

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: **the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods**

Teaching Summary for Week 50

## The Tribulation Period

### **Part 3. The Chronology of the Tribulation Period**

#### The events in the Middle of Daniel's Seventieth Week

We have been studying the Bible verses that tell us what happens in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. So far we have examined Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15-20, and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10.

Tonight we will examine the fourth major passage, and that is Revelation chapters 12 and 13.

But we are not quite finished with 2 Thessalonians quite yet.

So we'll pick things up with 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless **the apostasy comes first**, and **the man of lawlessness is revealed**, the son of destruction, 4 who **opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.** 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

6 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.

8 Then that **lawless one will be revealed** whom **the Lord will slay** with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by **the appearance of His coming**; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with **the activity of Satan**, with all **power and signs and false wonders**, 10 and with all the **deception** of wickedness for **those who perish**, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Please note that 2 Thessalonians does not mention a firm covenant being made between the lawless one and the many.

Neither does Matthew 24.

And when we come to Revelation we will see that it does not appear in the book of Revelation either.

The making of this firm covenant marks the start of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, but no one else mentions it.

For this reason it can be difficult to pinpoint the events that occur in the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

Before we move on, I want you to refer to the **handout** that recaps what we have learned about what happens at the midpoint of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

### *The apostasy and the restrainer*

We are next going to address two topics that people had questions about:

The **apostasy** in verse 3.

And **he who now restrains** in verse 7.

Paul told the Thessalonian saints about these things when he was with them. Apparently they were so familiar with the apostasy and the restrainer that he saw no need to identify them in the letter.

But unfortunately we don't have the benefit of his face-to-face teaching there because it was not recorded.

Paul did not tell us what the apostasy is or who the restrainer is.

So we are left to speculate to some degree. However, there is evidence that we can weigh in order to decide which alternative explanation seems to be the most likely.

But the bottom line is this: **we cannot be 100% sure.**

We do know something about the chronology of these two events.

The **apostasy** comes before the man of lawlessness is revealed. In all likelihood that means that the apostasy occurs in **the first half** of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

On the other hand, the **restrainer** will be taken away at the time that the man of lawlessness is revealed.

And according to 2 Thessalonian 2:4, the man of lawlessness will be revealed when he opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

In other words, the restrainer will be taken away at the time that **the abomination of desolation appears**. And that occurs in the **middle** of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

So let's start with the **apostasy**.

The Greek word for apostasy here is *apostasia*. It means a departure or a falling away.

It also refers to a rebellion in the last days, caused by the lawless one (BDAG, p. 120)

It appears in only two places in the New Testament: here in 2Thess 2:3, and in Acts 21:21.

Acts 21:21

and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to **forsake** Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

In our passage, *apostasia* does not refer to the saints but rather to unbelievers who claim to be believers.

They will be easy prey for the deceptions which will occur in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

So there is a falling away or a rebellion against the Lord that happens some time during the first 3 ½ years of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

We have very little information though about what happens during those first 3 ½ years.

At best we have two passages, really – any other things are established by inference rather than direct statements in the Bible.

The two passages are Matthew 24:4-8 and Revelation 6:1-6.

Matt 24:4-8

4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will **mislead many**. 6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

Verse 5 speaks about many being misled during this period. This could be the apostasy that Paul refers to in 2 Thess 2:3.

What about **the one who restrains** in verse 7?

We know from 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that the restrainer is taken away in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week.

So let's consider the requirements that the ideal candidate for the restrainer needs to meet:

1. He restrains evil and lawlessness. This means that he has the ability and authority to resist and defeat satan and the fallen angels.
2. He protects the nation of Israel.
3. He restrains wicked Gentile empires and evil world leaders.
4. He is on the scene at the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.
5. When the restrainer is taken away, the lawless one will persecute the nation of Israel. He will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering and take his seat in the temple of God as the abomination of desolation. The Jews must flee to the mountains.

Let's review the other passages that describe the events of the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week to see if there is any mention of someone or something as the one who restrains the lawless one and/or lawlessness.

Matt 24:9-22

9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 "Therefore when you see **the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

17 "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

We find nothing about one who restrains here in Matthew 24.

Daniel 9:27 doesn't speak about one who restrains either.

