

**The 7-Fold Excellencies of the Mystery:
“The Catching Up (or Rapture) - Right Division is the Key”**

Theme Scripture:

[READ] 2 Tim. 2:15-18

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is **Hymenaeus and Philetus;**

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

Review:

Two fellowships ago we began our current subject, the Sixth Excellency of the Mystery, the Catching Up (or, Rapture) of the church which is his body. We looked at 1 Thess. 4 at that time. In our last meeting, we continued in 1 Thess. 5. We saw the simple teaching made clear in chapter 4 and then, in chapter 5, the dispensational distinctives of this teaching. Today we continue with the dispensational distinctives by moving ahead just as the apostle Paul did when he wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians, as he continued to correct the saints regarding the false teachings they had received regarding the rapture and which he had addressed in his first letter.

It seems pretty clear that what the false teachers had been teaching was that the rapture had already occurred. Perhaps they were teaching that some had been raptured (the “overcomers”) but that the rest had been left behind. Or, maybe it was somewhat different, that those that had died would not be raptured at all but that their resurrection would be delayed until the final resurrection mentioned in 1 Cor. 15 and Revelation 20.

Or, might it have been that they had been taught a very non-Pauline ,non-literal rapture, a non-literal tribulation, and a non-literal kingdom? I prefer this view. That false teaching has persevered actually with most by far of all those that name or have named the name of Christ down through the ages of great apostasy in christendom. They hold that scripture is not to be taken very literally,

especially concerning Paul's teachings in these letters.

Remember 2 Tim. 2:17-18 as our theme today:

“And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, **saying that the resurrection is past already**; and overthrow the faith of some.”

The only way this teaching could have been accepted by the believers would have been if they had been instructed to reject the literal meaning of what Paul had written. That is so clear.

Our Outline:

- #1: Our Rapture Hope: It is the Basis of A Dispensational Exhortation***
- #2: Our Rapture Hope: Right Division is Required for Its Understanding***
- #3: Our Rapture Hope: Right Division Reveals Its Distinctiveness***

Our Key Scripture Today: 2 Thess. 2:1-10

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:1-2

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,

2 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.

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:3-5

3 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?

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:6-7

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.

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:8-10

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.

I. Our Rapture Hope: It is the Basis of A Dispensational Exhortation

2 Thess. 2:1-2

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,

2 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.

- ***The basis of encouragement for the believer is found here in verses 1 & 2***
 - ***Verse 1 uses the “coming” and the “gathering together unto him” as the future reality to be anticipated, NOT a future apostasy from the faith.***
 - ***Verse 2 shows the consequence of taking the apostle at his word in verse 1.***
 - ***Note the wording in verse 2, “at hand”, “the day of Christ is ‘at hand’”***
 - ***This literally means “present” and is translated that way in most places [only] Paul uses the word.***
 - ***“Time present” - Rom 8 & 1 Cor. 3***
 - ***“Present evil world” - Gal. 1***
 - ***“Perilous times shall come” - 2 Tim. 3***
 - ***This also lends support to the view that the false teachers had taught that the rapture of the church had already occurred clearly in some non-literal sense. And that would be quite troubling indeed, would it not?***
- ***The Day of Lord, a time of great judgment, is NOT what is being anticipated but rather his Coming: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering***

together unto him”

- *“The Day of the Lord” occurs in some - about 15% - but 85% of the existing manuscripts read “day of Christ” which is surely more consistent with the context here. Once this key event occurs, this “falling away”, prophecy will be fulfilled at a rapid pace as described in detail in Daniel and in Revelation*
- *The “Day of Christ” cannot begin until the “falling away” occurs first*
- *So, the Rapture is the next event on the historical horizon for the saints of this grace dispensation, NOT the Tribulation period which will include the manifestation of Satan’s Anti-Christ, the Mark of the Beast, great trials for all on this earth including believers, and finally, the salvation of the Nation of Israel as Christ returns to this earth to establish his 1000 year Kingdom.*

#1: Our Rapture Hope: It is the Basis of A Dispensational Exhortation

[Comments?]

II. Our Rapture Hope: Right Division is Required for Its Understanding

2 Thess. 2:3-4

3 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.

