

Need: "Some teach that the Church will experience PART of the coming Great Tribulation time predicted in the Revelation and be raptured the last half of it. That makes me nervous! As we see world events going downhill spiritually, should we hold up in a fort and stock weapons and food to prepare for a holocaust, or what?!"

- I. **Man's long decline into paganism has warped his view of God's purposes in history that new believers from paganism can be so confused by errant views on prophecy that they live sinful lives!**
 - A. Though God created the world and set up man as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gen. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. God renewed human history by the Noahic Flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
 - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
 - D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check his sin, Gn. 12:1-3.
 - E. Yet, the Old Testament records that nation, Israel's repeated failure to curb Nimrod's error and even to be corrupted by it, Gn. 12:4-Malachi.
 - F. When God sent Jesus, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, apostate Israel rejected Him, so God postponed the Kingdom's installation and carried on its recruitment program through the Church, The Gospels and Acts.
 - G. However, with Israel's Kingdom **postponed**, Gentile believers from **ages** of apostasy in paganism were so errant in their views of God and His future purposes that they miscalculated and lived sinfully:
 1. When Paul evangelized pagans in Thessalonica, though he had told them the Church would escape the Tribulation via the Rapture, they believed another report that they were **then** going **through** it, 2:1f.
 2. This confusion led fear and to some being unruly, 2:16-17; 3:11!
 3. **Their miscalculations about prophecy resulted from past pagan ignorance and influence that missed God's purposes in history!**
 - a. Zechariah 11:15-17 predicted that God would send the antichrist to **judge** men for rejecting Messiah (Unger, Zechariah, p. 204).
 - b. Ignorant of this **purpose** for the Tribulation and fearing God was **capricious** (typical of pagans), regardless of Paul's past teaching, they feared God might let them go **through** it!
- II. **God thus used Paul's Second Thessalonian Epistle to focus on this divine PURPOSE in the Tribulation Period to edify these converts!**
 - A. Paul said that **God** would **punish** their **current persecutors** when He **returned**, 1:1-12. Their persecutions were **not GOD'S Tribulation!**
 - B. Then, he corrected their error, noting God's reason for the Tribulation:
 1. Paul showed that antichrist had to appear **prior to** the Tribulation:
 - a. There first needed to come a worldwide apostasy, 2 Thess. 2:3b.
 - b. Then **antichrist** was to be **revealed AS ANTICHRIST**, 2:3c-5.
 2. **However, a Restrainer was at work inhibiting that revealing, and He would do so until the CHURCH'S RAPTURE**, 2:6-7!
 - a. Since antichrist comes in Satan's power (v. 9), his **Restrainer** must be stronger than Satan, making the Restrainer **God**.
 - b. The **only** explanation of **God's** being "taken out of the way" in 2 Thess. 2:7c is the removal of the Holy Spirit's ministry through Christians at the **rapture**, Eph. 4:30 (cf. 1 John 4:4b)!
 - c. Thus, the **rapture** is **before** antichrist is **exposed as antichrist!**
 3. Well, antichrist **AS REVEALED** interacts with Israel in Daniel 9's **entire 7 year** (70th prophetic "week") **period** to fulfill Zech. 11's prediction of judgment for Israel's rejecting Jesus. Thus, the Rapture occurs **before** antichrist's **7 year** treaty with Israel **begins!**
 4. Since God will let antichrist be **REVEALED** to **punish** the **world** for **rejecting Christ**, **not** to punish **Christians** who have **accepted** Him (2 Thess. 2:10-12 with Zech. 11), the **Christian CANNOT experience any part of the Tribulation Period**, 2 Thess. 2:13-14.
 - C. Paul thus urged the Thessalonians to **relax** for not having to face **any** of the Tribulation **Period** so as to live **responsible** lives, 2:15-3:18!
- III. **2 Thessalonians adds to the "thread of redemption" in revealing that the TRIBULATION that the Church escapes is not JUST the harsher last half of Daniel 9's seventieth week, but antichrist's WHOLE SEVEN YEAR reign as their deliverance from his ERA!**

Application: We will escape the entire Tribulation Period if we (1) believe on God's Messiah, Jesus as God then gives us eternal life and promise of a blessed future with Him, Jn. 3:16; 2 Th. 2:13-14. (2) Then realizing that we will escape the entire Tribulation Period, live via this comfort lives that responsibly witness the Gospel to others that they may be saved and join us in the Rapture, 2:16-17!

Lesson: The Tribulation is God's seven year judgment for men to be EXPOSED to a reigning FALSE Messiah for rejecting Jesus! Since Christians are innocent of that sin in having ACCEPTED Christ as Savior, they cannot be exposed to this entire Tribulation PERIOD, and can thus relax and thereby live sensible, responsible lives as a witness!