

The Pre-Tribulational Rapture¹

With a mid-Acts dispensational view on the subject of End Times, one finds that the prophetic program was put on temporary hold. This was due to the majority of Israel rejecting her Messiah during the ministry of the twelve as well as their resisting the Holy Spirit at the stoning of Stephen. God responded in matchless grace with the raising up of the Apostle Paul. It was unto him that the risen, ascended, and glorified Lord Jesus Christ communicated, through a series of direct, heavenly, revelations, the new program of God's grace known as the *mystery*. It's called the *mystery* because you can't find it forecast in the prophetic Scriptures. The only indirect hint we have as to how long this new program will last is in Romans 11:25,26. Here, we learn that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in and then all Israel shall be saved. Blindness in part (Gr, *meros*: piece, portion) means that it affected a piece or portion of Israel and we know from the context (i.e., "until") that it will be temporary.

Romans 11:25,26: **“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:”**

The condition, where God will remove the blindness in part, is that **“the fulness (Gr, *pleroma*: completion) of the Gentiles be come in.”** *Pleroma* suggests that as Gentiles are being added to the body of Christ, there is a point in which the *completion* of this process will arrive. I take this to mean the full complement or number of Gentiles becoming saved. Since no one but God knows how many more it will take or how long it will take, the *rapture* could happen at any moment.² Once this fulness is achieved and the *rapture* occurs, God will work to save all Israel by first of all removing the *blindness*. We know that this will involve a time of tribulation, judgment, and preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. This time, without the *blindness*, Israel will be taken to a point of belief and trust. This time is called the *day of the Lord*. (Note the prophecy in Joel and its partial fulfillment in Acts.)

Joel 2:28-32: **“And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”**

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² Isn't it sobering to think that the *rapture* could happen as you are leading someone to Christ, the moment they believe and isn't it also sobering to think that once the *rapture* occurs, you will lose the opportunity to talk to your friends and family about trusting Christ?

Acts 2:16-21: **“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

I Thessalonians 5:2: **“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”**

How do we know that once the *blindness* is removed from Israel, she will respond to the gospel of the kingdom this time? Let’s look to the Scriptures for our answer:

Zechariah 12:9,10: **“And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.”**

The prophetic clock will be restarting after the *rapture* of the body of Christ. The man of sin, the Anti-Christ, the beast, will be revealed and the day of the Lord will begin as foretold in the book of Revelation.

During Paul’s ministry, of approximately thirty years, he had to constantly fight against false doctrine. One such false doctrine was that the day of the Lord had already come. In his second letter to the Thessalonians he addressed this issue:

II Thessalonians 2:1-3: **“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 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;”**

In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, he described in detail the future **“gathering together unto Him”** (see I Thessalonians 4:13-18). The term we use today for this event is the *rapture*. Although the word *rapture* is not found in our English translations, there is a Greek word (*apostasía*)³ in verse three above that has the idea. That word is translated **“a falling away”** and the Greek definite article (*the*) is supplied in the original

³ This word appears to have a dual meaning, it’s used one other time in Acts 21:21: **“...thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses...”** it carries the idea of *depart* (from Moses). Many translations also use *apostasy* or *rebellion* in II Thessalonians 2:3.

and suggests *the* departure. I know a lady who grew up in Greece and although the Modern Greek is much changed from the Greek in our New Testaments, many of the words are still in usage today. I asked her about the Greek word *apostasia* and she told me how her father used it with her. He told her that if she found herself with others that were talking about things or doing things of which he didn't approve, she was to *apostasia*. At that point she tore a piece from a page of paper in front of her and tossed it across the table. She was to *depart* from that group! With that in mind, let's paraphrase the three verses above from II Thessalonians 2:1-3:

We ask you, based of the fact that Jesus Christ is going to come and gather us unto him, not to be upset by false teachers that come and say that this day or the day of the Lord has already come. That day has not come yet and won't come until the rapture happens and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

In the next verses Paul says a few words about why the man of sin, the Anti-Christ, won't be revealed until after the *rapture*.

II Thessalonians 2:5-7: **“Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 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.”**

Many take these verses to mean that it is the Holy Spirit **“what withholdeth”** (Gr, *katecho*: to hold down) and is **“he who now letteth”** (Gr, *katecho*: to hold down). This may be true; however, we also know that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers today and that after the *rapture* the restraining influence of Spirit filled Christians will be gone from the earth. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, will still be on earth as Israel is being saved in the tribulation. If it is the Holy Spirit who is **“what withholdeth”** and is **“he who now letteth”** I believe He is doing it through the believers that live on the earth at this time.

After the *rapture* the next thing on the timetable will be the events as they unfold in the book of Revelation. Around a century ago Sir Robert Anderson made the observation that: “A thousand years *could* expire after the *rapture* before the events of Revelation start without violating a single line of Scripture.” Most people think the events of Revelation will start immediately, but only God knows for sure. One thing *is* sure; it won't matter to us as Christians since we will not be here to wonder about it!