
The Thessalonian Letters

Precursors to God's Wrath

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12



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Topic: the imminence of the Rapture (2:1)

- Concerning the “**coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**” ~ Paul had mentioned two distinct “comings” of the Lord:
 - 1) His coming to resurrect church-age saints and to bring them to heaven at the Rapture (1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-17; 5:23).
 - 2) Christ’s coming in judgment with His angels and the glorified saints at the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 1:10).
- “**our gathering together to Him**” (*episunagōgē*) ~ to lead together; to collect in one place. This described Christ’s gathering of church-age believers, both living and dead, to meet Him above the earth (1 Thess 4:16-17) and to take them to the place He has prepared for them in heaven (John 14:3).

Disturbed by false teaching (2:2)

- ***Their reaction:*** “shaken” (*saleuō*) ~ to agitate, stir, or cause something to sway as if about to collapse. “**composure**” (*nous*) ~ the Greek term for the mind. “**disturbed**” (*throeō*) ~ to cry aloud in a state of nervous excitement.
- ***How false teaching could come:***
“**by a spirit**” ~ a prophetic utterance
“**a message**” ~ spoken words as if from the apostle Paul
“**a letter as if from us**” ~ a forged epistle attributed to Paul
- ***The content of the false teaching:***
“**the day of the Lord has come**” ~ this was contrary to Paul’s teaching that the Rapture would come first, followed by righteous wrath during the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:4, 9).

Precursors for the Day of the Lord (2:3)

- “**deceive**” (*exapataō*) ~ the false teaching was actually the deception.
- The **Day of the Lord** will not come unless specific events precede it. There are no such precursors for the **Rapture**.
- “the **apostasy** comes first” (*apostasia*) ~ to remove or depart.
- “**man of lawlessness**” or “**son of destruction**” ~ must first make his appearance in world history.
- “**lawlessness**” (*anomia*) ~ his complete disregard for God’s standards. He will do as he pleases, altering laws and calendars.
- “**destruction**” (*apōleia*) ~ born to bring destruction as well as to end in destruction.

Blasphemy of the man of lawlessness (2:4)

- The man of lawlessness “**opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship**” ~ self-proclaimed superiority over all gods. In self-deification he demands the exclusive and universal worship of all the people of the world.
- “**takes his seat in the temple of God**” ~ there will be a Jewish temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation. The man of lawlessness will enter and sit in the most sacred place (*naos*), the “holy of holies.”
- “**displaying himself as being God**” ~ This act of the man of lawlessness was predicted in the Old Testament.

Paul previously taught these truths (2:5)

- **“Do you not remember?”** (*mnēmoneuō*) ~ when Paul was first with them he had taught them about these future events.
- Teaching from the Old Testament prophets, Paul would have outlined much of the prophetic plan of God for the last days.

Ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. (Dan 7:24-25)

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. (Dan 9:27)

Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods. (Dan 11:36)

The Restrainer (2:6-8)

- Paul explained the reason the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed and why the Day of the Lord could not have begun.
- “**restrains**” (*katechō*) ~ to hold down; to prevent him from being revealed. He is “continually being restrained” (present tense).
- “**He who now restrains**” ~ requires an all-powerful person to restrain such powerful forces of lawlessness. [see the separate chart for His identity]
- “will do so until He is **taken out of the way**” ~ literally, “should become out of the middle.” He will stop His activity of restraining, and only then will the lawless one be revealed.
- “**whom the Lord will bring an end to**” (*katargeō*) ~ render completely inoperative and powerless.

Activities of the lawless one (2:9-10)

- “the **activity** of Satan” (*energeia*) ~ some form of satanic power will characterize the lawless one. He will demonstrate apparently superhuman capabilities through:
 - “**power**” (*dunamis*) ~ strength to produce the signs and wonders.
 - “**signs**” (*sēmeion*) ~ remarkable or persuasive phenomena.
 - “**false wonders**” (*teras*) ~ causing people to marvel or be astonished.
- “**deception**” (*apatē*) ~ the deliberate attempt to fool, trick, or delude someone into believing that something *false* is actually true.
 - “**wickedness**” (*adikia*) ~ literally, unrighteousness. Enticing people by appealing to their own unrighteous thoughts and desires.
- Ones who perish ⇒ they refuse to receive God’s provision for salvation.

Believing what is false leads to judgment (2:11-12)

- “**For this reason**” ~ the action God takes is because they have rejected His offer of salvation. Since the ungodly choose to believe what is “**false**” (*pseudos*) rather than the truth, God will allow them to have what they desire. They will be deceived and welcome unrighteousness (see 2:9).
- They will be “**judged**” (*krinō*) ~ the just consequence of their rejection of the truth. God will allow them to experience the power of the error they have chosen, and all restraint of lawlessness will have been removed.
- They “**took pleasure in wickedness**” ~ a perversion of character. Their willful rejection of the truth results in evil becoming good. They will believe they are finally experiencing the life they always desired, but in the end those very desires become the channel for their retribution.

Which view best fits the Scriptures and the Thessalonians' reactions

Scripture	The Rapture Before the Day of the Lord	The Day of the Lord Before the Rapture
1 Thess 1:10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> They are eagerly awaiting the imminent return of Christ to rescue them from wrath. Their reaction only makes sense if the Rapture occurs before the Day of the Lord.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the Day of the Lord comes first, they should be bracing themselves for the Tribulation and the intense suffering it brings, rather than expecting rescue from wrath.
1 Thess 4:13-18	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> They are grieving because deceased believers might miss the Rapture. Their reaction only makes sense if the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If they were expecting the Tribulation first, they would have rejoiced that their deceased loved ones escaped that period of intense suffering.
1 Thess 5:1-11	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> They are living to please God, knowing that He has not destined them for wrath, but for rescue.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the Tribulation is first, then their life now is only preparation for more intense suffering to come.
2 Thess 1:3-10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> They will have relief from their current persecution, but their persecutors will suffer during the coming wrath. Their reaction only makes sense if the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the Tribulation comes first, then Paul would have warned them that they are to expect even more intense suffering and perhaps martyrdom during the Day of the Lord.
2 Thess 2:1-12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> They were shaken from their composure and disturbed by the claim that the Day of the Lord was in progress. Their reaction only makes sense if the Rapture is to occur before the wrath begins.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If they were expecting the Tribulation first, they should have rejoiced that the Day of the Lord had arrived and that they were enduring their final push before the glory of heaven.