

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING THE DAY OF THE LORD

2 Thessalonians 2

How would we respond if we were facing severe persecution—possibly even death—because of our faith in Christ.

During our missions conference we heard about thousands in Africa who were slaughtered because of their faith in Christ. Many in Sudan, in Indonesia, and other places have suffered severe persecution because of their walk in God.

Reliable sources have affirmed repeatedly that more people died for their faith in the 20th C. than in all the previous centuries of church history combined!

We find that hard to believe, because WE'RE so comfortable here!

The most we suffer is public embarrassment, or limited restrictions on the expression of our faith.

However, it's likely that during the 21st C.—if the Lord doesn't come first—WE will pay a price for our faith.

Paul affirmed that ALL who would live godly lives WILL suffer persecution!

Paul writes to the Thessalonian church in the midst of persecution—they are suffering because of their faith in Christ and their walk with God

THE CHURCH FACES HARD TIMES

The book was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians (about A.D. 51).

They continue to suffer because of their faith in Christ.

The persecution has created further theological problems that need to be dealt with.

Purpose and Theme— Paul writes:

To comfort suffering people

To correct the doctrinal confusion concerning the Day of the Lord.

To encourage us to stand firm and hold onto sound doctrine

Main idea of the letter: comfort in the midst of their suffering.

- He comforts us by demonstrating that suffering produces praise.
- Those who are faithful triumph in the end.

Ch 2: Paul presents **instruction concerning the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)**

Frustration with de-emphasis on what God has said concerning His plans for His church in the future.

"I don't know and I don't care!"

God does know and He does care!

God has spoken about the future.

We need to know what He has said about it!

THEIR AFFLICTION 1:3-7

Their faith and love is growing 1:3

They are enduring persecution 1:4

They will be declared worthy of the kingdom 1:5

God will repay those who afflict His people 1:6-7

THEIR QUESTION 2:1-2

They wonder whether the affliction they're going through [this] could be the tribulation. "Could THIS be the tribulation?"

Apparently a **false representative** has come, claiming to have been sent by Paul, **claiming they are in the day of the Lord** [the tribulation]

"This tribulation we're going through was promised in the Day of the Lord." 2:2

The subject isn't imminency—that He would come soon.

The subject is the day of the Lord.

This view requires a post-tribulational view.

Their concept—what Paul wants to correct—is post-tribulational!

If we're in the tribulation, and Christ hasn't come for His people yet, then His coming must be *after* the tribulation!

Paul responds by teaching about two subjects:

1. **Our Lord's coming.**

2. **Our gathering together with Him (= the Rapture) 2:1**

Paul answers by teaching them "*with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him*" (= the Rapture)

He corrects mistaken idea by teaching about rapture!

Paul warns us of the danger of being deceived 2:2-3a.

TWO PREREQUISITES FOR THE TRIBULATION 2:3-10

Answer: we can't be in day of the Lord because 2 notable events must occur before its arrival.

This can't be the tribulation. 3b

Two prerequisites—two definitive events— are missing! 2:3c

Two things must happen first!

These constitute definitive evidences we can watch for as indicators.

If these haven't happened, the day hasn't come!

1. **"APOSTASY" 2:3c**

The first of these definitive events is an "apostasy" (2:3a)

The common view of "apostasy" is that it refers to a doctrinal deviation from truth.

Problem with this view: this kind of apostasy isn't an objectively verifiable, definitive event as Paul uses it here; it's a state.

When does it start?

State already existed when Paul spoke.

John tells us that it already existed 1 Jn. 2:18-19 ff.

Paul too: 2 Thess. 2:7a

Gradual intensification of that state to a new climax doesn't seem to satisfy Paul's use of the term.

When is enough enough? How do we know when it's bad enough?

Apostasy isn't a notable event you could use at any time to determine if the day of the Lord has begun, as Paul uses it.

How then should we understand it?

Better to interpret the word with **non-technical, root idea**, normally expressed by the verb form.

aphístemi—depart from, draw away, fall away, refrain from

mid.—depart from, withdraw oneself

=> apostasía—falling away, forsake

aphístemi—depart from [all uses in N.T. shown for all related words] 15X in 14 ref.

Lk. 2:37 "[Anna] . . . And she never *left* the temple, serving night and day"

Lk. 4:13 "And when the devil had finished every temptation, he *departed from* Him until an opportune time."

Lk. 13:27 "and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; *depart from* me all you evildoers.'"

Acts 12:10 "and they went out and went along one street; and immediately the angel *departed from* him."

Acts 15:38 "But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had *deserted* them in Pamphylia."

Acts 19:9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he [Paul] *withdrew from* them and took away the disciples"

Acts 22:29 "Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately *let go of [withdrew from]* him;"

2 Cor. 12:8 "Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might *depart from* me."

1 Tim. 4:1 "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will *fall away from the faith*" [*depart from it; they'll leave!*] [4/15]

2 Tim. 2:19 "Let every one who names the name of the Lord *abstain from wickedness. [depart from; leave it]*

Heb. 3:12 "Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in *falling away from the living God.*" [*departing from; leaving Him*]

Acts 5:37-38 "After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and *drew away* some people after him [*got them to leave*] , And so in the present case, I say to you, *stay away from [depart from]* these men and leave them alone,"

Luke 8:13 "those on rocky soil . . . believe for a while, and in time of temptation *fall away [depart; they leave!]*."

