

Before starting this lesson, read **2 Thessalonians 1 - 3**

BACKGROUND

When Paul first went to Thessalonica, he taught in the Jewish synagogue. Some Jews, as well as many God-fearing Gentiles, believed. Because they had attended the synagogue, they knew the Old Testament prophets.

They knew about a future judgment, called the **Day of the Lord**

They knew about God's coming kingdom.



Then from Paul, they learned the gospel message ...

About **SALVATION**, the **CHRISTIAN LIFE** and the **RETURN OF JESUS**.

They had detailed information about salvation and the Christian life.

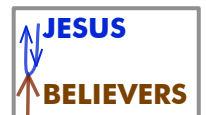
TEACHING FOR	church members	{ teaching reproof of action correction of belief 2 Tim. 3:16	SALVATION	CHRISTIAN LIFE	RETURN OF JESUS
			ROMANS 1-2 CORINTHIANS GALATIANS	EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS	1 THESSALONIANS

But when Paul was forced to leave town, he had not been able to give them all the details about **Jesus' return** - about who and what was involved.

These are Gentile believers. They had been raised in the pagan Greek religion, which did not believe in a resurrection of the body. So when Paul told them about the return of Jesus, they assumed it would only include believers who were living at the time. When some of their church members died, they were overcome with sorrow. Those who had died would be left out and never get to be with Jesus.

When Paul learned of their grief, he wrote immediately to give the details about the "coming" of Jesus. The word "comes" is the Greek word **PAROUSIA**. It literally means *to be alongside*.

When Jesus comes in the sky, **all** believers since the day of Pentecost - those who are living and those who have died - will receive resurrection bodies - they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. He then leads us to His home to be alongside Him forever.



With this teaching, the Thessalonians were comforted and encouraged. But just a few months later, a rumor started.

According to Paul, the parousia has taken place. Jesus returned, and believers have been taken to be with Him.

Since they, the Thessalonians are still on earth, they think they are forgotten.

Once again they are grieving.

The first time they had been afraid believers who **died** had missed the Parousia.

Now some are afraid they who are **living** have missed the Parousia.

There is **wrong belief**.

Other believers have **wrong action**.

They still think Jesus will return at any moment, so there is no need to work or make money.

They can temporarily live off of others.

Because of wrong **belief** and wrong **action**, Paul writes his 2nd letter from Corinth.

It comes just a few months after the first - c. 52 AD.

1 THESSALONIANS is **teaching** about the return of Jesus for us - we will be with Him forever.

2 THESSALONIANS is **reproof** and **correction** about the return of Jesus.

TEACHING FOR	church members	{ teaching reproof of action correction of belief 2 Tim. 3:16	RETURN OF JESUS	
			1 THESSALONIANS	2 THESSALONIANS

OUTLINE

Comfort in persecution	1
Correction of belief	2
Reproof of action	3

CHAPTER ONE Comfort in persecution

When Paul first went to Thessalonica and presented the gospel message, people believed. But almost immediately they were persecuted for their faith. Jewish leaders threatened and ridiculed them. Their lives and the lives of their families were physically in danger. This has continued week after week and month after month. The hardest part was the lack of justice. When they lost possessions, or a family member was killed for their faith, there was nothing anyone could do about it.

So in this 2nd letter, before Paul gives correction and reproof, he gives them **comfort in their persecution**.

No one in the city cared about their suffering.

Paul assures them that God cares.

God will continue to give them endurance and strength to go thru it. And God is keeping records...

...of **their** faithfulness

...of the persecution from their enemies

To make his point, Paul compresses time and future events to show the big picture of God's justice.

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. 1:6-7a

Since the Thessalonians might think this will happen in the next weeks or months, Paul goes on to explain this will not happen immediately. He is talking about the future. Paul continues...

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. 1:7b-10

When their persecutors die, it will seem like they got away with it - that there will never be justice. But Paul reminds them, this life is not the end. One day their persecutors will be resurrected to face God's judgment. They will forever be separated from God.

In contrast, the Thessalonian believers, because of their faith in Jesus, have salvation and therefore, will forever be alongside Jesus. In the present, it is God's power and grace that has enabled them to remain faithful in the midst of all the persecution. God is aware of their suffering and their faithfulness. In the future, at the Reviewing Stand, God will validate them or openly declare they are worthy of a reward.

