

2Th. 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

2Th. 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Evidently, the Thessalonians weren't any more sure of their knowledge of prophetic events than are many in the church today. I like the wording of the NIV best for these verses:

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

The KJV makes it read more like it could possibly be referencing two different things by adding the little word "by" (which is not in the Greek). It is obvious that he can't be talking about the visible return of the Lord because that would be obvious. Paul is writing about the coming of Christ to take His Bride home with Him as He promised in John 14. That is an event that, as a professed believer, had you missed it would cause you great concern.

"gathering together" = This phrase is represented by one word in the Greek that means "a complete collection."

When I looked up the Greek, that definition made me smile. When Christ comes to gather the believers, it will be to get them all—not just some of them.

Paul tells them not to get "agitated or disturbed in their thinking" or to be "frightened" that the "day of Christ" had begun. The Thessalonian believers knew that the "day of Christ" (interchangeable with the "day of the Lord" and the "wrath to come" as referenced in his first letter to them) would be a terrible time of God's wrath, and they didn't want to experience it and had been clearly taught that they wouldn't (1Thess 5:9). Since we know that these believers were experiencing persecution and trouble (cf 1:5-7), maybe this time of suffering had increased such that they were more susceptible to the deceit that the "day of Christ" had begun.

Paul is telling them to ignore any *spirit* (includes other humans as well as the possibility of demons), *word* (includes persuasive speakers or general conversation), or *letter* (written correspondence) that would tell them differently. The wording also implies that the Thessalonians had possibly received a letter from another source that either misrepresented Paul's teaching or falsely claimed to be from Paul.

I think the best translation of the word *soon* would be "suddenly." In other words, when someone confronts you with something that contradicts the truth as you have been taught it, take the time to think about it carefully. Don't make quick assumptions. You know the truth. Think it through.

2Th. 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

2Th. 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

“man” = an enclitic indefinite pronoun; some or any person or object:—a (kind of), any (man, thing, thing at all)

This first phrase is restating the previous verse—Don’t let any person or thing deceive you in any way. Webster adds strength to the statement with his definition of “deceive,”—“ To lead into error; to cause to believe what is false, or disbelieve what is true; to impose upon; to mislead; to cheat; to disappoint; to delude; to insnare.”

Since I am not a Greek scholar, it was helpful to find a note in the NIV Commentary that was helpful in understanding why the phrase “that day shall not come” was added by the translators.

In the second part of this verse, the Greek sentence is not complete; it presupposes something to be added from the previous verse; i.e., “that day will not come” (lit., “that day is not present”).

“falling away” = This phrase is one word in the Greek, and is one that causes much debate even among those who agree on a pretribulation rapture. I did quite a bit of research on this when I was preparing my topical study, “The Rapture,” from which the following is an excerpt.

Is this a falling away from faith or a physical departure, i.e., the rapture? The following explanation comes from Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice and makes a lot of sense to me.

The words “falling away” were translated departure in the first 7 Bible translations. In 11/15 uses the root word for departure in the NT is used to reference departing from another person or place, a physical departure. The one time it is used re departing from the faith is 1 Timothy 4:1, which uses the qualifying words “from the faith.”

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall **depart** from the faith,”

The other uses are:

Luke 8:13 They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation **fall away**.

Acts 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and **drew away** much people after him:

Acts 5:38 And now I say unto you, **Refrain** from these men,

John Sweigert adds this information: “The history of translations of “apostasia” varied little for the first 15 centuries. Jerome’s Latin Vulgate contains the word “discessio” in 2Thess 2:3, meaning simply “departure.” Other translations up to the KJV of 1611 use variations of “departure.”

Though I am convinced the “falling away” is a physical departure, I believe the truth of a departure from the faith is also true, as stated in

1 Timothy 4:1 above, as I observe how “Christian” leaders are putting their own spin on biblical truth, saying that the Bible doesn’t really mean what it says (i.e., homosexuality, etc.).

(5/08) As I was listening to J. Vernon McGee this morning, I thought he tied together both understandings of the “apostasy” quite well. He, too, sees it as a departure or rapture of the true church that will result in the complete apostasy of the “church” that is left behind composed of people who profess but do not possess true faith.

