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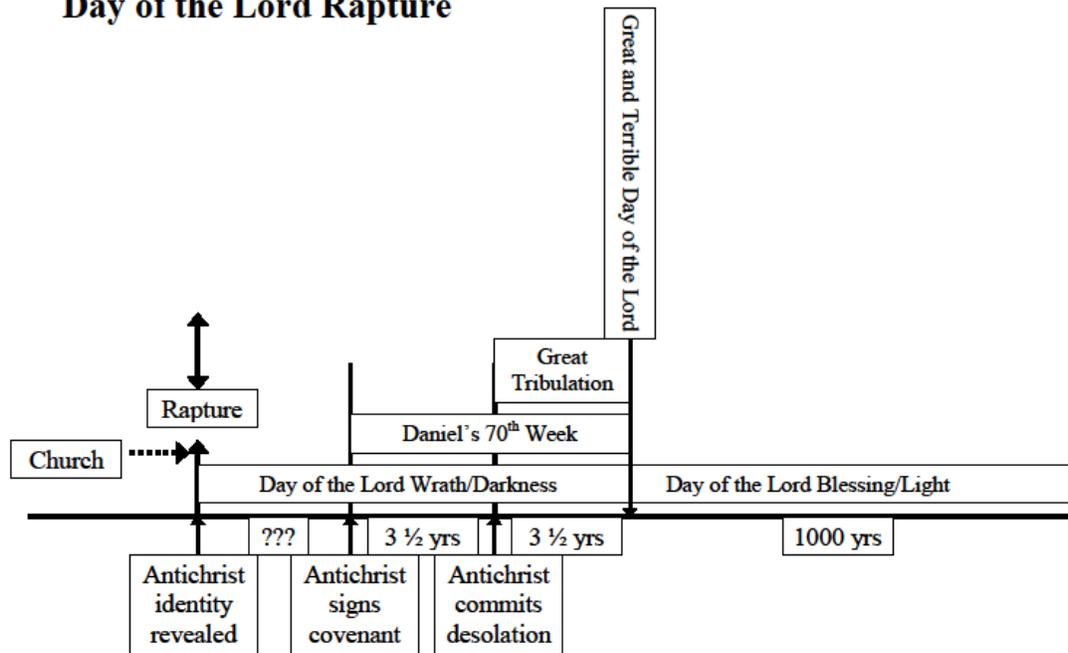
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**A1125 – June 19, 2011 – 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7**  
**The Restrainer**

Question: Is the restrainer (Holy Spirit) removed from earth at the Rapture? Will people who become believers after the rapture receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell them as we do now? Since these are related questions and our text today may have bearing on them then I'll answer them as part of the lesson at the appropriate time. The crucial thing to understand in answering both of these questions is that the Holy Spirit has many different ministries, He convicts of sin, He reveals Scripture, He regenerates, He indwells, He baptizes, He seals and much more. Some of these ministries are active at times and inactive at other times. But the Holy Spirit is always active in one or more of these ministries. So just because He may not be actively involved in some ministry at some time doesn't mean that He isn't actively involved in others.

## Day of the Lord Rapture



We're in 2 Thessalonians and to warm up to our text today let's review. In 2 Thess 2 Paul is correcting an Error that Satan had inspired through false prophets, false teachers and false letters. The error was that the day of the Lord had come. This was disturbing the Thessalonians because the day of the Lord was the day of God's wrath against His enemies. But they were His children, so how could they be in this day of wrath? Paul essentially says in verse 3 you're not in this day, that's a deception. "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy comes first." So the apostasy must come first before the day of the Lord can begin, but what is the apostasy? We defined the apostasy, the *apostasia*, as the departure of the Church from earth at the Rapture. That conclusion is based on two lines of argument: one, the word usage, both the noun and the verb are used, in the majority of cases, as a departure, and often of a spatial departure, not a doctrinal departure, though it is used that way in some contexts. So Paul is simply saying that you cannot be in the day of the Lord because the Rapture has to happen first. And if that indeed is the proper translation then this passage proves the church will not enter into the day of the Lord. However, if you try to use this passage be aware that they will fight

