

Paul's Second Letter to the THESSALONIANS

Dear Friends in Thessalonica:

Greetings, to all of you there in God's assembly in Thessalonica who are united in mind and heart to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

²May our God and Father fill your lives with rich blessings, and give you joyous peace thru Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

³It is only fitting and right that we continue to thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters, because of the outstanding way your faith is growing, and for the way each of you continues to abound in your love for each other.

⁴In fact, we are continually speaking highly of

you to the other assemblies of God's people, telling them about your faithfulness and endurance thru all the persecutions and testings you're going thru.^a

⁵And let me tell you: Your genuine faith and love, and your uncomplaining patience in suffering for God's Kingdom, give clear evidence that God will be doing what's right when He judges you worthy to inherit His Kingdom.

⁶For the same reason, He will also be doing right when He heaps misery upon those who are now heaping such misery upon you,^a

⁷and then gives you, who are now receiving such ill treatment, rest and tranquillity together with us. This will happen when Christ is revealed,^a coming from Heaven with His powerful angels.^b

⁸With flaming fire^a He will punish all who have

1:4a The spiritual growth at the church in Thessalonica was so extraordinary that Paul encouraged *other churches* to follow their example. They were not having an easy time of it. They were in the midst of a time of *persecution*.

One of the things for which Paul commends these people is their *endurance*. They knew that for them the end of this life simply meant stepping into the presence of God. They realized, as we must also, that while life is extremely brief, eternity is entirely without end. Therefore they were willing to hang in there and endure *persecutions and testings* for Christ, knowing that the rewards they would receive would make the suffering seem as no cost at all.

1:6a Paul tells them that their patience and faith while suffering for Christ was ample reason for the righteous judgment of God upon the wicked who were persecuting them. It is wonderful for the Christian to meditate about a glorious eternity with God. But likewise, the ungodly should rivet their eyes upon the terrible loss and misery that will be theirs in an eternity without Christ.

Though Christians may receive tribulation now for a brief time, the ungodly will receive untold tribulation in eternity, with no promise of an end, or even a brief rest.

1:7a Notice that we're told here when the Rapture will occur. It will happen when Christ is *revealed* in the heavens for all to see, *coming from Heaven with His powerful angels*. See Matthew 24:29-31.

1:7b The great hope of the Christian, whether he or she lives or dies, is the glorious meeting with *Christ* when He returns—and then to be with Him forever.

Have you ever compared life here with eternity? Let's draw a short line, one inch in length, to represent our present life on earth, and a longer one to illustrate eternity. Let us say that the one inch line represents 100 years, which is far beyond the time most people will live. How long should we make the line that represents eternity? That's right—it will be a line without end. It will go across the page, across the room, across the nation, across the ocean, out into space beyond the moon, beyond the sun—beyond the stars.

Is it not then real wisdom to devote this one inch line—representing our brief life—to the Lord? Where can you make an investment that will pay greater dividends? Our Lord simply asks our love, trust, and obedience. He certainly deserves all of that, when He is the One who brought us into existence, and made us in His very own image and likeness, with desire that we be His children forever.

If you haven't yet done so, why not turn right now to the back of the Book and read Appendix 247, page 520, entitled, *The Amazing Story of God*. There you will discover who you really are, and what your destiny can be, and what to do about it.

1:8a When the Lord returns, it will indeed be *with flaming fire*. His judgment of fire will fall upon the

willfully ignored God.^b The same will also happen to all who are not obeying the Lord's instructions and commands contained in the Great News.^c

⁹They will suffer the punishment of destruction^a that will last forever,^b shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His majestic power.^c

¹⁰This will happen on that glorious Day when Messiah comes to receive great praise from those who are truly dedicated to Him. All who have believed will be astonished and filled with wonder

at His powerful and majestic presence. You will be there, too, because you believed^a all that we shared with you.^b

¹¹That's why we are constantly praying for you,^a that our God may judge you worthy of the place and position to which He has called you. May He enable you to fulfill every one of your good intentions regarding the good things you desire to accomplish. By faith may you serve Him effectively thru His power.

¹²We pray all this so that the very name of our

armies gathered at Armageddon, as, *Out of His mouth came a sharp sword, which would enable Him to strike down the nations.* Revelation 16:12-16; 19:11-21. Following Armageddon, many areas upon earth will evidently be literally bathed in fire. 2 Peter 3:10-13. His judgment of fire will also fall upon those on His left hand at the judgment of the nations, as they are sent from Him *into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* Matthew 25:41.

