

We now come to chapter two of 2 Thessalonians.

Please join me in 2 Thessalonians as we begin our study in this second chapter.

We said when we were studying chapter one that you could summarize it with the word, “comfort.”

This is also true with the second chapter, which can be identified by the word “correction.”

It is here where Paul “exhorts the Thessalonians to stand fast in the faith, and not to be alarmed at the rumors they heard concerning the sudden coming of Christ. Because, previously to this coming, there would be a great apostasy from the true faith, and a manifestation of a son of perdition.”¹

¹ Adam Clarke, Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible. MacSword.

The subject of the second coming of Christ and the Day of the Lord encompasses the first twelve verses.

Though we will not have time to look at all twelve verses this morning, I would like to read them so we have them in our hearing.

Paul says, “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 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, 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.

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 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. 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; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 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. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

THE COMING OF CHRIST (v.1)

As we approach this second chapter, it is important to note that this is Paul's fifth mention of Christ's coming.

He mentioned it 4 times in his first letter (1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23) and now in chapter two verse one of his second letter he mentions it again.

This is the parousia that occurs 24 times in the NT.

The word means "presence or arrival" (Louw-nida, DBL Greek, EDNT, Greek-English Dict. of NT) or "coming" (LEH LXX Lexicon).

The word is used in the NT to speak of the coming of human beings (2 Cor.7:6); the coming of Jesus at the end of the age (Mat.

24:27); and the coming of the Antichrist (2 Thess.2:9).

Of the 17 times the word “coming” is used in connection with the return of Christ, it is used only in the singular and always with the definite article or a personal pronoun (i.e., ‘the coming,’ ‘your coming,’ or ‘His coming’).

Not once does the Bible speak of two comings---not even by hint or implication.

Marvin Rosenthal says, “The Lord’s coming is a comprehensive whole. There is only one Second coming. It includes the Rapture of the church, the outpouring of God’s wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ’s physical return in glory. The meaning of the word *coming* (parousia) demonstrates that fact. It means a coming and continuing presence.

The Lord's coming is consistently portrayed as a singular event.

The Bible is repetitively consistent on that fact:

“And what shall be the sign of thy *coming*?” (Matt.24:3);

“So shall also be the *coming* of the Son of Man be” (Matt.24:27, 37, 39);

“In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His *coming*” (2 Thess.2:19);

“At the *coming* of the Lord” (1 Thess.3:13);

“We who are alive and remain unto the *coming* of the Lord” (1 Thess.4:15);

“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.5:23);

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.2:1).

This also occurs in 2 Thess.2:8; Jas.5:7; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; and 1 Jn.2:28).

In each and every instance, the word *coming* (parousia) is either modified by the personal pronoun *his* or *thy* or, most frequently, with the definite article *the*.

And in every case, His return is in the singular; not *comings* but *coming*.

There is not even a hint---anywhere---of two separate comings.

The often-heard suggestion that Christ will come first *for* His church and then return to the earth a second time seven years later *with* His church is an assumption with no biblical evidence to substantiate it.”²

As we look here in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, we see the parousia is speaking of the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus will return for His own.

In John 14:1-3, Jesus told His disciples, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. “If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will**

² Marvin Rosenthal, The Prewrath Rapture, 229.

come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Paul referred to Christ's coming in his first letter to the Thessalonians by stating that "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (4:16-17).

This is the episunagoge or 'gathering' "together to Him" that he is talking about in verse 1 of 2 Thessalonians 2.

Notice...

THE THESSALONIANS' ALARM (v.2)

Paul says they were “quickly shaken[ed]” by the news they heard concerning “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “the day of the Lord” as if it [had] come.”

If you recall in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, the rapture of the saints occurs first then the Day of the Lord according to how Paul talks about the two events.

That would line up with Matthew 24 and Revelation 6-8 with the seals, trumpet and bowl judgments.

Paul gives this same sequence in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 when he refers to the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our

gathering together to Him” and “the day of the Lord.”

But you have to look at Revelation 6 and Matthew 24 to understand at what point the man of sin is revealed and the saints are raptured.

There are 4 views of the rapture.

There is the pre-tribulational rapture, the mid-tribulational rapture, the post-tribulational rapture, and the pre-wrath rapture.