1 Tim. 6:5 " . . . men of depraved mind . . . [alt. rdg. – "from such *turn away [depart]*"].

apostasion [3X] certificate of divorce, of dismissal, of separation (Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mk. 10:4)

apostasía [2X]

Acts 21:21 "you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to *forsake* Moses. [They're teaching the Jews to leave Moses!]

2 Thess. 2:3 "It will not come unless the *apostasy [departure]* comes first"

"Apostasy" is a departure!

The verb normally describes a separation or departure
(occasionally a figurative use).

Noun, in non-biblical usage, first related to verb idea, with *no* religious connotation.

Doctrinal apostasy is a derived meaning. – *it came later!*

Extra-biblical use found at dock—to list ship departures.

Context indicates the type of departure that the speaker had in mind.

What is there in *this* context to clarify the meaning here?

- It's a clearly defineable, notable sign.
- v. 1 is clearly referring to a departure.
- This departure is again mentioned in v. 3.

The departure, with definite article, indicates something well known, *or*, mentioned in preceding context.

- It's also closely tied with previous letter (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

If Paul is saying that "*the departure*" must occur first, this is a *clear* reference to the rapture which he previously identified with the day of the Lord in his other letter to them.

The rapture would certainly be a definite, objectively verifiable event; in particular for the church.

The rapture is a notable departure—*people will know it happened!*

Until this "departure" occurs (be it physical departure or doctrinal "departure") we can't be in the day of the Lord.

Therefore, this can't be the tribulation!

[2nd notable prerequisite—2nd thing that must happen before the tribulation:]

2. REVELATION OF MAN OF LAWLESSNESS 2:3b-10

He is the central character in the day of the Lord.

The one who brings it on hasn't shown up yet!

Persecution can't be the day of the Lord because the real persecution doesn't start until half way through the week (Dan. 9:26-27).

He comes at the start of the week—to sign the treaty.

His character 2:3b

He is characterized by rebellion against the law

He is characterized by destruction, which is his destiny.

His work 2:4-5

The man of lawlessness opposes all other gods.

He wants all worship directed to himself.

He sits in a temple, presenting himself as a god.

Two views concerning this temple:

Jewish temple reconstructed—

Would the Bible call a temple reconstructed by rebellious Jews, out of fellowship with God, the "temple of God"?

This seems to occur before the restoration of Israel.

Temple of the beast—he sets himself up as god.

He could establish his own temple.

It is the temple of a god => himself.

He reigns from there as political and religious leader (Dan. 11:45)

He reigns from his temple as political and religious leader.

His obstacle 2:6-8a

[Though the power of lawlessness is always present in the world,]

God is restraining Satan's power.

Satan is ready to begin his program whenever God permits.

JDP: "Satan has his man ready in every generation—just waiting for his chance!

But God is holding him back—until *HE's* ready!

God's in charge! He establishes *HIS* timetable!

v. 6— neuter — "that which restrains"

v. 7— masc. — "he who restrains"

The Holy Spirit uses the law [or the church] to restrain sin today.

The Holy Spirit is taken "out of the way"

It doesn't say He leaves. He stops interfering.

It's like taking a barricade out of the middle of the road.

"Detour to Antigua => " sign

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent.

He can't be taken out of the world.

He's always present.

He's the *agent of regeneration* in *all* time periods.

He isn't taken out of the way until the church is taken out.

Therefore, the rapture comes first.

When the Spirit is taken out of the way, that is, when He stops blocking Satan's attempt to rule, then the program of lawlessness can start.

The Spirit is taken out of the way when the church departs

This doesn't mean the Spirit leaves.

An omnipresent God can't leave!

He stops restraining!

His destiny 2:8b

Paul reveals the destiny of the man of sin.

He will be destroyed by Christ at the second coming. (cp. Rev. 19)

His deception (power) 2:9-10a

He leads many astray by the mighty acts he performs.

God allows him to delude them into believing in him.

Danger of a "theology of signs"

His following 2:10b-12

They reject the truth –He says it twice!! (10b, 12)

They believe his lies

They take pleasure in wickedness.

Paul makes it clear that the reason people will be deceived by his lies is that they have refused to accept the truth. Rev. 6:14-17

They demonstrate their true loyalty by their enjoyment of wickedness—it's FUN!

Therefore **they will be judged** (condemned).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION: [For those who have not trusted Christ–TRUST HIM NOW
–before the great lie comes along and you are deceived by it!]

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR GOD'S AFFLICTED PEOPLE 2:13-17

Paul thanks God because we don't belong to the condemned. 2:13-14

We have received the truth

We have been called to share in Christ's glory.

Our destiny is secure.

Our suffering is temporary.

We won't be left behind to suffer in the day of the Lord.

We are secure. (Cp. 1 Thess. 5).

We were chosen for deliverance–not for wrath.

Paul prays that God will give us strength to stand firm in the midst of this temporary affliction **2:15-17**

Specifically, – That we may stand firm 2:15a

That we may hold to the doctrines taught 2:15b

That God may encourage us 2:16-17a

That God may strengthen us 2:17b

confirm us in every good work and word.

HOW SHOULD THIS TRUTH IMPACT OUR LIVES?–How should we then live?