❖ 1<sup>st</sup> Conclusion: the Restrainer is God operating through His Church (His sovereign option for this age).
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Conclusion: the Restrainer removed is like the opposite of Pentecost. The Church, the Body of Christ, currently restrains evil via its Spirit of righteousness. When removed from planet earth, evil will run its course.

### **THIRD, The Revelation/Unveiling of the Man of Lawlessness**

Note \_\_\_\_\_ names for the Anti/Pseudo Christ

1. **v.3** The Man of Lawlessness (NASV); The Man of Sin (KJV) = Lawless toward God
2. **v.3** The Son of Perdition = his doom, his destiny is destruction (same said of Judas by Jesus, John 17:12)
3. **v.8** The Lawless One = reaffirmation of his rebellious nature
4. **v.11** The Lie = the personification of untruth

His true person is “revealed” (apokalupto/ ἀποκαλύπτω, in Aorist, Passive, Subjunctive) to the world when He shows himself as God in the temple of God.

## THE LOGIC OF PAUL IN 2THESS.2:1-8 RELATIVE TO THE DAY OF THE LORD

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ (literal, parousia) of Christ and our \_\_\_\_\_ to Him (the rapture/translation) are two truths that are to stabilize the believer's mind relative to the Day of the Lord, **v. 1.**
2. Believers are not to heed anyone who says the Day of the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ or is here, **v. 2.**
3. Paul says that that day cannot come until two events happen, **v. 3-4:**
  - First: The Apostasy occurs: the physical departure of v.1 (best understood as the Rapture).
  - Second: The revelation/unveiling of the Man of Lawlessness ("of sin," KJV), the Antichrist.
4. Paul adds: but the Man of Lawlessness, the Antichrist, cannot be revealed until The \_\_\_\_\_ is removed, **v. 6-8.** Notice:
  - v.6, "what restrains" ("what withholdeth," KJV) is an articular, neuter participle.
  - v.7, "what restrains" becomes "he who restrains" ("he who now letteth," KJV), an articular, masculine participle. What is impersonal (neuter) in v.6 becomes very personal in v.7.

OBVIOUSLY, A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF "THE RESTRAINER" IS CRITICAL TO THE MEANING OF THE PASSAGE:

- AMILLENNIAL View: The Restrainer: \_\_\_\_\_ rule, law & order.
- PREMILLENNIAL View: The Church as now empowered by the Holy Spirit. The removal of the Restrainer is understood as the Rapture of the Church.

QUESTION FOR AMILLENNIALISTS: Will law and order be removed or will it be intensified under the Antichrist? If intensified, how can one say it is removed?

5. CONCLUSION: Since the Restrainer has not been removed, the Antichrist cannot be revealed, and since he is not revealed, the Day of the Lord cannot be here.
6. CRITICAL POINT: The Day of the Lord in this passage is directly associated with the Antichrist, his activities and his revelation/unveiling to the world. Believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and functioning as the Body of Christ on earth, now serve as a restraining influence on the mystery of iniquity. Until the Church is removed, Antichrist will not have complete liberty to function.