

# “When God Pulls the Plug”

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; John 16:7-11

East Berlin Community Church

Pastor Keith A. Mosebrook

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## Introduction

- Danger on the Susquehanna River
- Analogy to the world scene
- Review of the biblical evidence of the return of Christ prior to the tribulation.
  - The Imminent return of Christ—at “any moment”
  - God’s promise to “*deliver us from the wrath to come*”.
  - The structure of the Book of Revelation. “Church” not found in the “tribulation” section.

## “When God Pulls the Plug” — The Removal of the “Restrainer”

• 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12-- *“Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together with Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in your mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 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. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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. 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. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

### A. The presence of a letter falsely attributed to Paul—2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

1. **Content:** The “Day of the Lord” had already begun and the rapture had not taken place.
2. **Reaction to the letter:** “*shaken in your minds*” and “*troubled*”
  - 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5-- *“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 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. Do you remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”*
3. **Their reaction to the false letter is a good indicator that Paul had taught them the pre-tribulation rapture of the church.**

### B. The Removal of the Restrainer before the Tribulation.—2 Thessalonians 2:3-9

1. **Two Historic Events Prior to the “day of the Lord”**
  - a. **The Great Apostasy** or the “meltdown of the professing Church”—2 Thessalonians 2:3
  - b. **The Unveiling of the Antichrist**—2 Thessalonians 2:4-5
    - 1) The Antichrist needs to be on the world scene before the tribulation begins, NOT BEFORE THE RAPTURE OCCURS.
    - 2) The tribulation period begins when the antichrist signs a peace treaty with Israel, so he needs to be a recognized world leader.

2. **The Presence of the “RESTRAINER” or the “Plug” that must be pulled.**
  - 2 Thessalonians 2:7-- *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.*
  - a. **Paul had revealed to identity of the “restrainer” to the Thessalonians, but not to us.**
    - 2 Thessalonians 2:5-- *“for when I was still with you I told you these things”*
  - b. **Clues from the text as to the Identity of the Restrainer.** It must be...
    - 1) Both a POWER and a PERSON
      - 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 -- *And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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.*
    - 2) A Supernatural Person to restrain from Paul’s time to present, and to exert world-wide influence over the forces of evil.
    - 3) A Powerful Person to hold back apostasy and the man of sin
    - 4) Have logical reason to restrain lawlessness and antichrist
    - 5) Have logical reason to terminate restraint
  - c. **Inadequate Restrainers**
    - 1) **Human Government**—View of the Mid-tribulation position
    - 2) **Satan Himself**
      - Matthew 12:24--*“When the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’”*
      - Matthew 12:25-26 -- *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?”*
    - 3) **Michael the Archangel**—View of the Pre-Wrath position
      - a) Michael is involved in spiritual warfare with demonic forces
        - Daniel 10:13-- *“Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.”*
      - b) Michael will be involved in guarding the Jewish remnant during the Tribulation
        - Daniel 12:1-2-- *“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.”*
      - c) But Michael does not have the power to restrain evil or Satan
        - Jude 9-- *“Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”*
  - d. **The only perfect restrainer: The Person of the Holy Spirit**
    - 1) **The Holy Spirit is both a “power” and a “person”.**
    - 2) **He is referred to in Scripture by the title that describes his ministry.**
      - John 14:16-17 -- *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*

- 3) **His mission in the world is spelled out in John 16:7-11**
- John 16:7-11-- *“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. And when He comes, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”*
- a. He will convict the world of sin.
  - b. He will show the world what true righteousness looks like.
  - c. He warns the world of coming judgment
- 4) **His historic role of restraining before the first universal judgment**
- Genesis 6:5-- *“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*
  - Genesis 6:3 -- *“My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”*
- 5) **He does His work of restraining through the Spirit-controlled Church**
- Ephesians 5:8-16-- *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them, for it is shameful even to speak of those which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore, He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.”*

**BOTTOM LINE: GOD PULLS THE PLUG WHEN THE SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH IS RAPTURED!!**