At the judgment seat of Christ, the works of service of true Christians will be tested by fire, and the foolish and ineffective works will be burned up. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. And at the Great White Throne Judgment, following the first 1,000 years of our Lord's reign on earth, the ungodly of all time will be *thrown into the lake of fire.* Revelation 20:11-15.

Will this *fire* be literal fire as we know it? Well, if it's not, we can be sure it will be just as devastating and just as awesome and awful. If the term *fire* is just a symbol, the reality for which it stands may actually be far worse.

1:8b Romans 1:18-20; 2 Peter 3:3-7.

1:8c Romans 2:6-16; 6:11-16; Hebrews 5:9.

1:9a Not annihilation, but ruination, as when a human body is ruined by disease or malfunction of organs, but still lives, as in 1 Corinthians 5:5. The same Greek word is used here, also in 1 Timothy 6:9.

1:9b Will the ungodly really be punished by the Lord with *destruction that will last forever*? Will they be conscious all that time? This is the only information God has given us, that they will be. Matthew 25:41,46; Revelation 14:11; 20:10. We might say that we would never treat anyone that way, and surely God will not. But just because we would not do something doesn't mean that God will not. We can hope that somewhere, sometime, God will give them another opportunity, but there is nothing in the word of God which would lead us to believe that anyone will be given a second chance. Therefore, we must warn the lost of the terrible judgment which awaits them unless they turn from

their sin and accept God's offer of His love and forgiveness.

Even if the words *forever and ever* in Revelation 20:10 are to be translated literally *to the ages of the ages*, they say the same thing. It's *time out of mind*. Some believe the lost will have a second chance after being in the lake of fire after many, many thousands of years, after *ages upon ages*. But who in his right mind would be willing to be tortured for even 100 long years in exchange for the very temporary satisfaction of some sin? Right now, this moment, is the time you can accept God's mercy and be forgiven, and live! You have no assurance of another tomorrow.

1:9c We do not know how much the lost will be made aware of our Lord's *glory and power*. Perhaps they, too, will finally *know as they are known* and will have full realization of what it is that they have despised. Such knowledge would certainly add to their anguish and punishment.

1:10a ... and acted upon ...

1:10b There will be many in Heaven *because Paul's testimony was believed*. Let us likewise give an earnest and clear testimony to others (Romans 10:9-10), together with earnest prayer for them, that our Lord may *be glorified* in the many we are able to present to Him.

1:11a Paul *prayed* for the Thessalonians that they would be genuinely converted to the Lord, and not later prove themselves to be mere pretenders. So many today pretend to be Christians, but they reveal their hypocrisy, because they refuse to really obey the Lord. They don't even take the time to read His word to find what His will is for them.

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was that they would be genuine Christians, filled with God's Spirit, serving Him in *His power*. We need to earnestly pray for ourselves in the same way. We need to pray for our fellow Christians, our fellow church members, our "Christian" nation.

2:1-2a (Concerning *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) The last words of v 1, *and our being gathered together to be with Him*, make it very clear that the

Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified thru you. May you also be glorified by the undeserved ways our God and the Lord Jesus Christ bless and use you.

The Astounding Happenings Just Prior to Christ's Return

2 Now, my dear brothers and sisters, let me clear up some things for you concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to be with Him.

²In the first place, do not allow yourselves to be

easily shaken up or terrified by a supposed message from the Holy Spirit, or by a verbal report or letter said to be from us, saying that the Day of Christ is already here.^a

³Don't let anyone fool you by any means! Because that Day will not come until there is first a great rebellion against God, and the utterly vile person who will glorify sin, the man utterly devoted to lawlessness and destruction, has appeared on the world scene and has been clearly revealed for who he really is.^a

apostle is speaking again of the second coming of Christ, when He will gather His own to Himself. Our *being gathered together to be with Him* will take place at the Rapture. Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

In v 2 he tells them that they are not *to be easily shaken up or terrified* by anyone who tries to tell them that *the Day of Christ is already here*. The term, *the Day of Christ*, is not to be confused with the term, *the Day of the Lord*. *The Day of the Lord* refers to judgment, the period when Christ will come to judge the earth, while *the Day of Christ* refers to Jesus' coming to set up His Kingdom on earth. The term, *the Day of Christ*, is mentioned in only three other Scriptures: Philippians 1:6,10, and 2:16.