All this, (your perseverance and faith while suffering for your faith in Jesus), is evidence that God is right in His justice, when, (in the future), He declares you completely worthy or deserving (of rewards) in the kingdom of God and pays back those who persecuted you. 1:5-6

Paul makes the statement that God is going to declare them worthy of reward. But then in verse 11, he prays that God will consider them worthy. What he desires for them is that they can be rewarded for continued faithfulness. He also prays that God will enable them, by His power, to fulfill their desire for goodness and faithfulness in their choices and actions. 1:11

Chapter 1 is comfort in persecution.

CHAPTER 2 Correction of belief for some church members

Paul starts with what he taught them in the first letter.

Concerning the coming - the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together...

He says their wrong belief involves something about the *Parousia*.

Verse 2

...We ask you brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us - a prophecy, by word of mouth or by letter....

False teachers had come to the church saying there was a letter or message from Paul. However, Paul had not sent any. Since this is now his 2nd letter of instruction to a church, and he will be sending letters to other churches, Paul realizes the potential problem. Anybody could write a letter giving false teaching and say it was from Paul.

So Paul now sets up a way that proves which letters are his. He will continue to dictate his letter and have a “secretary” write it down. But then, at the end of every letter, he will write the final greeting himself.

His handwriting, at the end, will be the distinguishing mark in all his letters. He includes it in this letter. 3:17

Paul, in 2:2, states what the false letter had said.

.....*We ask you ... not to become easily **unsettled** or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us... saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

From Paul’s teaching, the Thessalonian believe there is the *Parousia* or “coming” of Jesus for believers.

Then after that, is a period of time called the *Day of the Lord* for non-believers.

So when the church members heard this false report that the Day of the Lord has already come, they were devastated.

It meant that Jesus returned and they have been left out of the *Parousia*. That was bad enough.

But then to think the Day of the Lord has started. It means God sees them as non-believers.

This has caused them to be alarmed and unsettled.

The Greek word for *unsettled* was often used when a boat got loose from its mooring and was being wildly tossed about in heavy waves. This is how the Thessalonian believers feel with these wrong beliefs. Their minds are in utter chaos, going from fear to disappointment to confusion.



For most people today, the phrase “**day of the Lord**” has little or no meaning. But for the Thessalonian believers of the first century, it had profound meaning. Because they were God-fearing Gentiles who had attended the Jewish synagogue, they had extensive teaching about the *Day of the Lord*. It was a phrase used by 7 of the Old Testament prophets.

The complete phrase, *day of the Lord* is found some 16 times in the Old Testament.

The phrases, *the day, that day, that great day* are used 75 times in the Old Testament.

It is not a literal 24-hour day. It means an extended period of time. It is always connected with God’s anger or wrath, meaning, “His response to evil, to injustice or wrong.”

ISAIAH described this day in Isaiah 13:6.

*Wail, for **the day of the Lord** is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.... See, the day of the Lord is coming - a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger - (with a response to wrong) - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.*

Notice, the Day of the Lord is connected with God’s wrath and it involves the judging of sinners.

ZEPHANIAH said,

The great day of the Lord is near - near & coming quickly.

That day will be a day of justice, a day of distress & anguish, a day of trouble & ruin, a day of darkness & gloom, a day of clouds & blackness.

In the fire of God’s justice, the whole world will be consumed, for He will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth

1:14,15,18

This is what the Thessalonians had learned both in the synagogue and from Paul. No wonder they were alarmed.

The day of the Lord was always connected with God’s judgment on those who rebelled and rejected Him.

In the New Testament, Paul calls the day “the coming wrath.” We know this event as *The Tribulation*.

The Thessalonians think their **persecution** means they are suffering God’s **judgment**.

To calm their fears and correct their belief, Paul assures them the “day of the Lord” has not begun. The way they can know, is because certain things have to happen **FIRST**.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

*Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come **until** the apostasy occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.*

The **Day of the Lord** will not begin until...

1. There has been a worldwide turning away from the truth – changing the basics of faith by those who claim to follow God.
2. The man of lawlessness is revealed.
Some Bibles call him the man of sin or rebellion, the Rebel.
The word *revealed* means he appears and people will recognize him for who he is.

2:4 Paul describes what this man will do after he appears and takes over the world.

He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Because this man of lawlessness is both **against** Christ and **in place of** Christ, he will be called Antichrist.

2:6 You know **what** is holding him back so that he may be revealed at the proper time.

Paul has told the Thessalonians about the *Day of the Lord* many times.

Now he reminds them, they know **what and who** has kept this man of lawlessness from being revealed.

2:7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the **One** who now holds it - lawlessness - back will continue to do so until **He** is taken out of the way.

