

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Introduction

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were the first letters he wrote and are our earliest Christian literature. The purposes of these letters were to reveal the great Biblical doctrine of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, encourage believers with this truth, and correct false teaching of those who opposed it, in particular, the view that believers will experience the Tribulation or Day of the Lord.



The Rapture is the believer's "blessed hope" ([Titus 2.13](#)), the resurrection of the Church, the body of Christ. This truth was unknown by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus did not reveal it in His earthly ministry and Peter and the Eleven knew nothing of it. The ascended, glorified Lord disclosed it to Paul alone. This doctrine was the main subject Paul taught the Thessalonians after they had responded to the gospel. Evidently, God desired the Rapture to be revealed in Christianity's earliest writings. If we are to learn from Paul and follow his example towards the Thessalonians, this foundational truth should be taught to all believers soon after they have believed his gospel ([1 Corinthians 15.1-4](#)).

Believing the Pre-Tribulational Rapture is not essential for salvation. However, its acceptance is necessary for Christian maturity and essential for Christian obedience. God *commanded* believers to encourage one another with the truth of the Rapture. Thus, one cannot obey Christ without obeying this command. This study will examine Paul's earliest

letters to learn what God would have us to know and do regarding this remarkable subject.

Background

Paul visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey as a result of God's supernatural intervention directing him westward. Stopping in Troas, he had intended ([πειράζω](#), imperfect, "kept trying") to move east to Bithynia (in northern Asia Minor, now Turkey) but the Holy Spirit forbade him ([Acts 16.6-7](#)). In the evening, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia, who implored him to come help them ([Acts 16.9-10](#)). Obeying the vision, Paul went to Philippi, the capital of Macedonia, named for Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. On a Sabbath, he encountered a group of Jewish women gathered for prayer on a riverbank. Paul approached, and taught them the Word of God. One of the women, Lydia,¹ a successful merchant of fine fabrics, believed Paul's gospel and was saved ([Acts 16.13-15](#)). Later in Philippi, Paul and Silas made enemies of men who controlled a young girl possessed by a spirit of divination by removing her demon. For this, they were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. At midnight, while singing praises to God, God caused an earthquake and freed them and the other prisoners from their chains ([Acts 16.25-26](#)). Fearing their escape (Rome held jailers responsible for their prisoners with their lives), the jailer was about to kill himself when Paul intervened. This resulted in the jailer and his family believing the gospel ([Acts 16.29-32](#)).

Leaving Philippi, Paul traveled south to Thessalonica. It is commonly believed he spent about a month there ([Acts 17.2](#)). It seems Paul must have ministered to the Jews on the Sabbath and on the other days of the week to Gentiles. During this time he worked to provide for his own needs ([1 Thessalonians 2.9](#); [2 Thessalonians 3.8](#); [Philippians 4.16](#)). Jewish priority ceased with his Roman imprisonment ([Ephesians 3.1](#)). After this, Paul went no longer to Jews first. God blessed his ministry among

the Thessalonians: some Jews believed his gospel and a great number of Gentiles believed, including several prominent women ([Acts 17.3-4](#)). Despite the response, trouble again found the great apostle, as it had in Philippi ([Acts 16.16-40](#)). Some Jews, angry over his message, incited a mob and forced him to leave ([Acts 17.5-10](#)).

Paul's Message

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians reveal a godly Christian church. This demonstrates the power of the gospel to change lives for the Thessalonians were formerly idolaters ([1 Thessalonians 1.9](#)). His words reveal great love and tenderness toward them. Little correction is found in the letters. They were model believers.

Normally, Paul's letters include little prophetic content. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles ([Romans 11.13](#)) and prophecy in God's plan primarily concerns Israel. But his letters to the Thessalonians were an exception. The doctrinal content of the letters is prophecy ([1 Thessalonians 4.13-5.11](#); [2 Thessalonians 2.1-3.5](#)) and Paul gave the Thessalonians a solid foundation in things to come. In particular, he revealed the previously unknown doctrine of the [ἀρπάζω](#), the Rapture. Most of Paul's converts were Gentiles, former idol worshipers ([1 Thessalonians 1.9](#)). They knew nothing of Jewish prophecies much less the unknown truth of the Rapture. A statement of the Lord's return is found in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians ([1 Thessalonians 1.10](#), [2.19-20](#), [3.11-13](#), [4.13-18](#), [5.9-11](#)) and in two of the three chapters of 2 Thessalonians ([2 Thessalonians 1.6-10](#), [2.1](#), [8](#)).

