

Sunday October 15th 2023
From Time to Time – Part 9

1). 2 Th 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of the Lord had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come [upon the earth] unless the falling away [apostasy] comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. [the mid-point in the tribulation] 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

We had seen last time that a false message had been introduced among the Christians in Thessalonica, claiming that they had already passed through the tribulation and that the Day of the Lord was present on the earth. Now, we know that the Day of the Lord has always existed outside of the confines of this present earth and the heavens associated with it. Hence the reason why Christians will find themselves in the Lord's Day following the resurrection/rapture of the church into Christ's presence at His Judgment Seat – Re 1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands.....20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the*

angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

On the earth however, it is Man's Day, and the Day of the Lord cannot be manifest in the earth until the full six thousand years of Man's Day are completed. And these six thousand years will not be completed until the end of the tribulation, the completion of Daniel's seventieth week. God does not act outside of the precise timeframes that He has established, and always in accordance with His Word.

a). And to counter the false message that the Day of the Lord was already on the earth, Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the two things that he had previously told them about that must take place before the day of the Lord can come. One had to do with the dispensation of the church, 'unless the falling away [apostasy] comes first', and the other has to do with the beginning of the final seven years of the dispensation of the Jews when 'the man of sin is revealed.....in his own time'. And he reminded them that the man of sin could not be revealed until 'He who now restrains is taken out of the way'. And the Thessalonians knew exactly what Paul was referring to through the use of this phrase in his second letter, even though he doesn't specifically identify what he was talking about, because he had already made it clear to them in his first letter.

b). And as we had noted last time, the 'falling away', apostasy, which is the concluding work of 'the mystery of lawlessness', has to do with Christians with respect to one specific thing, the proclamation of and hearing of the Word of the Kingdom.

c). And this, we will remember, is just what Jesus began to teach on the very same day as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit recorded in Matthew Chapter 12, after He left the house, symbolizing the House of Israel and sat by the sea – Mt 13:1 *On the same day [as the events in Chapter 12 when the offer of the Kingdom of the heavens was effectively taken from Israel] Jesus went out of the house [the House of Israel] and sat by the sea. [picturing the Gentiles] 2 And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. 3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow.....18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 **When anyone hears the word of the kingdom.....***

At the beginning of our dispensation the Word of the Kingdom was the ONLY message that was taught to those who were already saved. No one had need for a doctrinal statement to set out their stall in the Christian marketplace in those days. And as a result of hearing the Word of the Kingdom Christians began to produce the fruit of it – Mt 13:23 *But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word [of the Kingdom] and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*”

Mt 21:43 *“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

And it is with respect to those who hear the Word of the Kingdom that we see the mystery of lawlessness at work within the Matthew 13 parables. Firstly, it's at work to prevent those who hear the Word of the Kingdom from ever producing fruit and secondly, it's at work by trying to stop those who begin producing fruit from continuing to do so. And this is the subject of the first four of the seven parables in Matthew Chapter 13, four parables which the Lord gave before returning to the house to give the final three. Four parables that provide a dispensational 'history' of the church with respect to the Word of the Kingdom – Mt 13:37 *He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

It was the tares, the sons of the wicked one, Christians with a message that was contrary to the Word of Truth, who are described as 'sown among the wheat', with a false message to bring corruption to the Word of the

Kingdom – 1 Ti 4:1 *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

2 Pe 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.*

And it is the work of the tares, being the instruments of the mystery of lawlessness, the original apostates, that we see in – Mt 13:31 *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."*

The mustard seed, we will remember, is used as a metaphor for what would be the newly formed church, which would begin to grow after the correct fashion until the tares, the false teachers, would introduce the doctrines of demons, received from deceiving spirits, heresies that would destroy those who would receive and believe them with respect to positions of rulership in the Kingdom. And once these destructive heresies were introduced into the church and became widely accepted, so the church began to grow in a completely unnatural way, that led to it being visualized as a tree, which symbolizes a nation within the kingdom of this world. A place in which the birds of the air, the emissaries of Satan, the deceiving spirits, had readily found a home to continue their destructive work.