this point to the death. The second line of argument for why we translate the apostasy as “departure” is Paul’s lack of explanation for it. When someone doesn’t define something they are assuming you know what they are talking about. So if we observe what Paul had already taught them, he taught about a departure at the end of each chapter in 1 Thessalonians, we call it the rapture. It would be rather natural then that Paul would sum up in the second letter his teaching on the rapture with the word “departure.” The departure would then be Paul’s way of summing up the doctrine of the Rapture. Today we call it the Rapture, then they called it the Departure. What’s the difference? There is no difference. The rapture is us being caught up in the air. The departure is us being taken away from earth. So it’s my conviction that Paul is teaching that the day of the Lord cannot come unless the Rapture comes first.

Then Paul goes on to a second, but closely related but event, the revealing of the man of lawlessness. What does this refer to? This is the opening event of the day of the Lord. So you’ll have the Rapture and then the man of lawlessness is revealed and when that happens the day of the Lord has begun. Since the man of lawlessness is very definitely a person then we concluded he was Antichrist. Therefore, the day of the Lord begins with the Antichrist’s identity being revealed.

So if you look on our chart you will see that his revealing is not the event that begins the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. The 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel begins with the Antichrist signing a covenant with Israel. And then we have the Great Tribulation and that begins with the Antichrist committing the abomination of desolation. But the day of the Lord begins when Antichrist’s identity is revealed. So we have three periods and each period begins with a distinct event related to the Antichrist. Since each event is different then each period must begin at a different time. This is a key to Bible prophecy. The day of the Lord, the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel and the Great Tribulation are not the same. They overlap, yes, obviously, but the very fact they have distinct starting points tells you they are not the same.

We’re interested in the day of the Lord and it begins when Antichrist’s identity is revealed. If that is the case then his identity is right now being restrained. We say right now because Satan right now wants to take over and rule the world with unbridled power. And his chosen instrument to do that is

the Antichrist. But he can't realize his desires right now because God runs history. God has a plan and God's plan for the present times of the Gentiles is all written in the book of Daniel. And Satan can't thwart God's plan and so even though Satan desires to bring his man antichrist out onto the stage of world history so he can rule all the nations, God is working out His plan and is restraining Satan's. Therefore Satan always has to have one or two or three antichrist's running around just in case this is the generation he can get his man out in the open and rule over all nations and start a worldwide rebellion against God. But God is somehow, either through someone or something, restraining the identity of the Antichrist right now. And that's our big topic today; who or what is the restrainer?

Now the man of lawlessness has many titles just like Jesus has many titles. We usually call Jesus by His title Christ and we normally call this man by his title Antichrist. But there are many other titles carried by the man of lawlessness. In Genesis he is called the "seed of Satan" (Gen 3:15), in Isaiah he is called "the star of the morning," "the son of the dawn" (Isa 14:12), in Micah he is called "the Assyrian" (Mic 5:5), in Daniel he is called "the little horn," (Dan 7:8), "the prince who is to come" (Dan 9:26) and "the willful king" (Dan 11:36), in Revelation he is called "the beast out of the abyss" (Rev 11:7), "the beast out of the sea" (Rev 13:1) and "the eighth king and the seventh kingdom" (Rev 17:9-11), in 1 John he is called "Antichrist" (1 John 2:18) and Paul in 2 Thessalonians calls him "the man of lawlessness," "the son of destruction" and "the opposer and exalter of himself."