Frankly, whichever you choose to believe, this is a proof point for the beginning of the “day of Christ,” not the rapture. The main truth is that *after* this falling away (be it the rapture or a mass departure from the faith), the man of sin will be revealed. (4/07) The oldest Greek texts use “*anomias*” for the word *sin* in reference to no law, lawlessness, contempt for law and morality.

The day of the Lord will not start until the man of sin is revealed. The rest of verses 3 and 4 go to great lengths to identify “the man of sin.”

- The son of perdition. – This phrase is only used twice in scripture—one in reference to Judas Iscariot and the other in this verse referencing the man of sin, the Antichrist.

John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled

We know that Satan entered into Judas...

(11/08) **Luke 22:3** Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

...and I believe this phrase indicates that this *man of sin* is the other person whom Satan has chosen to personally “possess” because of their significance in his war against the Son of God. Revelation 17 tells us that “the beast,” whom we call Antichrist, the title by which we know this “man of sin,” will go into perdition.

Rev. 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Rev. 17:11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

The word *perdition* is a reference to eternal damnation.

- The one who opposes and exalts himself above any being called “God.” – The Hebrew for the word *God* makes special reference to “the supreme divinity.” It’s interesting that the Spirit inspires Paul to word this truth to include any person’s or group’s identification of God. (To point: Many people are confused into thinking that Islam’s “Allah” and the Jewish/Christian “God” are one and the same.) The “man of sin” will be

a puppet of and eventually possessed by Satan, whose purpose is to present himself as “God.”

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev. 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Rev. 13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

- The one who opposes and exalts himself above any being that is worshipped. – To be doubly clear, this “man of sin” controlled by Satan will seek to position himself as the only being worthy of worship (adoration, devotion).
- One who will sit in the temple of God and claim to be God. – The temple of God being referenced in this phrase is the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. It is the only “temple of God” that would carry any significance to those who are the children of God through faith in His Son. This phrase in verse 4 is a reference to “the abomination of desolation” referenced in Daniel and in the Olivet Discourse by Jesus. Following is an excerpt from the topical study, “The Olivet Discourse.”

Jesus is referencing a specific prophecy made by Daniel--**Dan. 12:11** And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

“abomination” - 946. **bde÷lugma bdelugma**, *bdel´-oog-mah*; from 948; a detestation, i.e. (specially) idolatry:—abomination.

Even though we know that Antiochus Epiphanes seemed to fulfill this prophecy in history when he offered a pig on the altar in the temple to Zeus, Jesus is making the point that this prophecy was yet to be fulfilled (as was the case with many prophecies—foreshadowing and fulfillment); it was future to the time that Jesus was speaking. This would be a desecration of the temple, which means that there will be a functioning temple prior to the occurrence of the event being referenced. This abomination would be a thing or person *standing* where it ought not—that would seem to reference something like an idol. “The holy place” and “where it ought not” could reference any part of the temple, the whole of which is considered holy, but more likely refers to the inner sanctum of the temple and possibly even the holy of holies.

This phrase in verse 4 would certainly qualify as referencing the fulfillment of the prophecy of that coming “abomination of desolation.”

2Th. 2:5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Paul now reminds these believers that he had already taught them specifically concerning these events when he was with them. They should remember this.

2Th. 2:6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

“withholdeth” = to hold down (fast)... retain, seize on, stay.

These seemed to be the best choices from the Greek looking at the context of the passage. Who is the person about whom they are discussing his being revealed? The man of sin (cf v3). The context indicates that something or someone is keeping his identity secret until it is “his time.” This also indicates that he, the man of sin, has an appointment with destiny, a “set time” (from the Greek). Since we know that the “man of sin” will get his power from Satan (as shown above), this withholding force evidently has the authority to limit the power and authority of Satan. Since Satan is a supernatural entity, the force that limits him must be a supernatural entity of greater power and authority. According to Paul, the Thessalonians knew the identity of this being—the Holy Spirit.

(4/07) I found a quote from R. A. Coombes at www.aoreport.com that gives further explanation on the grammar used in this verse.

“The neuter participle ‘what withholdeth’ in verse 6 becomes the masculine participle ‘he who now letteth’ in verse 7. The first term focuses on the force of the one that restrains, the second on the person that restrains.”