d). And then, as a result of this initial work, the mystery of lawlessness is seen progressing towards its conclusion. And this is the subject of the parable of the leaven that provides additional commentary

on the parable of the mustard seed - Mt 13:33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The [proclamation and offer of] kingdom of heaven is [has become] like leaven, which a woman [those who had the potential to be part of the bride for Christ] took and hid in three measures of meal [the way of truth] till it was all leavened. [so that the way of truth is now blasphemed]"*

And if we were to follow this same corrupting process from the perspective of the seven churches seen in the Revelation, which provide another dispensational 'history' of the church with respect to the Word of the Kingdom, then we will see that we can only begin and end in exactly the same place. Here is the beginning - Re 2:4 *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. [the woman places leaven in the three measures of meal] 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; [from being coheirs with Christ] repent and do the first works, [that produced fruit for the Kingdom] or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.*

And here is the end - Re 3:15 *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, [towards the Word of the Kingdom] and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—[till it was all leavened]*

The church in Ephesus was producing fruit for the Kingdom as a result of hearing the Word of the Kingdom, the gospel of the glory of Christ, through Paul's ministry, as well as Priscilla and Aquila and Timothy, this was their first love. However, they then left that first love, which had made their fruit production possible, by receiving the work of the tares instead. A situation that Paul had warned them about and reminded them of, as he met with the Ephesian elders at Miletus - Acts 20:29 *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

1 Ti 1:3 *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—**remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine**, 4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.*

And from this beginning, the church has generally moved in only one direction. Ultimately becoming that which is described through the condition of the church of the Laodiceans, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. And we will keep in mind that this Laodicean condition exclusively deals with Christians and the Word of the Kingdom. And the reference in Revelation Chapter 3 to the final state of the church as thinking itself to be rich, wealthy and in need of nothing, has more to do with how Christians today view themselves spiritually, than with their material possessions. Although in many cases these two will go hand in hand.

e). And it is the final end of the work of the mystery of lawlessness that the Lord provides in summary form, recorded in –
Lk 18:8.....*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find the faith on the earth?"*

This is a rhetorical question for which the answer is already known through the way the question is asked in the original language. NO, the Son of Man will not find the faith, faith to the saving of the soul, when He comes.

f). The mystery of lawlessness then is fulfilling its work among the saved, a work that brought about apostasy at the beginning of the dispensation and is responsible for the consequences of that apostasy witnessed in every direction today, consequences that we can find presented through a type given in – Mt 23:15 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell [Gehenna] as yourselves.*

The falling away, the apostasy that Paul said must come first, encompasses the ongoing corruption of the Word of the Kingdom throughout the course of this dispensation. From the original apostates who stood away from the Word of Truth, to those who are the end result of that apostasy. And we find ourselves right at the end of the destructive work of the mystery of lawlessness, during that time depicted by the Laodicean church, when all has been leavened, and the way of truth is blasphemed.

g). That which had to come first has come, the falling away, the apostasy, and we are living in those days. But as we have also seen from the Scripture recorded by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians, the man of sin cannot be revealed until 'He who now restrains is taken out of the way'. And only after the man of sin, the beast, the Antichrist has been revealed and the Lord has consumed him by the breath of His mouth and destroyed him with the brightness of His coming, can the Day of the Lord with its change of rulership be present on the earth, and the Lord's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

2). And just to be clear about He who now restrains, let's go back to the foundation and build from there - *Ge 5:21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. 22 After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam, with seven generations denoting a complete period of time, and he provides the foundational type for the resurrection/rapture of the church having been taken alive into heaven. Enoch does not provide the complete picture but the foundation upon which the complete picture is to be built. And it is intriguing to note that Enoch, according to that recorded by Jude, before being taken alive into heaven, had prophesied about the very apostates from this dispensation, of whom we have just been speaking – *Jude 1:14 Now Enoch,*

the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men [the apostates] also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, [angels] 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