Let me describe in overview fashion the career of this individual throughout history. From the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden God revealed a program of war between two seeds: the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. The seed of the woman developed along the lines of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David, culminating in Jesus, the Messiah. The seed of Satan has no clear lines of development, but shows himself in the Pharaoh of the Exodus, in Queen Athaliah, in Haman, in Antiochus Epiphanes IV and in Herod the Great. All of these and others attempted to destroy the arrival of the seed of the woman. However, the actual incarnation of Satan in the ultimate Antichrist is still to come. Since he does not know when God's plan will culminate in the Antichrist then he has prepared antichrists in every generation. When the time comes the restrainer will remove his restraint and the ultimate Antichrist will be revealed. His identity will be decipherable by

those who have wisdom. The numerical equivalent of his name will be 666 and he will rise from the ancient Roman Empire, perhaps from the ancient Assyrians who reside in modern day Iran, when there is a ten nation confederacy and he himself will become an eleventh king among them. But he will be quite unlike the rest. He will subdue three of the kings that do not submit to him, thus making him the eighth. He will be killed in battle but God will raise him from the dead. Satan will indwell him and with great signs and wonders he will deceive the nations and they will be amazed and will worship him. He will become world dictator and the embodiment of the seventh great Gentile kingdom in history (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome 1 and Rome 2). When he rules the world engaging in economic commerce will require taking the mark 666 either on the forehead or the back of the hand. However, while it gives the privilege of economic commerce it also marks you as destined for destruction. He will enter the Temple in Jerusalem and commit the abomination of desolation, breaking his covenant with Israel. He will speak monstrous things against the God of gods and will turn against Israel, waging total war against them in an attempt to destroy God's covenant promises to that nation and take control of Jerusalem and reign over the whole earth. He will prosper but he will come to his end and he will be annihilated and destroyed forever.

So now that we have an overview of the Antichrist's career we'll read what Paul wrote in verse 4 as a summary of his career and then we want to get into how his career gets started, the removal of the restraint. In verse 3 he is called the man of lawlessness, we covered that title; essentially it means he's the most autonomous individual ever. Then he is described as **the son of destruction**, "son of" is a Hebrew idiom for destiny, it means he is destined for destruction. He comes to the brink of total power and control but then he goes to destruction. There are many passages that describe his destiny of destruction and in this one it's described in verse 8, "the Lord will slay" him "with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming." But it's also described in Dan 7:26; 9:27, 11:36, 45 and Rev 19:20.

In verse 4 he is also called **the opposer and exalter of himself**. He does two things: he opposes God, "speaking monstrous things against the God of gods" and he exalts himself, "he will magnify himself above every so-called god and will make himself the object of worship," proclaiming to be God and setting up an image of himself in the Temple, which He commands all to

worship. While numerous passages describe his opposing and exalting activity, here Paul describes it in verse 4 as the one “who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God,” that is his opposing and exalting activity, also described in Dan 7:25; 11:36-38 and the bulk of Rev 13.

So let's look at some of this activity in verse 4 and make observations. He will take **his seat in the temple of God**. Now there are two words for **temple** in the Greek NT, one is *ieron* and it refers to the whole temple complex and the other is *naos* and it refers to the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was placed. The word used here is *naos* and so refers to the Holy of Holies. Now, if that's the case and this prophecy was not fulfilled in AD70 with Nero, (who never did this, but people try to say Nero was the Antichrist, which is absurd because his name does not add up to 666, you have to invoke his title to get the numbers to add up and change the ending of his name, so it doesn't add up and he never did all the things the Bible says the Antichrist will do anyway and so Nero is not the Antichrist) and since that is the case and the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 by Titus and the Roman armies, then if Antichrist is to do these activities then the Temple must be rebuilt, at least the altar and the furniture and the Holy of Holies and it has to be cleansed and operational by the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel because that's when the Antichrist enters the Holy of Holies and commits the abomination of desolation, causing sacrifice to stop.