The view we have been teaching for some time is the “pre-wrath rapture,” which says the church will go through the first six seals of Revelation 6 and then be raptured before the 7th seal which is the Day of the Lord’s wrath.

So Paul begins verses 1-2 referencing the two events and then addresses their alarm and finally

corrects their error by reminding them of what he taught them when he was “still with [them]” (v.5).

Therefore, the subject matter of this chapter focuses on whether the gathering of the saints and “the day of the Lord has come” (v.2).

If you think about it, that would be alarming.

But if you’ll notice in his first letter, he also had to calm their sorrow regarding erroneous information they were receiving.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, he also had to correct their understanding of the coming of Christ.

At that point, they thought there was some advantage to being raptured over dying and immediately being with Christ.

So he begins verse 13 by saying, “But we do not want you to be uninformed” or “ignorant,” brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.”

In other words, “Stop sobbing like the world!”

He doesn’t mean they are not to mourn for their loved ones who had died but that they should not act like the world in their sorrow--acting “as do the rest who have no hope.”

Death for the Christian is not the end. It’s the beginning.

Paul said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:8 he preferred to be “absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (NKJV).

Why? Because he would be “with the Lord” now!

That’s also why he said to the Philippians in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Why is death gain to Paul?

He answers that question in verse 23 by saying, “But I am hard-pressed from both having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”

Now as to...

THE DAY OF THE LORD (v.2)

If you recall as we looked at chapter one, we defined it as “the day of the wrath of the

Lord” (Ezek.7:19; Zeph.1:8) and “as destruction from the Almighty” (Joel 1:15).

No wonder Joel 2:1-2 gives this warning concerning this horrible Day:

“Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the **day of the Lord** is coming; Surely it is near, **A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness.** As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations.”

So as Paul begins chapter two of 2 Thessalonians, he begins by stating this day hasn't occurred yet nor has Jesus come for His saints.

Therefore, do “not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed” (v.2).

The terms “quickly shaken” have been used to describe an earthquake (Acts 16:26).

"Quickly" carries the idea of “fast” (EDNT), “at once” (LXGRCANLX), “without delay” (LEH LXX Lexicon)

"Shaken" means to "be distressed" (DBL Greek), or “unsettled” (Greek-English Dict. of NT)

It signifies “to be moved as a wave of the sea, or to be tossed upon the waves, as a vessel is.”³

Along with the word “disturbed,” it describes the state of agitation and alarm that had gripped the church.

³ Albert Barnes, Barnes Notes on the New Testament. MacSword.

They were greatly distressed because they had expected the Rapture, the gathering together to the Lord, to take place before the Day of the Lord.

They had expected to be taken to glory and heavenly rest, not left to persecution and divine wrath.

Paul must have taught them that they would miss the Day of the Lord (1 Thess.5:2–5; cf. Rev. 3:10), but they had become confused by the persecution they were experiencing, thinking they may have been in the Day of the Lord.

This error had been reinforced by some messages to them claiming that they were indeed in the Day of the Lord.⁴

⁴ John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997). 2 Th 2:2.

Paul gives us the source of this error in verse 2 as being “either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us.”

A “spirit” would most likely refer to a false prophet claiming divine revelation as in 1 John 4:1–3.

A “word” would refer to a sermon or speech given, while a “letter” indicated a written report. The powerful but harmful effect of this false information was gained by claiming it was from the Apostle Paul (“as if from us”).

Whoever was telling them they were in the Day of the Lord claimed that it came from Paul who heard it, preached it, and wrote it. Thus their lie was given supposed apostolic sanction. The result was shock, fear, and alarm.⁵

⁵ John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997). 2 Th 2:2.

Now in verses 3-12, Paul corrects the error that had pervaded the Thessalonians and says...

THREE EVENTS MUST OCCUR BEFORE JESUS RETURNS (vv.3-12)

Two of them are mentioned in verse 3.

He says, “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 perdition.*”

He says there will first be a world-wide falling away referred to here as “the apostasy,” and second the “man of lawlessness” being revealed. That’s the Antichrist.

The third event is mentioned in verses 6-7, the removal of the restrainer.

When these three events happen, the day of the Lord is here.

Verse 8 says, “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.”

Anytime false information is given, it has the potential to deceive someone.