*And once Enoch had been taken, another complete period of time found its conclusion in the tenth generation from Adam, with Noah – Ge 7:11 *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12 And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark—**

*And Noah, the tenth generation from Adam, and his family passed safely through the worldwide flood, protected by God's provision for them, as He brought judgment on the peoples of the earth. A type that provides the foundation for Israel, God's adopted firstborn son, being kept by God's provision, through the seven years of the tribulation as they are brought to repentance and the Gentile nations judged – Jer 30:7 *Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it.**

*Re 12:6 *Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness, [Gentile nations] where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.....13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.**

And again, just as we saw with Enoch, Noah and the worldwide flood provide the foundational type upon which the complete picture is then to be built.

a). And what we know so very well from the chronological sequence given in foundation from Genesis Chapters 5 and 7, is that the resurrection/rapture of the church MUST take place before the tribulation can begin. And as we have seen from the verses in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, the man of sin must be revealed in his own time, as it is his action of making a covenant with the Jewish remnant in the land that marks the beginning point for the tribulation – *Re 6:1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.*

And as we have seen, it is only at the end of the seven years of the tribulation, which must be initiated by the revealing of the man of sin and his covenant, that the Day of the Lord will be manifest in the earth.

b). And although there is no mention of the tribulation in the panoramic type seen through the sequence of consecutive chapters in Genesis, Chapters 21-25, the same pattern is to be found. Following Sarah’s death in Chapter 23, that pictures the setting aside of Israel, there is a completed search for a bride for Isaac, typifying the Holy Spirit’s present work of searching for a bride for Christ, before Abraham marries Keturah in Chapter 25, picturing God the Father’s remarriage to a repentant and restored Israel at the end of the tribulation, when the Day of the Lord will be present on the earth.

c). And we have seen the same presented again through particular events in the lives of Joseph and Moses, where following their initial rejection, each found a Gentile bride before dealing with their brothers a second time, during circumstances that picture the tribulation.

d). And with all this in mind, and in conjunction with the inseparable connection between Paul’s gospel, the gospel of the glory of Christ, and the antitype of Genesis Chapter 24, along with recognizing the place to which Paul had brought the Thessalonian Christians at the conclusion of his first letter to them – *1 Th 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the*

trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

It becomes very easy then for us to identify exactly what Paul was talking about when he said, *'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. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed.....'*

'He who now restrains' is not a reference to the Holy Spirit per se, but to the work of the Holy Spirit throughout this dispensation, the search for the bride for Christ, given through the type of the search for a bride for Isaac in Genesis Chapter 24, a search by the Holy Spirit which began on the Day of Pentecost following the Lord's ascension – Jn 16:7 *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.....*13 *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

And in fulfillment of the type, just as Abraham's oldest servant spent the night with Abraham's family before leaving to return to his master, so the Holy Spirit has been working during this time of spiritual darkness – Eph 6:12 *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

And He will leave at the dawn of a new day with all Christians, to meet the Lord in the air at His Judgment Seat – Ro 13:10 *Love does no harm to a*

neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. 11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 **The night is far spent, the day is at hand.** Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Mt 25:5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Re 1:9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying.....4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."6:1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

It is then only after the resurrection/rapture of the church and the subsequent determinations made at the Judgment Seat that the man of sin

can be revealed. And in this sense his revealing is being restrained by the present work of the Spirit. But once that work is completed, at the end of the two thousand years of this dispensation and the Holy Spirit leaves with the Bride and 'her maids', then the two days allotted to the church will be at an end. And having completed His dealings with this particular group of household servants, Christians, the way is clear for God to begin dealing with Israel once again during Daniel's seventieth week. And in order to deal with Israel so that God's purpose for the nation will be accomplished, the man of sin must be revealed. This will now be his own time.

We will continue with this next time if we remain and the Lord is willing, and we have prayed to that end.