Date and Location

Paul wrote these letters about 52-53 A.D. from Corinth where he ministered a year and a half ([Acts 18.11](#)). Due to Jewish persecution, Paul and Silas escaped from the persecution in Thessalonica at night and journeyed to Berea ([Acts 17.10](#)).

Paul had more success with the Jews of Berea than in Thessalonica ([Acts 17.10-12](#)). When the Jews of Thessalonica learned Paul had gone to Berea they followed and stirred up mobs against him ([Acts 17.13](#)). Paul departed for Athens and left Silas and Timothy to minister to the Bereans ([Acts 17.14-15](#)). After preaching to the Athenians on Mars Hill, he traveled to Corinth where he stayed a year and a half ([Acts 18.1, 5. 11](#)). This was probably in the spring of 52 AD to the fall of 53 AD. Later, Timothy joined him ([1 Thessalonians 3.1-2, 6](#)). We know the letter was written from Corinth, not Athens, because Silas and Timothy had rejoined Paul ([1 Thessalonians 1.1](#) ; [Acts 18.1, 5](#)). Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians from Corinth shortly after his first letter for Silas had reunited with him ([2 Thessalonians 1.1](#)). Silas disappeared from Paul's company after the second missionary journey as Barnabas had after the first.

Comment

ΠΡΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΕΙΣ²

[1Th 1:1](#) Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.

[1Th 1:2](#) Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν μνεΐαν ποιούμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν ἡμῶν,

[1Th 1:3](#) ἀδιαλείπτως μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν,

[1Th 1:4](#) εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν,

[1Th 1:5](#) ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πληροφορία πολλῇ, καθὼς οἴδατε οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν ἐν ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς·

[1Th 1:6](#) καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου, δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς πνεύματος ἁγίου,

[1Th 1:7](#) ὥστε γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς τύπον πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ.

[1Th 1:8](#) ἀφ' ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ Ἀχαΐᾳ, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελέλυθεν, ὥστε μὴ χρεῖαν ἔχειν ἡμᾶς λαλεῖν τι·

With companions Silvanus (a.k.a. Silas) and Timothy, Paul followed up their ministry to the Thessalonians with a letter of encouragement. They greeted and conveyed thankfulness to God for them and let them know they were in their prayers (vv. 1-2). Paul declared the church of the Thessalonians was “in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ (ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ). What a great address! The next time someone asks you where your church is, tell them, “it is located in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” God has placed us in Christ, in the heavenlies ([Ephesians 1.3](#)). That is our positional location and destiny.

Time and again Paul wrote of the trinity of faith, hope, and love or combinations of these virtues (v. 3; cf. [1 Thessalonians 5.8](#); [Romans 5.2, 5](#); [1 Corinthians 13.13](#); [2 Corinthians 8.7, 10.15](#); [Galatians 5.5-6, 22](#); [Ephesians 1.15, 3.17, 6.23](#); [Colossians 1.4, 23](#); [1 Timothy 1.14, 6.10-11](#); [2 Timothy 1.13](#); [Titus 3.15](#); [Philemon 1.5](#)). Paul reiterated that the gospel had come to them not only in word but in power with the Holy Spirit (v. 5). The gospel—not signs and miracles—is God’s power for His Church. It alone can give life and light to those who will believe it ([Romans 1.16](#)).



Paul noted they had become followers of them ([μιμηταὶ](#)) and that the Thessalonians had received and followed their message “in much affliction” (ἐν [θλίψει](#) πολλῇ), i.e., distress, tribulation (v. 6). No doubt this referred to the tumult fomented by the Jews to incite a mob to attack Jason’s house ([Acts 17.5-9](#)) and other incidents. Paul’s word [μιμητής](#) for “follower” (KJV) means to imitate or copy. It is the word from which comes “mimic” and “mimeograph.” Throughout his letters, Paul commanded believers to “imitate” or to “copy” him ([1 Corinthians 4.16, 11.1](#); [Ephesians 5.1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1.6, 2.14](#); [Hebrews 6.12](#)).³ No other apostle did this. The Thessalonians had responded and became godly examples ([τύπων](#)) to all in Macedonia (northern Greece) and Achaia (southern Greece).