So let's look at our chart. If the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel begins when the Antichrist makes a covenant with the leadership of Israel for seven years, the final seven years of the seventy sevens of Daniel 9, then at the middle of that seven years the Antichrist will enter the Holy of Holies and will commit the abomination of desolation which renders the Temple defiled. And to do that the Temple, or part of it at least, has to be rebuilt, you can't enter into a Temple and defile it if it isn't in physical existence in the physical city of Jerusalem. So it must be rebuilt and cleansed and operational, that is, the Jews must start offering sacrifices to the great dismay of PETA. Now, I don't know when it will be rebuilt, cleansed and operational. Orthodox Jews for decades have been planning and organizing to rebuild a Temple on the Temple Mount. Right now, of course, the Dome of the Rock is on the highest point of Mt Moriah where they want to build. That area is the most sacred

space of Judaism. The rock that is being covered by that dome is, as Leen Ritmeyer argues, the very location of the Holy of Holies and he's one of the leading authorities on the Temple Mount. He's done extensive Temple Mount excavations for a number of decades, he has studied the dimensions of the rock covered by the Muslim Dome and you can see from his diagrams and pictures that there is a rectangular indentation in the rock that is exactly the dimensions of the Ark of the Covenant and you can see where the walls of the Holy of Holies were and he suggests that is precisely where it once sat. That place, the highest point on Mt Moriah, that is now covered by that Muslim dome is very sacred to Jews. It is the holiest site of Judaism because they believe that it is the position from which the whole universe was created, they believe that is where Abraham offered Isaac and they believe that is where the Ark of the Covenant was located. And there are many orthodox Jews in Israel at this very hour preparing the furniture to the exact specifications in the Hebrew Bible, who are training priests to serve in the future temple, who are planning the building of the future temple after the model of Solomon's Temple. So there are things in place to build this temple today. There are also some things not in place; things like the Muslim control of the Temple Mount. Even though the Temple Mount is formally under Israeli sovereignty, the Temple Mount is controlled by the Muslim Waqf and the reason is because the Israeli leadership doesn't want to rock the boat, the majority are secular Jews and so they have effectively turned over control of the Temple Mount to the Muslims. And if you want to go up there today then you have to go through this big checkpoint and if you take your Bible to the checkpoint you'll never see it again, and if you go up there on the Temple Mount and you start praying then you can be arrested, and as you walk around you'll be followed by these strange guys wearing wires who are undercover Muslims, and you can't go into the Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Dome of the Rock like you used to. It is a highly sensitive area and if you do something offensive to the Muslims then you might start WWIII. And when high profile Jewish figures go up there, like Ariel Sharon did back in 2000, the Palestinians will erupt in violence, it started an intifada. They didn't like Sharon going up there because he was a high profile military leader in the IDF army since 1948. So this is all a block to presently building a Temple and making it operational.

Nevertheless, in some way and at some time the Muslim blocks will be removed and the Temple will be rebuilt right where the Dome of the Rock is.

And like I said last time, it's my guess that the Antichrist will actually provide the conditions for rebuilding when he signs the seven year peace covenant with Israel. I think that may very well set in motion the plans that are already in motion and it will get built to the point it can be cleansed and sacrifice can begin. But whereas it's the Jews' purpose to sacrifice, it is Antichrist's purpose to be worshipped in the Temple. And that's what our verse is talking about, **so that he takes his seat in the *naon* of God**, the Holy of Holies, **displaying himself as being God**. He claims to be the God of the universe, a lot like the ancient Assyrians, and that's why I pointed out that connection earlier from Micah 5:5. The Antichrist will be very arrogant like the Assyrians. And since the Assyrian region was taken in under the Roman Empire and the Antichrist must arise from within the ancient Roman Empire then it is possible that the Antichrist will be of Assyrian descent and he will take on this character of exalting himself as being God just like the Ancient Assyrian kings did.

