

The first chapter was a greeting and introduction. Now Paul dives into the reason he is writing. He had taught them when he was with them about the return of Jesus. In his first letter He clarified about the dead coming with Christ when He returns and about their transformed bodies rising to meet their spirits in the air. Apparently there was still some misunderstanding, so Paul again addresses the subject of Jesus' return.

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2 Since we do not have his oral teaching, which was the foundation of the subject, we are left to try to figure out from Scripture how this all comes about. That is why there are so many different interpretations. I will share what I understand, but please take it as my opinion based on other Scriptures, but certainly not the final say.

He begins by clarifying his topic, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him. ⁱ The word "coming" means to draw near or presence. There are two comings in this chapter. The coming of the Lord in this verse and the coming of the Lawless One in verse 9 which we will look at next week. The Greek word for "gathering together" *episunagoges* is to gather together to worship. The coming of the Lord is what many people call the rapture. In his first letter and in this verse, Paul connected the event Jesus' coming to gather us with the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17ⁱⁱ; 5:1,2ⁱⁱⁱ). Isaiah describes the day of the Lord as a day when ¹⁷ *(And) the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.* ¹⁸ *And the idols shall utterly pass away.* ¹⁹ *And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.* Isaiah 2:17-19

It seems that some people in the congregation were worried, after the death of fellow believers, that the day of the Lord was about to begin. Perhaps they thought the deaths they witnessed were the gathering together to the Lord and they had missed it. That would mean they were about to face what Isaiah and other prophets wrote about as a day to hide from the splendor and majesty of the LORD when He comes to terrify the earth. No wonder they needed a letter of correction. You would be alarmed too if you thought you missed the rapture, especially if you thought God's wrath would follow!

Paul first asks them not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from his team that the day had come. Alarmed "by a spirit" may mean that someone gave a prophecy that it was about to start. John the Beloved warns us not to believe every spirit because many false prophets have gone into the world (1 John 4:1^{iv}). I believe that is the use of "spirit" in this verse. "Or a spoken word," which would refer to a teaching. "Or a letter seeming to be from us," would be a letter written by someone claiming to be Paul or his team. Paul is making it very clear that the rapture had not come. He follows this with two sure signs that must happen first. Until these signs come to pass, we are not to believe anyone telling us the day had already come. Are you ready for the definite signs that must happen first before our gathering together unto the Lord or what many call the rapture?

³ *Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,*
⁴ *who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.*

2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 Paul starts off with another warning not to be deceived. Jesus also emphasized that we were not to be deceived because His coming would be like lightning shining from the east to the west (Matthew 24:23-27^v). These warnings mean there will be a lot of false messiahs as the day approaches. In the first letter Paul said when Jesus comes there would be the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God when the saints are gathered, which precedes or introduces the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16^{vi}). Apparently they missed that. There will be no missing the actual event. The world will know! Anyone who tries to tell us otherwise is in error.

Before the harvest of the saints there must come the rebellion (*apostasion*).which means a forsaking. The KJV calls it a falling away. That sounds to me like a great rejection of the faith. Throughout my life various people have told me it was happening. They would point to Europe's empty churches or the decrease in church attendance in the USA as evidence of it. But the gospel is still advancing around the world. The number of believers in Christ in the USA is on the rise for the first time in decades. Because of Charlie Kirk's faithful witness, there was a record church attendance last Sunday. In some countries, multitudes are coming to Christ. The gospel will in our lifetime be published in every language on earth. Jesus said that would happen before He returns (Matthew 24:14^{vii}). So, we have somewhat mixed signals in the world today. The falling away does not seem to be worldwide, and yet a number of other signs seem to be coming together, such as the world having access to the Scriptures in their own languages.

As an aside, I think worldwide publishing of the Scriptures is one of the many signs that the Bible is divinely inspired. If there is a God who loves us and wants us to know what He has done to make us right with Him, then it follows that He would see that his message was available to everyone. Of course, there are many other reasons to place our faith in Scripture, but that is one that lines up with the return of Christ.