In the Old Testament, God the Father was the One who was active in the world. During the time of the Gospels, Jesus was active. Since the day of Pentecost, it is the Holy Spirit who has been active and working on this earth. Because He is deity, He has the power to control Satan.

During the time of the Church, the Holy Spirit lives inside of believers forever. So it is the Holy Spirit working thru the Church, the Body of Christ, who is holding back total evil and keeping Satan's man from taking over. The Holy Spirit will continue to do this until He (the Holy Spirit) is removed from that ministry, at the time believers are removed. This will happen when Jesus comes to take believers from the earth so they can be alongside Him.

From that point on, the Holy Spirit will no longer be inside of anyone left on earth. Instead, He will be over people like He was in the Old Testament for ministry. He will still convict people of sin but not restrain them. This means there will be no restraints on this earth. It is the removal of the Church and the Holy Spirit within them (the "**what**" and the "**who**"), that allows Satan's man to be revealed. He will then start laying the groundwork for Satan's kingdom to become established.

2:8 And then, (after the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way), the lawless one will be revealed...

To keep the Thessalonians from any more panic, Paul immediately adds, *whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming.*

SUMMARY

The Day of the Lord cannot begin until...

There is a worldwide turning from the truth of Scripture

Believers and the Holy Spirit within them are removed

The man of lawlessness is revealed so people will recognize him for who he is



2:9-12 Why Satan's man can take over so easily and why God will allow it.

*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish **because** they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For **this** reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe **the** lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth, but have **delighted** in wickedness.*

From the days of Paul until now, Satan's man has been held back by the Holy Spirit working thru the Church. But more and more, people know what God has said and yet they deliberately, knowingly choose to reject it. In fact, they delight in watching evil as well as doing evil.

As it gets worse, there comes a point when the Holy Spirit and believers will be removed and taken out of the way. God will allow Satan's man - Antichrist - to be revealed.

- First, he will do what is needed to get the world ready for Satan's kingdom.
- Then once Satan's kingdom is established, he will be in charge.
- He will work miracles, signs and wonders. Over a period of time, people will accept his lie.
- Then he will set himself up in the Jerusalem temple and demand worship as god.
- However, after a total of 7 years, **he** will be destroyed by Jesus.

The people who refuse Jesus' payment will have to make the payment themselves - they will be separated from God forever.

CORRECTION OF WRONG BELIEF

The **Parousia** has not taken place. **The Day of Lord** has not started.

Instead of being fearful and unsettled, these believers should be encouraged and strengthened.

Because of their faith in Jesus, they can be sure they will never be left out of the *Parousia*.

Yes, they are going thru suffering; it will probably continue, but this life is not the end.

God is a God of justice. In the future, their enemies will be judged and they, the believers, will be rewarded.

He called you to this thru our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2:14

Their future reward will be having a part in God's kingdom. They will share in His glory.

CHAPTER 3 Reproof of action for a different group of church members

The problem *We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 3:11*

Within the local church are some believers that never accepted the false report and are still waiting for Jesus' return. Because they think it will happen any day, they are refusing to work. Instead, they are wandering around meddling in the lives of others, telling them what they should do and how they should do it. When it comes time to eat, they show up at a friend's house. The next day, they visit someone else.

The reproof

Follow Paul's example.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model - an example - for you to follow. 3:7-9

Follow his command.

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: if a man will not work, he shall not eat. 3:10

It is understood that the person is capable of working and there is work available. If these 2 conditions are met, and people still refuse to work, they should not be given meals and should not be given any money.

Paul had taught them this concept when he was with them. He had instructed them about this in his 1st letter. But the Thessalonians have not listened. They think showing Christian compassion is the answer. So they have not followed Paul's example. They have not warned the idle as he told them to do. This is why Paul adds a command.

*Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ, to settle down (mind your own business) and **earn the bread they eat.** 3:12*

In case a church member still refuses to work...

*If anyone does **not** obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. 3:14-15*

The phrase, *do not associate with him* means, *do not invite him over for a meal. Do not provide him with food or money. Do not do anything to enable this wrong action to continue.* But when you meet him in town or in church, do not refuse to speak - remember, he is a believer. Warn him in love and hold him accountable for his choices.

Paul ends this letter expressing what he wants for their lives. He is saying this in contrast to the way they have been feeling - like a boat tossed about by heavy waves. 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way.

In the midst of suffering and with their fear about the future, it is correct teaching of Jesus' return that will give them continual peace in every way.

Today, if all believers had continual peace about the future, I would not give any further explanation. But unfortunately, there are many like the Thessalonian believers. Thinking about future events brings fear and panic. Instead of peace, there is uncertainty, especially about the Day of the Lord.