Dan 9:27

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

But there is another passage in Daniel that also mentions the abomination of desolation – Daniel 12.

Dan 12

1 "Now at that time **Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise.** And there will be **a time of distress** such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. 3 "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4 "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"

7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for **a time, times, and half a time**; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. 8 As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?"

9 He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. 10 "Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

11 "From the time that the **regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up**, there will be **1,290 days**. 12 "How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! 13 "But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."

When Michael, the great prince of the people of Israel, arises, the Great Tribulation begins.

The archangel Michael arises at the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. This puts him at the scene at the time that the restrainer is taken away.

But does Michael meet the requirements for the one who restrains?

Let's examine the other passages in the Bible that speak about Michael the archangel.

Dan 10:13-14

"But **the prince of the kingdom of Persia** was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, **Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me**, for I had been left there **with the kings of Persia**. 14 "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future."

The person speaking is the angel Gabriel. Persia was the greatest world empire at this time. The prince of Persia was delaying Gabriel from appearing to Daniel with a vision. This was the fallen angel who protected Persia. Michael came to help Gabriel by fighting the prince of Persia.

Dan 10:20-21

20 Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the **prince of Persia**; so I am going forth, and behold, **the prince of Greece** is about to come.

21 "However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except **Michael your prince**.

This passage reveals that the archangel Michael is the prince of Israel – the angelic guardian and protector of Israel.

He fights and prevails against the fallen angels who guard wicked Gentile kingdoms.

Then we have our passage in Daniel 12:1 that also describes Michael as the great prince who stands guard over Israel.

Dan 12:1

1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who **stands guard over the sons of your people**, will arise.

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Jude 8-9

8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. 9 But **Michael the archangel**, when he **disputed with the devil** and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

In this passage we are told that Michael the archangel fought with the devil over the body of Moses.

Finally, and most dramatically, we encounter Michael in the book of Revelation.

Rev 12:5-10

5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**.

7 And there was **war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon**. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and **they were not strong enough**, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.



9 And the **great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world;** he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

The dragon is identified here as being the devil , Satan.

Michael and his angels defeat Satan and his angels. The war was in heaven.

Michael and his angels throw the devil and his angels down to earth.

Michael does not go down to the earth.

He was taken away from his post guarding Israel to do battle with Satan and prevail.

After that, he remains in heaven.

Angels are not omnipresent. If Michael is in heaven, he is no longer standing guard on earth.

He no longer restrains the evil that is on the earth.

Immediately, the devil begins to persecute the woman – Israel.

So let's return to our ideal candidate and see which qualifications the archangel Michael fulfills.

Here again are the requirements that the ideal candidate for the restrainer needs to meet:

1. He restrains evil and lawlessness. This means that he has the ability and authority to resist and defeat satan and the fallen angels.
2. He protects the nation of Israel.
3. He restrains wicked Gentile empires and evil world leaders.
4. He is on the scene at the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.
5. When the restrainer is taken away, the lawless one will persecute the nation of Israel. He will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering and take his seat in the temple of God as the abomination of desolation. The Jews must flee to the mountains.

Is Michael powerful enough to defeat Satan?

Does he protect the nation of Israel?

Does he restrain wicked Gentile nations and evil world rulers?

Is he on the scene in the middle of Daniels 70<sup>th</sup> week?

Is he taken away from his post guarding Israel at the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week?

Does satan, the destroyer persecute Israel when Michael no longer patrols the earth to protect Israel?

OK. Time for a **discussion**.

We have seen the evidence that supports the theory that the archangel Michael is the one who restrains in 2 Thessalonians 2.

But there are other theories to consider as well.

The principal contender is probably **the Holy Spirit and/or the church**.

Others that have been put forward over the years include the Roman Empire (early church held this) and civil government

What do you think about the evidence that Michael is the restrainer?

Are there other qualifications that you would like to add?

What evidence in the Bible supports the theory that the Holy Spirit and/or the church is the restrainer?

OK, if there is time, we need to go over the homework we have from last week.

Remember?

To prepare for this study of Revelation:

1. **Read the book of Revelation 2-3 times** between now and next Thursday.
2. Then go through the book and write down which scenes occur **in heaven** and which occur **on the earth**.