The second event that must happen before the Lord's return for us is that the man of lawlessness must be revealed, the son of destruction.^{viii} The term lawlessness is defined by John in 1 John 3:4^{ix} as practicing sin. Vines dictionary of Greek terms proposes that this is the powers of darkness trying to overthrow God. We can see this at work in our world in the way immoral teaching is trying to capture the minds of our youth in the public education system. That is why we support Christian education. I have been praying for decades that a nationwide alternative would be made available. Our governor has been trying to end the tax credit for alternative education even though it benefits children and the state. John said the spirit of antichrist is already in the world (1 John 4:3^x). We see that in giddy rejoicing over the martyrdom of Charlie Kirk.

Verse 4 describes how he will be revealed. He will exalt himself and sit in the temple of God proclaiming he is God. We see this taking place in Revelation 13:1-7^{xi}, Daniel 7:25^{xii}; and 9:27^{xiii}. This seems to take place around the midpoint of the tribulation for his power is for 42 months, half of the great tribulation period (Revelation 13:5).

This event of his self-proclamation to be God and sitting in the temple of God will be the sign that he is the Antichrist. Paul is saying that must happen before our gathering together unto Christ in the sky after which begins the day of the Lord. As we saw before,

the day of the Lord in the Old Testament is a day of destruction and justice from the hand of God. This is spelled out in Revelation chapters 16 through 18 as the bowls of wrath that affect the entire world. The day of the Lord is described by Isaiah as a day when the Lord alone will be exalted (Isaiah 2:10-12^{xiv}), and a day of destruction from the Almighty (Isaiah 13:6^{xv}), in which sinners will be destroyed from the land (Isaiah 13:9^{xvi}).

Since the Antichrist must be revealed by sitting in the temple and calling himself God, which lines up with Revelation 13, that leads me to believe the day of the Lord is the last half of the tribulation, when the vials of wrath which affect the whole world are poured out, which is the 42 months of the Antichrist's reign. For this to happen it seems that the Jewish temple must be rebuilt. Paul wrote this before the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Romans.

The Muslim Dome of the Rock is where I believe the ancient holy place was.^{xvii} The Temple Institute in Jerusalem has prepared all the necessary furnishings for a new temple. Only in the last month have I heard an Israeli government official talk about a third temple. The ancient route that people took up to the temple has just been excavated. The pool of Siloam is being uncovered which would serve as a large mikvah for ceremonial cleansing before walking up the excavated road to the temple. A practice run of sacrificing a red Heffer for the ashes of ceremonial cleansing has taken place this summer. If my understanding is correct, and that is a BIG if, then the next event should be a seven-year agreement to rebuild the temple followed by the trumpets of tribulation beginning which brings destruction to portions of the earth. At the moment it does not look like it can start, and yet things are falling into place for it to come to pass.

⁵ *Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?*

1 Thessalonians 2:5 Paul reminds the Thessalonians that when he was there for those three weeks he taught on this subject. That would indicate that this is an important Christian doctrine: that the Antichrist will be revealed before the saints are gathered unto Christ. Revelation 13 tells us that the Antichrist makes war on the saints and overcomes them. That must mean that he physically kills them, not that he overtakes their faith in Christ. To die in the Lord is the final victory for us. It was Jesus who said, "*Do not fear those who kill the body, but rather fear him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell.*" Matthew 10:28 It seems Paul was surprised that they did not remember this.

⁶ *And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.* ⁷ *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.* 2 Thessalonians 2:6,7 Paul had told them what is restraining the Antichrist. My guess would be the Holy Spirit, but it may be an angel or Jesus. Satan would like the Antichrist to come now. He hates seeing souls come to Christ and finding freedom. He is working right now to keep people from coming to faith using the lie he used at first, "*You will be like God*" (Genesis 3:5^{xviii}). He lies about what will satisfy our souls. But when the power that restrains this person from stepping into that role is out of the way, he will be revealed by declaring he is God in the temple of God. Satan will empower him to do signs and wonders (2:9^{xix}; Revelation 13:2^{xx}). Miracles do not authenticate a person to be godly.