[1Th 1:9](#) αὐτοὶ γὰρ περὶ ἡμῶν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὁποῖαν εἴσοδον ἔσχομεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ,

According to Luke, Paul was “explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’” ([Acts 17.3](#)). Some of the Jews Paul addressed with this message responded. But his greatest success was among Gentiles ([Acts 17.4](#)). Thus, the primary recipients of Paul’s letter were Gentile believers. Paul wrote they had turned from

idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9). He would not have addressed Jews in such manner.⁴

[1Th 1:10](#) καὶ ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυθόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης.

This is the first verse that reveals the nature of Paul's teaching beyond the gospel ([1 Corinthians 15.1-4](#)). The hope for all who have believed Paul's gospel is the return of Christ. At His return for His Church, He will transform our mortal flesh into bodies designed for eternity. At this time the Lord will deliver believers who are alive from God's wrath: the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation.

The Rapture

Since we have a reference to the Lord's return, let us pause to examine the subject. Hostility to the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture is increasing. Some opposition comes from non-Christians, which is understandable. But sadly, most opposition to this divine truth comes from those who claim to be Christians. Ultimately, the source of this hostility is Satan. Increased antagonism to this key Christian doctrine indicates the Lord's return is near—for Satan's purpose is to confuse, sow discord, and deny believers of their hope.

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture is as sound a doctrine as Paul's gospel ([1 Corinthians 15.1-4](#)). The Scriptures provide overwhelming evidence of it. The reason for opposition is twofold: 1) ignorance of the Scriptures (particularly Paul's letters) and 2) unbelief. Most refuse to accept it because they *do not want* to. For them, tradition and religion is dearer than the Scriptures. Like that generation of Jews at Kadesh who refused to enter Canaan ([Hebrews 3.11](#), [4.3](#)), they refuse God's rest of the Rapture. As a result, they wander in a wilderness of unbelief.

While many verses affirm the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, only a couple are needed to prove it: [1 Corinthians 15.51](#) and our present verse, [1 Thessalonians 1.10](#), will suffice. [1 Corinthians 15.51](#) proves the *fact* of the Rapture. Paul stated the Lord's return and our resurrection (the Rapture) was a "secret" ([μυστήριον](#)). The advent of Christ was not a secret. Throughout the Old Testament, the Jewish prophets taught it. The Lord taught it in His earthly ministry ([Matthew 24.30, 44](#)). Resurrection was not a secret. The Pharisees believed it and Jesus taught it. Martha knew about it and believed it ([John 11.23-25](#)). If Paul declared the Lord's return and our resurrection was a "secret," it can mean but one thing: it was a secret. Paul's teaching revealed something new—something God had kept hidden until He revealed it to Paul.

[1 Thessalonians 1.10](#) provides the *timing* of the Rapture: it occurs before the Tribulation. Paul wrote, "Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης,"—"Jesus, the one who delivers (or rescues) us from the coming wrath."⁵

What did Jews understand theologically? Jewish theology was based upon two great revelations proclaimed by the prophets. One was the earthly Messianic kingdom God had promised Israel. Most Christians pray for it (whether they realize it or not) every Sunday ([Matthew 6.10](#)). The other was the Day of the Lord. Technically, the Day of the Lord is composed of three elements: 1) God's wrath upon the earth, 2) the Messianic kingdom, and 3) the creation of a new heavens and earth. However, God's wrath is the subject most associated with the Day of the Lord. God revealed to David (c. 1,000 B.C.) that He would pour His wrath upon Israel and the nations ([Psalm 2.5, 9](#)). Notice Israel and the Gentile nations were the subjects of God's wrath—not the Church. Not one verse of Scripture teaches God will exercise wrath upon the Church, the body of Christ.

Every Jew knew the prophecies related to the Day of the Lord and Israel's kingdom. Peter proclaimed them on the day of

Pentecost. Peter recognized that God's gift of the Holy Spirit was a sign of the kingdom. He expected *all* of Joel's prophecy to be fulfilled shortly— including God's wrath. This is why he quoted the entire prophecy ([Acts 2.16-21](#) cf. [Luke 3.16-17](#)).

The chart below outlines Jewish theology. The verses noted comprise only a small sample of hundreds of verses in the Scriptures about these subjects. Interwoven into this framework were prophecies of the Messiah—the Suffering Savior and Reigning King.

