

New on Prewrathministries.org

I must begin this issue with an apology. As most of you know I have just moved to a new church field and now pastor at First Baptist Church in Citronelle, Alabama. Citronelle is located about 25 miles north of Mobile, Alabama. This is actually home for me and I am now within 45 minutes of most of my family. There has been so much to do to get the groundwork laid for my ministry in this new church field, and I have not been able to spend as much time on prewrath emails and newsletters as I would want. Therefore, I missed the August newsletter issue and am late for the October issue. So, rather than wait until November, I decided to get an October newsletter out now and then plan for the next one in December. The exciting thing is that my ministry here at First Baptist will provide some new opportunities for teaching the prewrath position. I plan to do a week long seminar on "In View of the End" maybe in the Spring and hope to publicize it throughout our area. Please keep me in your prayers that I will be able to stay on top of my ministry responsibilities here and also have the time to continue to promote the prewrath rapture position. By the way, if you are interested our church has just put up a new website and the address is <http://citronellefbc.com>.

Why The Holy Spirit Is Not The Restrainer

One of the issues regarding the rapture and the revealing of the Antichrist is the identification of the restrainer as the Holy Spirit. Now, we have already covered some of this in the main article on The Restrainer, but I want to deal more directly with why the Holy Spirit is NOT the restrainer.

It is important to note that nowhere in scripture is the Holy Spirit identified as having a ministry of hindering sin. Rather, the scripture identifies His ministry as:

John 16:8 (NIV) When he comes, he will

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Feature Article: The Restrainer

By Elbert Charpie

The passage in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 introduces an element of Christ's return that has caused much debate. It is found in verses 6 and 7. The passage we are concerned with is... (I have bolded verse 6 & 7)

2 Thess 2:3 (NIV) Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? **6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.** 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

The NASB states these verses like this...

2 Thess 2:6 (NASU) And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains [will do so] until he is taken out of the way.

This is where we get the idea of the restrainer, or the "one who holds back." The pre-trib position has made much of this citing that the restrainer is none other than the Holy Spirit. They conclude that the rapture must happen first because that is when the Holy Spirit will be removed from the world along with the church. However, they go on to teach that the greatest revival in history will take place during the 70th week spurred on by 144,000 "sealed" Jewish evangelists, even though the Holy Spirit has been "taken out of the way." They defend this revival by saying that the Holy Spirit continues to work in the same way He did in the Old Testament. They insist on this interpretation in order to explain the appearance of the multitude in Rev 7:9. Although these explanations seem reasonable, they are, in fact, not supported by scripture. First, the restrainer in 2 Thess 2:6 is not identified, although he is apparently known to the Thessalonian readers because Paul writes "and you know what restrains him now..." Secondly, nowhere is there any evidence that the 144,000 Jews who are sealed become evangelists. On the contrary, the scriptures teach that God will deal with these until they finally come to the point of recognizing Jesus as their true Messiah. Third, there is no scriptural evidence of a revival during the 70th week, rather we are told that the people of the earth still refused to repent.

Now, if the restrainer, then, is not the Holy Spirit—who is he? Does the scripture give us any clue to his identity? I believe there are a couple of passages that point to who this restrainer might be.

First in Daniel we are given a glimpse of a connection between Michael the archangel and the beginning of the tribulation of the 70th week...

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Daniel 12:1 (NIV) "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

Whatever Michael's "arising" is, it is the beginning of the "time of distress." We also know that the archangel Michael is pointed out in scripture to be the defender of Israel. For instance:

Jude 1:9 (NIV) But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Daniel 10:12 (NIV) Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. 14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

Daniel 10:20 (NIV) So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; 21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince...)

So, Michael was involved when Moses died, and also when Daniel was seeking to know the future of his people. It is interesting to note that Michael is referred to as "your prince." It was Michael who disputed with the Devil, and it was Michael who fought against the prince of Persia. It is much of a stretch, then, to assume that Michael may be the very one who restrains the "power of lawlessness that is already at work?" When you add to that, that Michael is linked to the beginning of the 70th week tribulation, I think it makes a very strong case for the identity of the restrainer as Michael. Michael is also the one in the book of Revelation who fought against the dragon and cast him down to earth. Restraining doesn't seem too hard of a task after reading that.

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convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; 10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Nowhere is hindering here mentioned. Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit is removed as some have suggested, there is a conflict of other scripture passages that indicate that the Holy Spirit is at work and active during the 70th week.

For Instance...

Mark 13:8 (NIV) Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. 9 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Matt 10:17 (NIV) "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Luke 21:13 (NIV) This will result in your being witnesses to them. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

Far from being gone, it seems the Holy Spirit will be more active than ever indwelling and giving wisdom as He has done ever since Pentecost. Identifying the restrainer as the Holy Spirit and insisting that He is removed just doesn't make sense. However His presence during the 70th week to convict the world of sin "because men do not believe in me," and of righteousness because Jesus is not present, and of judgment because the Devil is facing judgment makes all the sense in the world. If the Holy Spirit then HAS to be present; the only other conclusion is that someone else is the restrainer.