Some people use this verse as a reason to lean toward pretribulation rapture. They reason that the one who restrains is the Holy Spirit and that being taken out of the way means the church is raptured. However, there are saints in the tribulation. They would never become saints if the Holy Spirit was gone. If the Holy Spirit is taken out of the

earth there could be no believers here (John 16:8^{xxi}). And yet, throughout Revelation the text speaks of saints, the redeemed, and God's servants. Taken out of the way or no longer restraining does not necessarily mean removed from the earth, but simply no longer hindering this man from taking power.

The point of this verse is that God is in control of the times and seasons. The Antichrist will not come and begin those last three and a half years until the time which God has preordained. When it happens, we will know it is the perfect time for it to happen. With the events of the trumpets in the first half of the tribulation devastating portions of the earth and sea along with the three angels of Revelation 14 declaring the gospel and what is to come, we will all be very busy welcoming a great harvest of souls (Revelation 7:13,14^{xxii}). And we will look up because our redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28^{xxiii}). The Antichrist will be trying to eliminate us. We overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimonies, not loving our lives to our death (Revelation 12:11^{xxiv}).

The rebellion against God along with the man of lawlessness declaring himself to be God means the trumpet that calls us home will soon sound. As Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke, ²⁵ *"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."* Luke 21:25-28

That sounds to me like events during the first half of the tribulation. A third of the vegetation of the earth is burned up. A third of the oceans become like blood. An asteroid poisons a third of the water. Light from the heavens is diminished by one third. Then it gets worse. Flying scorpion like creatures torment those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Four angels lead an army of demonic looking horse-like creatures to slay a third of humanity. No wonder the world will be open to a leader who claims to have supernatural powers. They will be desperate. They will not realize they are ushering in the bowls of wrath that will bring judgment to the entire planet.

Matthew records it a bit differently but notice the similarity of the powers of heaven being shaken. ²⁹ *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* Matthew 24:29-31 When did Jesus say this would happen? Immediately after the tribulation of those days! Put that together with the first harvest in Revelation 14 which comes right after the revealing of the Antichrist and his war against us, and you can see how this all fits together, the Olivet Discourse, Daniel, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and the whole of Revelation.

The mystery of lawlessness was already working in the world when Paul wrote. It is the denial that Jesus came in the flesh to save us. Some Gnostics taught that Jesus did not have a physical body. It is also the denial that God exists. In our day it takes a deliberate attempt not to see the overwhelming evidence in creation (Romans 1:20^{xxv}). It

is to worship and serve the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25^{xxvi}). To deny there is a God removes any reason or basis for laws. Anarchists violently try to remove all authority. If they could succeed there would only be chaos, and that is the goal of Satan for that brings the most death and destruction. The other side of the same coin is megalomania, one man wanting to rule the world. That results in death and destruction as well. Nations are God's idea (Genesis 10:5^{xxvii}; Deuteronomy 32:8^{xxviii}). He set their boundaries. The Antichrist is a megalomaniac and will use anarchists to create chaos.

⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 God is a god of order and law. His nature is what is good and right. What is opposed to his perfect nature is evil and wrong. The lawless one will oppose all that we know to be good, all the good we see in God's nature. He will be revealed when declaring himself to be god, he blatantly breaks the first commandment and insists that everyone worship him (Exodus 20:3^{xxix}). Once you break that one, breaking all the others follows. He makes war on the saints and is allowed to overcome us (Revelation 13:7^{xxx}). But even though he is empowered by Satan, the breath of Jesus will destroy him. Jesus' appearance will obliterate his power. Revelation tells us the sword that comes from Jesus' mouth will destroy those who come against Him at the battle of Armageddon, but the beast/Antichrist and false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:15^{xxxi}, 20^{xxxii}; Isaiah 11:4^{xxxiii}).