2Th. 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

“the mystery of iniquity” – Satan’s power and authority, to limited degree, is already effectively at work on planet earth. The fact that it is described as a mystery (secret) is because he has not been allowed to manifest himself openly in the fullness of his power and authority. He has had to be content to work behind the scenes. The Greek word translated “letteth” is the same word translated “withholdeth” in verse 6. The context is clear that this being is restraining or limiting the power and authority of Satan by His presence. The fact that “He” must be taken out of the way indicates that He is a presence that must be removed. Logic concludes that the Holy Spirit is the person of Almighty God that is now “present” on planet earth because He indwells every believer.

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

When the Holy Spirit is taken away, the believers whom He is indwelling will be taken away. In his later letter to the Ephesians Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is the down payment (so to speak) of our inheritance to come.

Eph. 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

When Jesus taught of the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, He was clear that He would *abide* with us forever.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, **that he may abide with you for ever;**

John 14:17 *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

“abide” = continue, be present, remain

2Th. 2:8 **And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:**

Only when the restraining power of the Holy Spirit as embodied in the church, the body of believers is removed, will “that Wicked,” the man of sin, be revealed. The Greek for the word *revealed* states “to take off the cover, disclose.” In other words, Satan won’t have to work behind the scenes any more. He’ll be granted public fullness of his powers during the time of the day of the Lord. Even though he is going to be granted his reign of terror, Paul makes it clear that the Lord will:

- Consume him with the spirit of his mouth. – The Greek for *consume* is a reference to the destruction of the man of sin by the Word of Jesus when He returns as King of kings.
- Destroy him with the brightness of His coming. – The Greek for *destroy* is a reference to making the power behind the man, Satan, of no effect and putting him out of the picture; he will be made to vanish (from the Greek) when he is bound for the 1000 year period of Christ’s rule on planet earth before all judgment is finally declared and eternity begins. The Greek for *brightness* is a reference to manifestation; in other words, it is the physical appearance of the Lord Jesus that will result in the destruction of Antichrist and his power.

2Th. 2:9 *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*

2Th. 2:10 **And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**

Paul goes on to affirm that the man of sin will be operating under the empowerment of Satan (as established in the comments on v3-4 above). The things that he is able to do will involve miracles of obvious supernatural power as well as deceitful wonders (i.e., like a very adept magician).

I like the wording of the CJB for verse 10.

He will enable him to deceive, in all kinds of wicked ways, those who are headed for destruction because they would not receive the love of the truth that could have saved them.

The wording is clear that the reference is to those who are perishing and have chosen to reject the gospel message; they have rejected God's revelation of truth. The wording is interesting because scripture tells us that Jesus is "the Way, **the Truth** and the Life" (John 14:6). These people have rejected "the love of the Truth," which I think we can truthfully read as a statement of their rejecting the love of Jesus. Had they accepted His gift of love, they could have been saved and headed for an eternity with Jesus rather than perishing and headed for an eternity without Him.

2Th. 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

2Th. 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

These are very powerful, frightening verses. As I read them in context, the reference is to those who have "received not the love of the truth," those who are identified as perishing. God is going to send "effective deceit" (from the Greek for "strong delusion"); in other words, those who have rejected the Lord Jesus (which means that they have had an opportunity to receive Him and have refused it), will find the deceit of the Antichrist to be so effective that they will believe it. Even though Antichrist is working through the empowerment of Satan, we know that God has granted Satan power and authority according to God's own purposes in bringing all to pass according as He has determined from the foundation of the world. Verse 12 emphasizes that ALL will be damned who rejected God's truth and accepted / approved unrighteousness / wickedness. Reminder—this is speaking of those who have been left to go through the time of God's wrath, the day of Christ, the day of the Lord.

I haven't heard this point emphasized or taught (at least in my memory bank). Even the popular "Left Behind" series does not embrace this truth. We know that scripture teaches that many will come to know the Lord during this terrible period of time, but that group of believers will come from those who have not yet had the opportunity of hearing God's truth and then choosing to accept it or reject it. I have talked to many who have told me that they'll make sure they get right with God if we disappear and they find themselves in the "tribulation." If I understand these verses correctly, those who have told me that will not have that opportunity. They will already have chosen to reject the truth.