Almost all modern translators have translated the phrase here in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, *the Day of the Lord*, instead of *the Day of Christ*. But they have used the words *the Day of Christ* in the Philippians verses. This is absolutely not warranted. The Greek very definitely states *the Day of Christ* in all four verses. Why change the wording here to *the Day of the Lord* when this Scripture so definitely speaks about the Rapture in relation to *the Day of Christ* and not in relation to *the Day of the Lord*?

The apparent reason these modern translators have used the words *the Day of the Lord* here is because they have followed the Greek text of Westcott and Hort. That Greek text came out in 1881, and omits and changes much of the word of God. The old Received Text (the Textus Receptus), from which the King James translation was made, in our opinion is the reliable Greek text. The text you are reading in this translation has been translated from the Textus Receptus.

Here are the verses in Philippians translated from the phrase *the Day of Christ*.

1:6 So there's one thing I feel very confident about, and that is that the Lord will continue the good work He has begun in your lives until He brings it to completion on the Day when Jesus Christ returns.

1:10 This deeper insight is absolutely neces-

sary if your lives are to be filled with all the truly good qualities with which Jesus Christ desires to fill them, so that you will be found to be pure and blameless on the Day when He returns.

2:16 If you do that, I will have cause to greatly rejoice on the Day when Christ appears from Heaven, because that will mean that all my work among you was not wasted effort.

In reading these verses, it is very clear that Paul was not looking forward to *the Day of the Lord*, which will be the time of *judgment* upon the earth, but to *the Day of Christ*, which will be that day when we shall have been either resurrected or taken up to be with Christ from that point on, forever. *The Day of Christ* appears to refer both to the time of Christ's coming to set up His Kingdom on earth, and also to the endless time of His reign.

2:3a Paul indicates that before Christ returns to *gather together* His own to Himself, *two conditions will prevail*. The first condition is termed *the great rebellion against God*. According to v 7, this rebellion was already trying to assert itself in Paul's time. Today we see evidence of this rebellion everywhere.

Some of the Bible students who believe in a pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church claim that the Greek word *apostasia* (translated *rebellion* here) means to *depart*. They point out that the verb form of *apostasia*, which is *aphistemi*, is used in many other instances to indicate a departure from a certain place. But the verb form is not used in this particular verse. The noun form, *apostasia*, is used, which means *rebellion, abandonment*; and in the religious sense *falling away, apostasy*.

That's exactly what's happening today—the world is rebelling against God's moral standards, and the Church is apostatizing and preaching an easy way to Heaven, which will not get you there!

The Bible students who translate this Greek word to mean a *departure* from a certain point, believe that the words *until there has first come the great rebellion against God* really should read *until there has first come a great departure*. The departure meant, of course, is the departure of the

⁴He will continually oppose everything that is called God or is revered and worshiped, and will glorify himself above them all.^a He will even sit as God in the Most Holy Place in God's Temple,^b arrogantly proclaiming that he himself is God.^c

⁵Don't you remember that I told you all this while I was still there with you?^a

⁶You also know what it is that's now holding him back, so that he can't come on the scene until it's time for him to come.

⁷The fermentation of rebellion against God is already secretly at work, and only the restraining power of the One^a holding this rebellion down is keeping it in check. And He will continue to do so, until He steps out of their way.

⁸That's when the lawless one will be revealed, the one whom the Lord will later destroy with the breath of His mouth and bring down to nothing by the brilliance of His coming.^a

⁹When this wicked one appears, he will come

with all the awesome powers of Satan himself. With Satan's power, he will perform miracles, and by fraud he will cause various other wonders to happen.

¹⁰He will use all kinds of evil deception to encourage those who are on their way to a living death in Hell to thoroughly indulge themselves in sin. They will be like clay in his hands because they did not open themselves to a love for the truth, so that they might be saved.^a

¹¹For that reason, God will send them strong misleading influences^a so that they will believe the lie,^b

¹²so that all who have not believed the truth but have delighted in living immoral and self-indulgent lives might be justly judged and condemned.^a

Stand Firm! Be Faithful!