Summary of Jewish Theology as Revealed By the Prophets	
The Wrath of God on the Earth (The Day of the Lord—The Tribulation)	The Kingdom of God on the Earth
Isaiah 2.20-21 ; 24.19-23 , 34.1-3 , Jeremiah 30.5-7 ; Zephaniah 1 ; Joel 2.1-11 , 30-31 ; Zechariah 14.1-7	Isaiah 2.2-5 ; 9.6-7 , 11.1-16 ; Jeremiah 23.3-8 , 30.8-24 ; Ezekiel 36.21-38 ; 37.1-28 ; Zechariah 14.8-11

The Day of the Lord, the Tribulation, God's wrath, is something no believer of Paul's gospel ([1 Corinthians 15.1-4](#)) will experience. Paul stated as clearly as language can express that the Lord will rescue believers from this dreadful time. The Lord's return that Paul taught was not the Lord's advent revealed by the prophets. It was a new and previously unknown event, which was why he called it a "secret" (μυστήριον). The purpose of the Rapture is twofold: 1) the salvation of the believer's body with a resurrection body (the believer's glorification, cf. [Philippians 3.20-21](#)) and 2) the rescue of believers who are alive at the time from the wrath God will bring upon the earth. Truly, this is a blessed hope!

Excursus: The Wrath of God

The word [ὀργή](#) occurs 34x in the New Testament. Another word for wrath is [θυμός](#) and occurs 18x in [Luke 4.28](#); [Acts 19.28](#); [Romans 2.8](#); [2 Corinthians 12.20](#); [Galatians 5.20](#); [Ephesians](#)

[4.31](#); [Colossians 3.8](#); [Hebrews 11.27](#); [Revelation 12.12](#), [14.8](#), [10](#), [19](#), [15.1](#), [7](#), [16.1](#), [16.19](#), [18.3](#), [19.15](#). Paul always used θυμός to refer to human rather than divine wrath. Generally, ὀργή indicates intense, abiding anger while θυμός impulsive fury. However, John, in Revelation, used both words synonymously in reference to God. The below chart shows how the word ὀργή is distributed.

Gospels	Matthew 3.7 ; Mark 3.5 ; Luke 3.7 , 21.23 ; John 3.36
Paul	Romans 1.18 , 2.5 , 8 , 3.5 , 4.15 , 5.9 , 9.22 , 12.19 , 13.4 , 5 Ephesians 2.3 , 4.31 , 5.6 Colossians 3.6 , 8 1 Thessalonians 1.10 , 2.16 , 5.9 1 Timothy 2.8 Hebrews 3.11 , 4.3
James	James 1.19 , 20
John	Revelation 6.16 , 17 , 11.18 , 14.10 , 16.19 , 19.15

Paul used the term ὀργή more than any other writer: 22x including Hebrews. The next most frequent use was by John in Revelation: 6x.

As noted above, the wrath of God revealed by the prophets referred most often to the Day of the Lord. This Day was revealed in the Gospels and unfolded most completely in Revelation. The Gospels cite God's wrath in the Matthew and Luke passages noted above. In Revelation, all citations of God's wrath refer to the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation (cf. [Revelation 1.10](#)). Paul noted this apocalyptic wrath 7x: [Romans 2.5](#), [12.19](#); [Ephesians 5.6](#); [Colossians 3.6](#); [1 Thessalonians 1.10](#), [2.16](#), [5.9](#).

[1Th 2:1](#) Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν,

[1Th 2:2](#) ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες καθὼς οἶδατε ἐν Φιλίπποις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι.

[1Th 2:3](#) ἡ γὰρ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ,

[1Th 2:4](#) ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκιμάσαμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν.

[1Th 2:5](#) οὔτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἴδατε, οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, θεὸς μάρτυς,

[1Th 2:6](#) οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν, οὔτε ἀφ' ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ' ἄλλων,

[1Th 2:7](#) δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι· ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν ἥπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα·

[1Th 2:8](#) οὕτως ὁμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν εὐδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε.

Paul recounted how he and his companions had come to the Thessalonians after suffering in Philippi and that they had proclaimed the gospel in the face of much opposition (vv. 1-2). Paul constantly had to defend his apostleship and ministry from persecutors, detractors, false teachers, and even fellow believers. The letter reveals Paul's exemplary character and behavior towards the Thessalonians. His exhortation was not with deceit ([λάνης](#)) or with impure motives ([ἀκαθαρσίας](#)) or guile ([δόλῳ](#)) (v. 3). He did not use flattery ([κολακεία](#)), was not motivated by greed ([πλεονεξία](#)) (v. 5), and did not seek glory or honor ([δόξα](#)) (v. 6). On the contrary, he came with gentleness ([ἥπιος](#)) as a nursing mother (v. 7). He was willing to give his life for them for they had become dear to him (v. 8). His exemplary character and behavior are worthy to be imitated by all Christians.