So I want to use this lesson to put facts together from thruout Scripture about 2 future events - what people have called the *Rapture* and the *Tribulation*.

In the last lesson I explained that because so many people have a problem with the word *Rapture*, I use the word **Parousia**, which literally means *to be along-side Jesus*. It is translated as *comes* or *coming* in our Bibles. It is the return of Jesus for believers.

The name *Tribulation* started being used by theologians probably at the same time as the word *Rapture* - sometime in the last few hundred years. It was a bad choice because the word *tribulation* means *suffering* or *persecution*. Jesus said that from the beginning of the Church on the day of Pentecost, until the *Parousia*, believers will always have tribulation or suffering. There is no one special time created specifically by God for the suffering or tribulation of believers. Jesus said, *In the world, you will have tribulation*.

What is commonly called The *Tribulation*, is what the Bible calls **the Day of the Lord** - the time when He will bring judgment on the earth to those who have rejected Him. It is always connected with "His wrath," meaning His response to evil and injustice. In plain English, it is the time of **Satan's kingdom when Satan's man is in charge of the world**.

1 Thessalonians gives the details about the **Parousia**.

2 Thessalonians gives the details about the **Day of the Lord**.

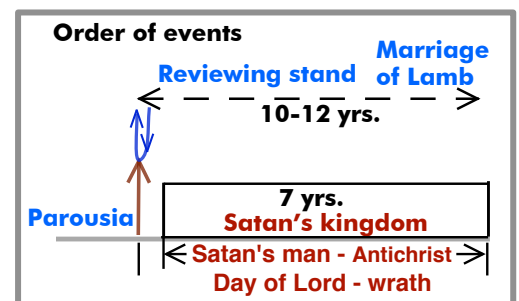
These two events are complete opposites

PAROUSIA	DAY OF THE LORD
Future of believers	Future of non-believers
Takes place in the air	Takes place on the earth
Blessing	Judgment
Encouragement	Darkness, wrath

It is obvious these are 2 different events for 2 different groups for 2 different purposes. Paul taught the Thessalonians that the **Parousia** comes first. Believers who have died and those who are still alive will meet Jesus in the clouds. From other Scripture we know that He then takes us to His home. We will be with Him in heaven for the next 10-12 years. Included in this time is the Reviewing Stand of Jesus. It is when we will get our rewards, apologies and vindications. There will be justice in relation to other believers.

Once the Holy Spirit thru the Church is no longer holding back lawlessness, those who are against God can rebel completely. There will be no restraint. Satan's man can then be revealed. Over the next 3-5 years, he will bring about world changes. When they are in place, he will establish Satan's kingdom and be in charge. The Old Testament calls it the *Day of the Lord* or the time of Israel's trouble. It is always connected with God's wrath. Jer. 30:7 God's judgment is to take His hands off the earth and let Satan run it. But God also had boundaries and limits of how far Satan can go.

Daniel chapter 9 tells us the Day of the Lord will be limited to 7 years. It will begin some 3-5 years after the Parousia. Evidence the day of the Lord has begun will be the signing of a 7-year treaty between Satan's man and Israel. Most likely, it will include the right to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple. This is why many of the Jews will think this man is their promised Messiah and why they will accept him.



Revelation tells us during the first half of these 7 years, Satan's man starts with a time of peace.

It is the last half that is described in 2 Thessalonians.

Satan's man, will set himself up in the Jerusalem Temple and claim to be god.
Thru counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders he will demand worship.
Because he comes in place of Christ, he is known as Antichrist.

Altho it will be **Satan's** 7-year kingdom, God will accomplish 3 goals. This is why it can be called **SATAN'S kingdom** and **the Day of the LORD** at the same time.

God's main goal - To bring the Jews to national repentance.

At the end of the 7 years, all surviving Jews will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and will ask Him to return.

God's 2nd goal - To bring Gentile individuals to repentance.

He will use 2 Jewish men who become believers. They will have such an effective ministry that thousands of Jewish young men will believe. They will become the evangelists who give the message of Jesus worldwide. The Holy Spirit will be working like in the Old Testament. He will be over or on them for ministry. Never again will the Holy Spirit live inside of people after the Church is removed. The ministry of the Holy Spirit within us is unique for the Church, the Body of Christ.