That’s certainly what took place here.

Paul corrects that deception with giving the events leading up to the day of the Lord.

First he talks about...

The Apostasy (v.3a)

Gr.apostasia, means, “defection, abandonment” (Friberg), “rebellion” (Louw-nida).

This is a wholesale abandonment of Christianity⁶ or the gospel.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1, “But the Spirit explicitly says that ***in later times some will fall away from the faith***, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”

Jesus said in Matthew 24:10-12, “***At that time many will fall away*** and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”

⁶ William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997). 2 Th 2:3.

This is seal 5 in Revelation 6:9-11 where there will also be the death of martyrs for Jesus.

Lenski says, “The fact that this apostasy will occur in the Christian Church is beyond question; it would otherwise not be an “apostasy.” The man of the lawlessness will be its head.”⁷

John MacArthur adds stating that this is “an event which is clearly and specifically identifiable and unique, the consummate act of rebellion, an event of final magnitude. The key to identifying the event is to identify the main person, which Paul does, calling him the “man of sin.”⁸

⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937). 407.

⁸ John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997). 2 Th 2:3.

The second event that occurs before the day of the Lord is...

The Revealing of the Man of Lawlessness

Who is this “man of lawlessness...the son of destruction” that will be revealed before the day of the Lord?

Scripture refers to him by many names:

He is called the “little horn” (Dan.7:8)

He is called the “willful king” (Dan.11:36)

He is called “the man of sin or lawlessness” (2 Thess.2:3)

He is called “the son of perdition or destruction” (2 Thess.2:3)

He is called “the wicked one or lawless one” (2 Thess.2:8)

He is called the “beast” (Rev.11:7)

He is called the “antichrist” (1 Jn.4:3)

The Bible gives us 21 facts about the coming of the Antichrist:

He will be an intellectual genius (Dan.8:23)

He will be an oratorical genius (Dan.11:36)

He will be a political genius (Rev.17:11-12)

He will be a commercial genius (Da.11:43)

He will be a military genius (Rev.6:2)

He will be a religious genius (2 Thess.2:4)

He will begin by controlling the Western power block (Rev.17:12)

He will make a seven-year covenant with Israel but will break it after three and a half years (Dan.9:27)

He will attempt to destroy all of Israel (Rev.12)

He will destroy the false religious system so that he may rule unhindered (Rev.17:16-17)

He will set himself up as God (Dan.11:36-37; 2 Thess.2:4)

He will briefly rule over all nations (Ps.2; Dan. 11:36; Rev.13:16)

He will be utterly crushed by the Lord Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev.19)

He will be the first creature thrown into the lake of fire (Rev.19:20)

He will be a master of deceit (2 Thess.2:10)

He will profane the temple (Mat.24:15)

He will be energized by Satan himself (Rev. 13:2)

He will do everything according to his own selfish will (Dan.11:36)

He will not regard the God of his fathers (Dan. 11:37)

He will not have the desire of women (Dan. 11:37)

His god will be the god of power (Dan.11:38)⁹

⁹ H.L. Willmington, Willmington's Book of Bible Lists (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987).

This is the “man of lawlessness...the son of destruction” that has to be revealed BEFORE the Day of the Lord’s wrath occurs.

So Paul says, “He has not been revealed yet. So stop being alarmed as if Jesus has already come and the day of the Lord is already occurring.”

CONCLUSION

My fear today is not that people are alarmed that Jesus has already come or that we are experiencing right now the day of the Lord.

It’s that people just don’t care.

I believe that is the state of the church right now.

Believers are not looking for the return of Jesus Christ.

They also are not warning unbelievers of the Day of the Lord's wrath that is yet to come.

We are just sitting around enjoying our social clubs!

There is a restrainer to all the mess in the world today.

But most importantly, there is a restrainer to the man of sin yet to be revealed.

The church needs to be ready and stop banking on a view of the rapture that might be incorrect.

At least if we were wrong with a pre-wrath view, we're ready for persecution!

Let's pray for the state of the church---that God would move our hearts out of complacency and fervently reach the lost!

Let's pray.

LIFE APPLICATION

Does the Bible speak of a rapture and a second coming of Christ as two separate events?

What is the day of the Lord?

Will we see the Antichrist?