¹³But we have strong reason to always give

Church of Christ from earth—the Rapture. But notice, that while the Greek word *apostasia* definitely does not have this meaning, also, the context does not support such an interpretation. The apostle Paul is talking about what will precede *our gathering together to be with Christ*. v 1.

If *apostasia* should be interpreted as the strict pre-tribulation rapturists desire, Paul would actually be saying, *The Day of our gathering together to be with Christ cannot occur until we have first departed to be with Christ*. This of course doesn't make sense.

It should be obvious, then, that the term *the great rebellion against God* refers to a great apostasy, a great abandonment of truth on the part of many who pose as ministers of Christ, and violent rebellion by the world against God's moral standards and against His true people, which we are now witnessing. This is one of the signs the Lord has given which will precede His coming to *gather together* His own to Himself.

For more information about this *great rebellion and falling away*, read the notes on 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7,12,13; 4:1-4. Each of these Scriptures indicates that both the Church and the world have now entered this time of rebellion.

* * *

The second condition to be evident before *our being gathered together to be with Christ is that the man of sin must be clearly revealed for who he really is*. Paul is speaking of the Antichrist. Read the notes in this connection in Revelation 13:1-10. The false christ will be positively identified when he sits in the Temple in Jerusalem (which has not yet

been rebuilt at this writing), *proclaiming that he himself is God*. v 4.

One thing to bear in mind in studying this verse is that Paul was strongly warning the people of the Thessalonian Church that they were *not to let anyone fool them by any means* about the time of *their being gathered together to be with Christ*. If Paul gave such clear instructions to the Church in that day, that they were not to expect the Rapture of the Church until the two stated conditions had been fulfilled, the same instructions surely apply today.

If it were possible to question Paul today about when Christ would gather us to be with Himself, he would certainly say the same words he wrote to the Thessalonians.

Some pre-tribulationists admit that Paul evidently referred here to a gathering of Christ's own at *the Day of Christ* when Christ returns to earth to reign. Matthew 24:31. But they claim that there will also be a Rapture of the Church before that time. But how can there be a Rapture before, when Paul says here that we will *not* be gathered together to be with Christ before the *two conditions* exist that are mentioned here? Let's be honest with the truth, and not tenaciously hang on to a teaching just because that's the way most people in our church believe or because that's the way we want to believe. Why not believe God's word?

2:4a His great and constant obsession will be to oppose and destroy everything and everyone who has anything to do with God. It appears from this Scripture that he will even oppose non-Christian religions, demanding that he alone be worshiped. Daniel 8:23-25.

thanks to God for you, dear brothers and sisters, who are so dearly loved by the Lord, because from the very beginning God chose to save you^a by the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in your lives and by your belief in the truth.

¹⁴God used our preaching of the Great News as His means of calling you to Himself, so that you might obtain the glory^a of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵So, my dear friends, continue to stand firm in your determination to live only to please God. And continue to hold on to all the truths you were taught, both what I taught you in person and what I've written by letter.

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father—who have loved us and given us such great encouragement about the ages to come, along with a hope that is absolutely sure, thru favor we don't deserve—

¹⁷encourage and strengthen your hearts in every good thing you say and do.

Pray for Us

3 Finally, my brothers and sisters, continue to pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message may continue to be broadcast in a great way, and that it will be highly prized and revered, just as it was by you.

²And pray that we will be kept safe from bad-tempered and evil men, because not everyone is willing to receive the truth.

³But the Lord is faithful, and He will make you strong and protect you from Satan's evil intentions.^a

⁴And we have confidence that the Lord will be faithful in reminding you to both do, and continue to do, what we told you.

2:4b So the Temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt before this can happen.

2:4c Some claim this means that Antichrist will reign from the Temple in Jerusalem. No, he will sit there briefly in puny, contemptuous defiance of Almighty God. But then, according to Daniel 8:11 he will order the Temple torn down. Antichrist will reign during his brief time from Babylon. Isaiah 14:4 (14:1-7); Jeremiah 50:43; 51:31 (51:1-58).

2:5a Paul had evidently spoken earlier to the Thessalonians about these revelations. Somehow, they had been confused by other teachers and had been led to believe that they could expect the Lord's coming for them at any moment, or that He had already come.