Now, Paul says, in verse 5, **Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?** That is when I was face to face with you, teaching you in Thessalonica. And there are two significant things I want to point from this verse. The first one is that the verb **telling** is an imperfect voice and the imperfect means over and over and over. It doesn't mean Paul taught Antichrist's career one time on a Thursday afternoon for five minutes, it means Paul went over it and over it and over it. Paul happened to believe in review and so day after day Paul would review the Antichrist's career. Paul happened to think that Christians should understand the Antichrist's career and that we ought to go over it and over it and over it. Why? Because very obviously it is a subject of the word of God. And all of the word of God has been given to us for our learning. And very obviously because Paul taught in contrasts, Paul taught that Antichrist is a contrast to Christ and you have the seed of Satan and the seed of the woman, very clearly the Bible teaches by way of contrast and the reason is because that is the way we recognize the truth from the error, we contrast one with the other. There's no such thing as just teaching the true thing and supposing everybody will detect the error. Baloney, show me where the Bible does that? So the first thing is the imperfect, Paul taught them the career of the Antichrist over and over and over.

The second thing I want to point out is that Paul was only there for 21 days. 21 days max. Acts 17 says three Sabbaths, which may have been as little as 15 days but we'll grant up to 21. 21 is one day shy of four Sabbaths. And yet in the 21 days Paul was there he already taught them the whole prophetic outline. Paul didn't say, well, don't worry about that prophecy stuff, and just believe in Jesus. No, Paul evangelized these people and quickly followed up with training. This was standard operating procedure. And part of that training was prophecy. But part of the training was salvation, how they were saved, and part of it was training in service, how to serve one another, how to lead by example, and part of it was training in sanctification, how to grow spiritually and he trained them in many other things. You say Paul did all that in 21 days? Yeah, Paul was a content Bible teacher. He taught content, content, content and he taught it day after day after day. Why was Paul so interested in teaching content? Because that's what you need to live the Christian life! You can't live the Christian life on a few stanzas sung over and over and over and a rock band that blows your eardrums for 45 minutes. You need content from the word of God. That's what man was created for, not rock concerts. Paul didn't care about any of that kind of stuff. And Paul didn't need it to reach out to people. He had something infinitely more valuable to reach out with, the word of God. And Paul was interested in giving them something valuable, not something that just distracts their attention away from the most important thing. Paul believed the gospel was the power of God unto salvation, not rock music and all the 101 other things that people think we're going to use to win people to Jesus. The gospel is what wins people to Jesus. Not these techniques. And Paul was very interested in training in content because Paul was interested in reaching the thinking part of man, training the intellect. Paul didn't care about getting some kind of hot emotion going. We can do that over a football game. See, today everything is turned around, it's exactly backward. For example, the intellect is defined as anti-spiritual, oh, you'll puff up if you know too much of the word of God, you need to emote more, that's where the Spirit is, and Christianity is inundated with these totally anti-biblical statements. Here's another one. Have you ever heard of the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge? There is no difference in the Bible between the head and the heart, never, not once is the head defined as the seat of the intellect and the heart as the seat of emotion, never. Always the heart is the thinking part of man, it is the intellect. And it is anti-biblical to divide the head from the heart, absolutely anti-biblical. How are you ever going to develop faith if you don't address the