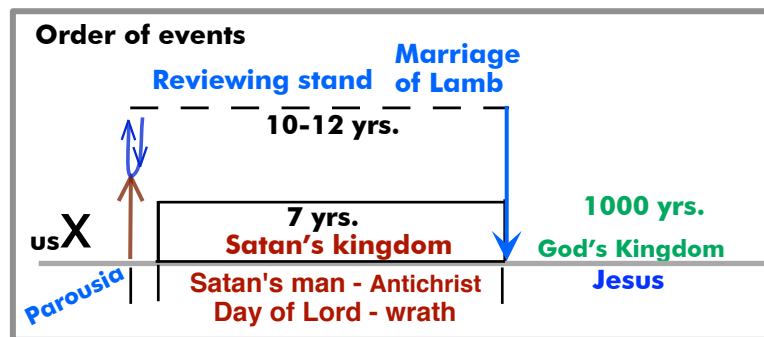
During the time of Satan's kingdom, (the Day of the Lord), thousands upon thousands of people will believe in Jesus. Many of them will be those who rejected Jesus during the time of the Church. Today, the world has so entered the Church and the Church so entered the world, that God's message has become muddled. Those in the world cannot see any difference in our lives, so they have no reason to believe our message. God knows this is why so many are rejecting the gospel message today. So in His grace and mercy, He will give them a chance to hear the gospel once again in purity and power. They will believe. But because they put it off and it is during the time of Satan's kingdom, they will be killed for their faith almost immediately. After 3 ½ years, all believers will be killed and there is no one left to give God's message. This is when God will send His angel to proclaim the gospel. Everyone who wants to, will have a chance to believe.

God's 3rd goal - To let Satan have a kingdom so everyone can see the best that he has to offer.

They will discover his best is nothing but hell on earth - his kingdom is a total failure.

Revelation and 2 Thessalonians tell us that after 7 years of Satan's kingdom/the Day of the Lord, Jesus returns to the earth, bringing us with Him. This is when He will overthrow Satan's man with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the splendor of His coming - the splendor is talking about the Shekinah glory - the divine glory of Jesus.

Jesus destroys Satan's man and Satan's kingdom in order to establish His kingdom of peace and justice. It is during this time that all believers who were part of the Church will help Jesus rule and reign in His kingdom. We will share in His glory.



In the 2 books of Thessalonians, Paul makes 3 statements about us, the Church, in relation to the Day of the Lord.

- > Jesus rescues us from the coming **wrath** - from the Day of the Lord. 1 Thess. 1:10
- > *For God did not appoint **us** (believers) to suffer **wrath**, but to receive salvation thru our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thess. 5:9
- > The Holy Spirit who is in us and holds back complete lawlessness must first be removed **before** Satan's man can be revealed or identified 2 Thess 2

Based on these statements, I personally do not believe that we as believers will go thru **the day of the Lord**. (When I say personally, it means it is my personal belief). I think we will be removed and be alongside Jesus in heaven during this time.

In regards to tribulation, there has been persecution, tribulation, (meaning suffering), for believers since the day of Pentecost.

In our day, believers in other parts of the world are being killed and persecuted by the thousands.

In this country, the gospel message is mocked. When we use Scripture as the basis of right and wrong, we are accused of hate speech and being intolerant. In fact, just believing there is a right and wrong is rejected.

Paul said as suffering and persecution increases, we are to look forward to the **Parousia** - the last part of the Gospel message. The picture of being taken up to be alongside Jesus is what gives inner stability and peace. This is the encouragement that Jesus gave the apostles at "the last supper," to give them peace

In My Father's house are many rooms. I would not be telling you about them if they were not there. Do not let your hearts be troubled about My leaving, because I am going to make ready a place for you. Even tho you do not know the when or the how, I am going to make ready a place and I am coming again to take you alongside Me, so that where I am, you also may be. ...Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give it like the world gives it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:1-3, 27

This is what God wants for our lives.

EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE

Thinking of being taken from this earth to meet Jesus in the **air**, sounds strange and extreme. Since we are on this earth, why not have Jesus come directly to the earth? The Bible does not give us an answer but I would suggest it is for our protection.

Over the years many people have claimed to be Jesus. Others will come in the future. Some will be very convincing, so how can we be sure we will know the real Jesus from the imposters?

To protect us, the real Jesus will not come to this earth. Instead we will be taken from the earth to meet Him in the clouds. No one can imitate this, so we never have to worry about being deceived. If anyone appears on the earth saying he is Jesus, we can know immediately he is a counterfeit. Our meeting place with Jesus will be in the air.

If you find the idea of a resurrection body and rising in the air to meet Jesus, difficult to believe or imagine, remember the resurrection body of Jesus and His Ascension. We will get a body like His and we also will ascend into the air.