2:7a The Holy Spirit. In God's time, the Holy Spirit will step aside and will no longer hold sin in check, but will allow mankind to reveal just how sinful they truly are. When the rebellion is full blown, the Antichrist will appear. Daniel 8:23. Many believe the Holy Spirit has already stepped aside, and that God is now allowing the world-wide rebellion against Him to take its course. The end of this age appears to be very near! *Prepare now to meet your God!* Remember, Heaven is real—but so is Hell!

Many believe that the Rapture of the Church is what takes place here. But in the Greek text, it is referring to one person; it's in the singular, referring to the Holy Spirit. It's in the singular all the way. If it was referring to the Rapture of the members of Christ's Church, it would have been in the plural, referring to many. The literal Greek is *until out of the midst be gone*. If Paul was referring to the Rapture of the Church, he would have used the Greek word *ekairo*, which means *to lift up*

from, or to take up out of any place.

2:8a Antichrist will wreak havoc in the world for at least three-and-one-half years while he is coming to power, and for an additional 3 1/2 years while he is in power. Following this seven-year period, Antichrist will be *destroyed by the brilliance of Christ's coming*. See notes on 1:8-9; Revelation 19:11-21.

2:9-10a Antichrist will be able to do *miracles* and *wonders* to deceive the world, because he will be empowered by Satan. Daniel 8:24a. God, in His turn, will allow the world to be deceived *because they did not open themselves to a love for the truth, so that they might be saved*. They are determined to go in their own sinful way, so God will give them up to do just that. But then, they must accept the wages that sin pays. Romans 6:23.

2:11a Or *erroneous beliefs, mistaken convictions, false impressions*. Literally *a working of error*.

2:11b Romans 1:24-25.

2:11-12a Even though these Scriptures of prophecy will be very understandable in the last days to those who diligently study them, those who determine to go their own way will be blinded by *misleading influences* from God. They will *believe the lies* of the Antichrist, *so that all who have not believed the truth but delighted in living immoral and self-indulgent lives might be judged and condemned*. Therefore, let everyone who is presently a rebel against God and His will, cry for mercy while the door to eternal life is still open!

2:13a Romans 8:28-29.

2:14a Romans 3:23; 8:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 2:10.

3:3a See Hebrews 2:18 refs., and notes.

⁵May the Lord Jesus in a most victorious way^a lead you to love God with all your hearts, and to endure your trials as patiently as He did His.

Warning Against Laziness

⁶And, dear friends, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I command that you withdraw from association with any members of your fellowship who loaf around and refuse to follow the instructions we gave them!^a

⁷You yourselves know that it's only right that you should follow our example. We didn't waste our time in a lazy manner when we were with you.

⁸We didn't eat anyone's food without paying for it. But we worked and toiled day and night, so we wouldn't be a burden to any of you.

⁹We didn't do this because we didn't have any right to expect your support, but we did it in order to set an example for you to follow.

¹⁰Because even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If anyone refuses to work, refuse to feed him."

¹¹We say this because we hear there are some among you living undisciplined lives, doing no work at all, but always meddling in other people's business.

¹²By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we order and urge such people to get to work, to mind their own business, and eat their own food!

¹³As for the rest of you dear friends, never get discouraged doing the good you're doing.

¹⁴If anyone refuses to obey our instructions in this letter, take special note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, so that he'll be ashamed of himself.

¹⁵However, don't consider him an enemy, but admonish him as a brother who needs your help.

Final Words

¹⁶Now may the Lord Himself, who is the source of our peace, give you peace continually in every circumstance and situation. May the Lord be with each of you at all times.^a

¹⁷*Please notice that I, Paul, am writing these last words of greeting with my own hand.* I do this in every letter to give you proof that this is really from me, by the way I write.

¹⁸May God continue to be most kind to all of you thru our Lord Jesus Christ. So be it.

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul, Silas, and
Timothy

3:5a In the Greek text, the optative mood. The mood of strong possibility.

3:6a 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

3:16a Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6.

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, let me clear up some things for you concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to be with Him.

³Don't let anyone fool you by any means! Because that Day will not come until there is first a great rebellion against God, and the utterly vile person who will glorify sin, the man utterly devoted to lawlessness and destruction, has appeared on the world scene and has been clearly revealed for who he really is.

—2 Thessalonians 2:1 & 3