Why did Paul want the Thessalonians to know all this? He wanted them to rest assured the rapture had not come. Perhaps he did not know it would come to pass so far into the future. It certainly clarifies what we are to watch for, and yet he does not give us an exact time. Many people believed Jesus was coming back last Tuesday. It is another of those false teachings rampant on the internet. They did not know the teaching of Paul in this passage. If Jesus had come last Tuesday, I sure would have been happy. But really it just shows how ignorant of God's Word the public is. How timely that we came to this passage that addresses the subject the very week of this false prediction. (See verse 3!)

Paul reminds us to be awake and prepared for that day. We never know when He might call us home. Satan plots the future, God determines the future. He is in control. Nothing can surprise Him. He will see us through whatever storms we face in life (Psalm 46:1^{xxxiv}). *² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* Psalm 18:2

How do we get ready for that day. Obeying the first and second great commands are the main way. Love God with your all and your neighbor. Die to yourself daily to serve our gracious king. Share Jesus with those who have searching hearts. Be prepared to give an answer for the hope He has put in our hearts (1 Peter 3:15^{xxxv}). Equip yourself with the Word of God. May God ^{11b} *make you worthy of his calling and fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,* 2 Thessalonians 1:11b Maranatha!

Questions: 1 What are the two comings in this chapter? 2 What do the terms "gathering together" and "day of the Lord" mean? 3 What two things must happen before the rapture? 4 How will the second sign be made clear? 5 What happens on the day of the Lord? 6 Why is verse 6 and 7 hard to interpret? 7 How do the Gospel passages line up with our passage today? 8 What is the mystery of lawlessness? 9 Which commandment does the Antichrist break? 10 How does this passage speak to us?

ⁱ John MacArthur: The struggle came, Paul indicates once again (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–5:11), because they were confused with regard **to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ** and believers’ **gathering together to Him**. Though Paul used two expressions, he actually had one event in mind, not two. The Greek syntax uses only one article with the two nouns, making it clear that two complementary elements of one event are in view

ⁱⁱ **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

ⁱⁱⁱ **1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

^{iv} **1 John 4:1 (ESV)**

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

^v **Matthew 24:23-28 (ESV)**

²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

^{vi} **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

^{vii} **Matthew 24:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

^{viii} Some people interpret these two signs as only applying to the day of the Lord and not our gathering together to Christ. In other words, they think Paul is saying that their suffering cannot be in the day of the Lord because those events have not happened. Yet the revealing of the Antichrist is halfway through the tribulation period, all of which they refer to as the day of the Lord. How would knowing a halfway sign help? The question is if Paul is referring to these events before the rapture, or the day of the Lord, or both. I think only the last makes sense.

^{ix} **1 John 3:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

^x **1 John 4:3 (ESV)**

³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

^{xi} **Revelation 13:1-7 (ESV)**

¹ And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” ⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.

⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,

^{xii} **Daniel 7:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

^{xiii} **Daniel 9:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

^{xiv} **Isaiah 2:10-12 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty. ¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. ¹² For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;

^{xv} **Isaiah 13:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

^{xvi} **Isaiah 13:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.

^{xvii} I am aware of alternate theories, over the Gihon spring, another spot on the temple mount, etc. but having seen the footings carved in the stone that it is in the Dome of the Rock and how they match the descriptions of the Holy of Holies in Scripture, I lean toward that being the actual site. Temple Institute verbally agreed.

^{xviii} **Genesis 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

^{xix} **2 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)**

⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,

^{xx} **Revelation 13:2 (ESV)**

² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

^{xxi} **John 16:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

^{xxii} **Revelation 7:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

^{xxiii} **Luke 21:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

^{xxiv} **Revelation 12:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

^{xxv} **Romans 1:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

^{xxvi} **Romans 1:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

^{xxvii} **Genesis 10:5 (ESV)**

⁵ From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

^{xxviii} **Deuteronomy 32:8 (ESV)**

⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.

^{xxix} **Exodus 20:3 (ESV)**

³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

^{xxx} **Revelation 13:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,

^{xxxi} **Revelation 19:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

^{xxxii} **Revelation 19:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he

deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

xxxiii **Isaiah 11:4 (ESV)**

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

xxxiv **Psalms 46:1 (ESV)**

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

xxxv **1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,