- ***Here is the Time Sequence of events: First the Rapture - Then the Tribulation***
- ***What is this “falling away”? This is such a critical matter for our understanding.***
 - The word (“*apostasia*”) literally means: a “*standing apart*”
 - Is this not in fact the Rapture of the Body, the Catching Up into heaven’s glory?
 - ***Few commentators have consider this and written of it, sadly (even among those who rightly divide), but it is***

increasingly clear to me that this is the only interpretation that can fit the context, for in this section of this letter it does not make any sense for this to be a doctrinal apostasy as is usually assumed, since there has always been greater or lesser degrees of that and looking for this or expecting this could in no way be a comfort to the Thessalonians as is Paul's intention as expressed in verse 2.

- *For this entire letter and this chapter are meant to provide encouragement and rest for the believers, **NOT** to encourage the immediate actions as had been revealed for believers who would be living in the Tribulation period. Those exhortations for believers living at that time (primarily Jews) are that they might thereby endure to the end and be fully prepared for the Second Coming (see Mt. 13, 24, 25, Lk. 13, 21, Dan., Rev., etc.)*
 - This exhortation is instead a *gracious* exhortation and not an exhortation to watch very carefully for the signs of the coming of the Lord in judgment on the earth and as a result an exhortation for all believers to *flee from the rooftops and seek refuge*. This what the “kingdom-oriented” scriptures teach, is it not, that “enduring to the end” is required for salvation in that time.

#1: Our Rapture Hope: It is the Basis of A Dispensational Exhortation

#2: Our Rapture Hope: Right Division is Required for Its Understanding

[Any comments or questions?]

III. Our Rapture Hope: Right Division Reveals Its Distinctiveness

2 Thess. 2:6-10

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.

- ***Here we find the explanation of current events (Satan's work in particular): The Mystery or Sacred Secret, never before revealed!***
 - ***My (very literal) translation of verse 7: "For the sacred secret is already operating, the lawless one, only [there is] the one constraining now until being [taken] out of the midst"***
- ***This sacred secret in verse 7 is that in this current dispensation of grace there would be a working of Satan using signs, wonders and miracles somewhat like that which will occur in the Tribulation period only far more limited by Almighty God. At that future time Satan will use these Messianic signs to confirm himself as the Christ (but he will be really, of course, in fact the anti- or substitute Christ).***
- ***The apostle says here that a similar work of Satan is "already present" to a degree (but it is constrained or limited). This explains the origin and source of at least some of the seemingly miraculous signs and wonders occasionally seen in this current dispensational period of God's grace. They are NOT the working of God after all, but the working of Satan. Since these are not now a working of God but a working of Satan, *they can have no spiritual value*, but are only damaging spiritually. These movements always emphasize feelings and "experience" over true faith in the gracious promises of God for us members of the Body of Christ.***
- ***For the Pauline revelation is that the catching up or rapture will occur BEFORE the work of Satanic deception which is the keynote of the Great Tribulation even begins. In fact, the Rapture is pre-tribulation! It is that simple.***

#1: Our Rapture Hope: It is the Basis of A Dispensational Exhortation

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[Any comments?]

Conclusions:

- ***The teaching here regarding the Catching Up, regarding the Rapture of the church which is his Body is simple indeed - but it is profound in its power and its clarity***
- ***The Thessalonians have been taught falsely, after Paul left town, apparently that the rapture had already occurred.***
 - ***But the clear teaching here is that the catching up is secured by Christ's death and resurrection and that nothing can interfere with that in God's program for the church which is his body. Believers shall all experience it. There will not be a partial rapture for overcomers - all will be caught up "together".***
 - ***And, the presence of signs and wonders today is only a sign of the mystery of lawlessness that is already at work, and not a sign of God's working at all. It is rather a sign of Satan's deceptive working to lead believers astray, as always.***

[Your thoughts?]

Exhortation:

- ***Well, beloved, have you received this clear teaching, this clear dispensational teaching? With each reference of the apostle Paul to the rapture the teaching becomes even clearer and even more powerful as we come to more fully comprehend and are blessed by the word of God RIGHTLY DIVIDED. AMEN!***
- ***Are you resting in the expectation of his coming and of his calling? Are you? Amen.***
- ***The apostle of the Gentiles exhorts us again regarding this hope of glory in a companion (and final word in his last letter):***

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:8

- ***Do we really believe that? Are we resting in this promise of deliverance? Has it made all the difference? Has everything changed for us since we***

believed? How real is this crown of righteousness now for us, whatever our circumstances? How real, beloved? How real?

As we conclude, let us not forget Paul's strong exhortation in 2 Tim. 2:17-18 regarding the false teachers that abound. He says we must be very discerning to reject always their teachings:

“And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, **saying that the resurrection is past already**; and overthrow the faith of some.”