thinking part of man? Paul taught that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. That means content, intellectual content, understanding content. Paul taught, be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. Now how is that going to happen apart from teaching content? And Paul taught in Christ are hidden all the riches of wisdom and knowledge. Well, if they are hidden in Christ who is in hypostatic union and kenotic then we might have to learn what those doctrines of Christ are. And Paul taught that we are to destroy speculations and every lofty thing exalted against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to Christ. And just how are we going to do that kind of apologetics if we are having an emotional fit every Sunday? How can you go to war with your emotions? You can't. You do know we're in a war don't you? It's spiritual warfare. And the weapons of our warfare are developed in the mind. When you go to war you have to have very clearly outlined objectives so you can destroy your enemy and that means knowledge of the word of God. And if you get your mind straightened out and you learn to think like a Christian then your emotions will straighten out, then you'll have stability and be able to control your emotions because they'll be under the control of doctrine and you can win battles in the spiritual life. And doctrine is not a bad word either, doctrine is a good word because what is doctrine? It's teaching. That's all it is. And what did Paul do? He taught the word of God, and he taught the word of God and he taught the word of God and he taught the word of God some more. And anyone with half a brain can see that if Paul had taught them all this in 21 days and made a big to-do about the career of Antichrist Paul was not against doctrine. Paul was more interested in doctrine than anything else in the whole world. And I for one intend to follow Paul. So if you're hanging around here hoping we're going to teach less and emote more let me just save you the time and tell you right now things are not going to change, not on my watch. If anything we're going to teach more. So in verse 5 Paul taught them prophecy over and over and over, and two, he did this within the span of 21 days max such that he could say, alright, don't you remember that while I was still with you, Paul expected them to learn what he was teaching and that meant to remember it.

Now verse 6, and here we come to the issue of the restrainer which is linking back to verse 3. Verse 3 is concerned with the revealing of the man of lawlessness, verse 6 is picking up with that topic again and discussing the restraint that is holding back the revealing of Antichrist. **And you know what restrains him now**, by the way, the participle **restrains** is neuter.

You have in the Greek language, masculine, feminine and neuter; masculine is male, feminine is female and neuter is neither. So here, just an observation, **what restrains** Antichrist is in the neuter. But in verse 7, **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so...**and that participle, **he who now restrains** is in the masculine. So in verse 6 the restrainer is neuter and in verse 7 the restrainer is masculine. What are we to make of this?

Well let's see. I hope you understand that the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, is also referred to in the neuter in some places and in the masculine in others. That's not anything new. However, how that is handled by theologians differs. Some take it that the Holy Spirit is not a person, therefore there is not a 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity, there is no Trinity, there is either a Binity or a Unity both of which are heresy. In both views the Holy Spirit is a force, an impersonal force in the universe. Now it is obvious that this is heretical from the fact that in Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit, who, by the way is said to be God. And I don't think you can lie to a force. You lie to people not forces. And there are many other passages that clearly depict the Holy Spirit as a person, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity. So what I think about the references in the neuter mixed with references in the masculine is that this is the Holy Spirit's way of keeping Himself in the background. See, it's not the Holy Spirit's job to be out front. It's Jesus Christ's job to be out front. That's why it was Jesus Christ that was incarnated, it was Jesus Christ who taught, it was Jesus Christ who did the miracles, it was Jesus Christ who died for us and it was Jesus Christ who rose from the dead, ascended and took His seat at the right hand of the Father. It was not the Holy Spirit who did those things. The Holy Spirit has different jobs and His jobs are behind the scenes jobs. If you think of it like a theatre production, God the Son is the main actor, He's on center stage, it's Him who the audience keeps their eyes focused on. God the Spirit is a tech guy, He's back stage, He makes the main actor, God the Son, look good. And that is God the Spirit's role in history. His ministries are always backstage ministries that point to God the Son, He wants God the Son to be magnified, He wants everyone to be looking at God the Son. That's why you can always pick out the Holy Spirit cults because they put undue emphasis on the Holy Spirit. That's one reason the charismatic movement is wrong, the emphasis is on the wrong person of the Trinity, everything is about the Holy Spirit and did you get the Holy Spirit the second time and my response to that is I

already got Him the first time and I got all I need. So you can always detect a Holy Spirit cult because the Spirit will be the center of everything and all you have to do is sit there and take notes when you go to these churches and if the ratio's come out anything other than about 90:10 then they're out of balance. The whole focus in the NT is on God the Son. And so this neuter-masculine switching back and forth is simply a way for God the Spirit to keep eyes off of Himself and over on the Son because He knew people would be trying to reverse this.