2Th. 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

2Th. 2:14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul and his coworkers are ever in a position of thankfulness to the Lord for this body of believers in Thessalonica. As believers, we are privileged to experience the unconditional love of God.

“from the beginning” - Some translations make this phrase a reference the Thessalonian believers as among the firstfruits of those who would turn to God in faith in Jesus. It is true that they form a part of the early church. I believe, however, that this is a reference to the truth stated in Ephesians.

Eph. 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: God knew, before ever creating the first thing, every individual who would come to Him in faith. Those beings are those whom He has rescued from the penalty of sin. He has purified this body of believers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit because of their trust in His truth and in His Truth—His Word and His Son, Jesus, Who embodies truth. It’s worth emphasizing again that this is the truth declared by the Lord Jesus.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life:

“Whereunto” = indicating the point reached or entered
This is a reference to our salvation through faith.

These believers responded in faith to the *gospel*, the good message, preached by Paul, Silas and Timothy. Paul identified the gospel as “ours” because it becomes a personal possession of every believer. Every person that responds in faith to the gospel brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this was the prevalent truth in the mind of Paul; he was thrilled to be a vessel of service that resulted in bringing glory to His Savior. Most of the translations focus on the truth that salvation will result in the believer getting to share the glory of Jesus. Both are truths expressed by the Savior in one of His last prayers to the Father before His crucifixion.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

2Th. 2:15 **Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.**

“Therefore” – Because you are a child of God by faith who has been chosen to be rescued from God’s wrath and share in His glory.....

“brethren” – Paul never tires of associating with the body of believers as part of his family.

“stand fast” = persevere, continue, abide

“traditions” = transmission, i.e. (concretely) a precept; specially, the Jewish traditionary law

I think we have to remind ourselves that Paul is writing a body of believers that is primarily Gentile according to my reading of Acts 17. It would seem that “precept” would have been a better translation than tradition. Paul is saying that they should persevere in and keep hold of the precepts (instructions) that they

had been taught both in person as well as in writing by Paul and his coworkers. I don't think you can connect this statement to "Jewish traditions" and stay in context. The context is a reference to what they have been taught through the presentation of the gospel message and the truth of the Old Testament scripture.

2Th. 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

This verse begins with a distinct reference to both Jesus the Son and God the Father. Both are identified as beings with whom they are personally connected—to Jesus as Lord and Messiah (Savior) and God as Father. Three things are emphasized as part of that relationship.

- We are recipients of their love. – This is such the predominant characteristic of God that the scripture defines Him as love. The scripture also tells us that this love is "in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Greek word for *love* used here is the one that references unconditional love.
1John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.
Rom. 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- They are our source of "everlasting consolation." – Webster gives more insight on this blessing. *Consolation* is defined as "alleviation of misery or distress of mind; refreshment of spirit; comfort." As His child, we will continually experience a refreshing of the spirit. This consolation is referenced as an *everlasting* blessing, which I think we tend to associate more with heaven/eternity. The truth we need to grasp is that this blessing is available to us now.
- They are our source of "good hope." – This is a reference to the "confident expectation/anticipation" of the believer regarding living in the presence of God for eternity. It is **this hope** that keeps us motivated day in and day out as we make our pilgrimage through this lifetime. It is **this hope** that helps us keep a perspective on priorities. We are to be storing up treasures in heaven.

Matt. 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matt. 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

How do we establish a relationship that blesses us so wonderfully? Through the grace of God. Grace is often defined as "unmerited favor." I think this is brought out more clearly in the Greek definition for this word: "especially the divine influence upon the heart." In his letter to the Ephesians Paul words it this way.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

The beautiful truth is that God loves us so much that He is the initiator, the giver and the preserver of our salvation. He does all the work. We just have to receive the gift.

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2Th. 2:17 **Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.** The truth of this whole epistle and especially the truth of the previous verse should both comfort their hearts (includes thoughts and feelings) and strengthen their faith so that it is reflected in both in what they say and what they do. I think it is also significant to note that whatever we say or do as believers that is a result of strong faith should qualify as good/beneficial.