

# STANDING FIRM

Part Nine: *signs*

October 29, 2023

Paul had told the Thessalonians they did not need to fear God's wrath (1 Thess. 5:9-11). Still, some of his readers were convinced they were living in the Day of the Lord. The persecution they were experiencing seemed to be what the prophets had predicted when they wrote about the Tribulation Period (Is. 13:6, 9; Zeph. 1:14-16).

## **In 2:1-3a, Paul tells the Thessalonians not to be shaken or fooled by false teachers.**

Paul tells the new Christians living in Thessalonica not to believe anyone who tells them they have missed the Rapture and are now living in the Tribulation Period, suffering the wrath of God.

## **In Vs. 3b-5, Paul gives the Thessalonians two signs confirming the Day of the Lord.**

1<sup>st</sup> Sign: There will be a great rebellion against God. Vs. 3b

As we get closer to the Tribulation Period, when God pours His wrath onto sinful humanity, there will be a great rebellion (apostasy) against God (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

2<sup>nd</sup> Sign: The man of lawlessness will be revealed. Vs. 3c-5

The great rebellion against God will pave the way for a man to rise to power and lead the world to oppose God and His will for humanity. Energized by Satan and aided by the false prophet, the Antichrist will have immense power and exalt himself as God (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 6:1-2; 13:1-17). This blasphemous self-exaltation will cause God to pour His wrath out on the earth during the second half of the Tribulation!

## **In Vs. 6-12, Paul lists four aspects of the Antichrist's career.**

1<sup>st</sup> – Paul talks about the Antichrist's revealing and defeat. Vs. 6-8

Paul tells the Thessalonians that someone or something is holding back (restraining) the Antichrist from taking power and overwhelming the world with his Satanic power.

*Who is the restrainer?*

- I believe the restrainer is the Holy Spirit.

*Three reasons I believe the restrainer is the Holy Spirit:*

1. What restrains (neuter gender) spoken of in Vs. 6 changes to who restrains (masculine gender) in Vs. 7.
2. Only God can restrain Satan and his Antichrist.
3. The Holy Spirit is the One convicting the world of sin (John 16:8) and working through the New Testament church to hold back lawless living.

*When will the Holy Spirit be taken out of the way?*

- The Holy Spirit's restraining ministry will end when the church is *raptured* (1 Thess 4:13-18).

Once the Holy Spirit's sin-restraining ministry is removed from the earth, the lawless one will deceive the people on earth until the Lord Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation and defeats him (Rev. 19:11-21).

2<sup>nd</sup> – Paul talks about the Antichrist's power and influence. Vs. 9-12

People will be in awe of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:2b–4; 17:8) because Satan will empower him and his false prophet to do signs and miracles that convince people he has supernatural power. But the Antichrist's miracles are not the only thing that will deceive people into thinking he has divine power. His words and actions will mislead people into worshiping him and doing evil instead of receiving the Gospel.

God desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4–6), but when people refuse to believe the truth, the Lord will allow them to believe Satan's lies (Rom. 1:18–25). Eternal condemnation will be the fate of all who suppress the truth.

### ***Takeaways...***

1. Two signs will confirm that the Tribulation has begun – a worldwide rebellion against God and a leader (Antichrist) will become the leader of the world.
2. The Holy Spirit's sin-restraining ministry will be removed from the earth at the Rapture.
3. We are not living in the Tribulation since these signs have not yet occurred.