So who is the restrainer? Some have thought that it was Satan. They're idea is that Satan is restraining the fullness of sin as a deception and he'll let it loose in all it's fullness during the day of the Lord because Satan is an angel of light. But this is contrary to everything we know about Satan. Satan is not restraining sin, Satan is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us. Further, verse 9 says that the coming of the Antichrist is in accord with the activity of Satan, so he is behind the Antichrist but he is in no way restraining the Antichrist.

So some thought that it was Seneca back in the 60's AD because Nero was so terrible that Seneca had to hold him back. Nero in this view was the Antichrist and when Seneca stopped holding him back Nero did his worst. The problem with this view is that after the Antichrist is destroyed then the Millennial kingdom comes for 1,000 years and then we go into the Eternal State. Since we are clearly not in the Eternal State then this is an impossible interpretation.

So some said since the restrainer is neuter in verse 6 and masculine in verse 7 then it may not be a person but Roman government. Paul lived during the Roman Empire so Roman government must be the restrainer. Now there's no question that Roman government did bring law and order to society, that it restrained sin, that's one of the functions of human government as God ordained it. But Roman government was also very sinful, they had many sinful policies and it seems very difficult to explain how the Roman government could restrain the Antichrist's identity. Just how did the Roman government restrain one man's identity? And how is it doing that today?

So other people said, no, it's the Bible. The Bible restrains sin, wherever the Bible has gone it restrains sin and produces a more righteous culture and

therefore the Bible is the restrainer. And it's true that when the Bible has been taken seriously by a people group it has produced a more righteous culture. However, again, how does the Bible keep the identity of the Antichrist from coming out? That doesn't seem to make good sense.

So third, some people said it's Christians. Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and they restrain sin so when Christians indwelt by the Holy Spirit are removed from the earth at the Rapture then it's going to get real sinful. And I have no real problem with this either. Government restrains sin, the Bible restrains sin and Christians indwelt by the Holy Spirit restrain sin. That's all fine and well, but I don't think any of those are what is meant by the restrainer here. They may be instruments used by the restrainer but they themselves are not the restrainer. I think, if you go back to what we said about Satan wanting to get his man, Antichrist, out in the open so he can rule the world, then whatever is restraining him must be stronger than him. So that gives you the answer. Who or what is more powerful than Satan? Only one person, God. Some charismatics will say well, Christians are more powerful than Satan. But is that what the Scriptures teach? Or do they teach that greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. So it's not you but He that is in you that is greater than Satan. So we're back to God being the one greater than Satan. So God is the restrainer, and in particular God the Holy Spirit.

So turn to Gen 6:3. What I want to show you is that one of the ministries of God the Spirit is to act as a Restrainer; that historically He has operated this way and so, even though He is not identified in vv 3, 6, 7 and 8 as the restrainer, it seems very obvious that He is the Restrainer. So much is He a Restrainer that His work of restraining is found in every age except the judgment phase of the day of the Lord, except this one period of world history on your chart. All the rest of history He's restraining to some degree, but not at all in this one period of time. It's this one period of time when God the Spirit lets go of all restraint and just lets the human race have at it and when He does that wickedness rapidly unfolds. Our hearts are desperately wicked and we cannot right now imagine how much restraint He is putting on us right now to curb us from our natural proclivity toward evil. This is a tremendous ministry that He carries out for believer and unbeliever alike. This is not for believers only, God the Spirit is restraining sin and evil among both believers and unbelievers, meaning it is a function of God's common

grace, meaning it is common to all men. So if we had some tool to measure and quantify the degree of evil which He restrains we would be shocked. All men are being restrained in their thoughts and actions by God the Holy Spirit. But after the Rapture His Restraint will be removed and the identity of the Antichrist will be revealed and the full destructive capacity of our sinful depravity will be unleashed to create the worst world ever. So it is a tremendous function of God's grace that the Spirit is restraining sin in this world.

Now in Gen 6:3, in the world before the Flood, which some have pointed out was the worst world ever before this future world, because you have depraved people living over 900 years, think how much evil you could dream up in 900 years. And the whole thing decayed to the point of verse 2, that the sons of God, which are angels in the OT, this was a period of angelic government in the world and they ruled with great power, and it says they were taking by force wives from the daughters of men, whoever they chose and the produce was a hybrid offspring called the Nephilim, it was an attempt to destroy the seed of man, that's a little stunt that was being pulled. And the Lord says in verse 3, "Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever;" and the picture is that God the Spirit was contending with man to some degree to keep men from working out their depravity. But it reached a point that He said, that's it, I'm not going to restrain men forever, I'm going to let go, and so another 120 years of common grace is given and then boom, the Flood came and took them all away.

Now turn to Isa 63:10, in the time of Israel when they were under the Law, which was given to restrain sin, and yet what it did was provide a base for their sin nature to press against and sin more, but the law was given by the Holy Spirit to restrain sin and in verse 10, "But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them." So there you see Him striving against Israel to restrain them from sin.

Now we come to the present era, the Church, and 2 Thess 2 is the main passage. This world is much like the world before the Flood. In fact, the future day of the Lord is compared to the Flood in Matt 24 and in 2 Pet 3. Two passages show a clear connection and the one in Matt 24 says the day of the Lord will come exactly as the Flood came. That is, its arrival is identical.

Just as before the Flood God the Spirit was restraining sin and men were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage, and then suddenly, without warning, the door of the Ark was shut and the Flood came and took them all away, so before the day of the Lord God the Spirit is restraining sin and men are eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage and then suddenly, without warning, the way of the Rapture will be over and the day of the Lord destruction will overtake them. So the Flood and the day of the Lord start identically, the Flood is a foreview of the day of the Lord, and when His restraining ministry was lifted the Flood destroyed the whole world with water and the day of the Lord will destroy the whole world with fire.

So the question earlier, Is the restrainer (Holy Spirit) removed from earth at the Rapture? The answer to that question I think is that it occurs the same day but it is not caused by the Rapture of the Church. In other words, His restraint is removed that day, but not because He is indwelling His Church and the Church is removed, but because it is the opening event of the day of the Lord and that relates to Israel. So the technical answer to your question is no because the Rapture is a Church truth and the day of the Lord is an Israel truth. And the Holy Spirit's restraining ministry is related to Israel. But the practical answer is yes because they both occur on the same day.

The second question, which is a follow up to the first, Will people who become believers after the rapture receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell them as we do now? Well, we just don't have any explicit revelation about this. What I'd say is that it is likely that they will not be indwelled as we are now. I say this for two reasons. One, the day of the Lord period sounds similar to the OT dispensation of Israel and in that time the Holy Spirit was *with* them but not *in* them. Second, there are 144,000 Jews who are sealed in the day of the Lord and this very clearly sets them apart from the other believers. Since the job of sealing is always a job of God the Spirit then He is actively ministering in the day of the Lord but not in the same way He is ministering today because today all believers are sealed; then only the 144,000 are sealed. Probably the Holy Spirit will minister on the earth after the Rapture in a number of ways. I would suggest that He will convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment and that He will regenerate men that believe. He may do some other things but I do not think that he will baptize; baptism of the Spirit is unique for the present age, the Church. And the Church has

already been removed at the Rapture, so in the day of the Lord I think He will indwell some, as He indwelled some in the OT, but not all as He does today. He will seal some, such as the 144,000, but not all as He does today. He will convict men of sin, just as He does today and He will regenerate all who believe, just as He does today. So there are differences in His ministry then.

Now we have identified in verse 3 the apostasy as the Rapture, it must come first, then we identified the man of lawlessness as the Antichrist and finally the restrainer, He's the Holy Spirit and He is restraining the identification of the Antichrist in particular, and sin in the world in general. When He removes His restraint the Rapture will have already occurred and the day of the Lord will have begun.

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