[1Th 2:9](#) Μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον· νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαί τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

[1Th 2:10](#) ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν,

[1Th 2:11](#) καθάπερ οΐδατε ὡς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ

[1Th 2:12](#) παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι, εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν.

Paul reminded the Thessalonians how he and his companions had labored and endured hardship in ministering to them, working “night and day” (νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας) and proclaimed the gospel to them. Paul was careful to ensure he placed no financial burden on the Thessalonians; they worked and paid their own way. Paul’s actions were always above board. He gave no opportunity for critics to accuse him of profiting from ministry. The fact that Paul and his companions found employment and worked night and day indicates they spent more than a few weeks in Thessalonica. Paul kept reminding them to recall (Μνημονεύετε, v. 9, μάρτυρες, v.10, οΐδατε, v. 11) their upright behavior towards them and their exhortation and encouragement to live godly lives.

[1Th 2:13](#) Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

[1Th 2:14](#) ὑμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων

[1Th 2:15](#) τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων, καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων, καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων,

[1Th 2:16](#) κωλύοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε. ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος.

[1Th 2:17](#) Ἡμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ’ ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας, προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ, περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ.

[1Th 2:18](#) διότι ἠθελήσαμεν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δίς, καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ Σατανᾶς.

[1Th 2:19](#) τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως—ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς—ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ;

[1Th 2:20](#) ὑμεῖς γάρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρά.

The apostle expressed constant thankfulness that the Thessalonians had received his teaching not as the “word of men” but as “the Word of God” (v. 13). No clearer indicator of the Holy Spirit’s influence is found than this. The Word of God is “alive and powerful” ([Hebrews 4.12](#)). Once received and mixed with faith, it begins to transform a believer into the image of Christ ([Romans 8.28](#); [Philippians 1.6](#)). The Thessalonians joined the ranks of faithful believers, i.e., became “copies” (μιμηταὶ) of Christ along with the churches in Judea (v. 14) who were suffering persecution for their faith.

Concerning their Jewish persecutors, Paul declared they had killed the Messiah, the prophets, and were now persecuting Paul and his companions (vv. 14-15). Specifically, these men opposed and hindered Paul from taking the gospel to Gentiles so they might be saved (v. 16). Paul declared that they were acting “to fill up their sins always” (εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε). As a result, “wrath had come upon them at the end” (ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος). Paul’s statement is to be understood in the context of the Day of the Lord. Paul expected the Lord to return in his lifetime and that unbelieving Jews would experience His wrath, the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation. Luke’s account of their encounter with Elymas (Bar-Jesus), who attempted to thwart Paul from sharing the gospel with the Roman official, Sergius Paulus ([Acts 13.6-12](#)) was a type of unbelieving and rebellious Israel. Elymas’ blindness was temporary as Israel’s will be. Paul wrote that all Israel would be saved ([Romans 11.26](#)). This referred to every Jew who is alive right before the Lord returns (cf. [Matthew 23.37-39](#)).

Paul longed to see the Thessalonians and had attempted to come to them more than once but Satan had hindered their travel (v. 17-18). These verses reveal that Satan can thwart Christian ministry. The chapter closes with the precious statement that the Thessalonians Paul had led to the Lord were their hope, joy, and crown (v. 19-20). What a joyful day it will be when believers to whom we have witnessed and ministered are present with the Lord at His coming!

[1Th 3:1](#) Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκήσαμεν καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι,

[1Th 3:2](#) καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν

[1Th 3:3](#) τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις. αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα·

[1Th 3:4](#) καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἤμεν, προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτι μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἴδατε.

[1Th 3:5](#) διὰ τοῦτο κάγω μηκέτι στέγων ἔπεμψα εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν, μή πως ἐπείρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν.

Paul was heavily engaged in disputing with the Jews in Athens ([Acts 17.17](#)) as well as with the Athenian philosophers ([Acts 17.18-31](#)). During this time, his anxiety for the Thessalonians reached a crisis so that “he could endure no longer” (Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες, v. 1), (διὰ τοῦτο κάγω μηκέτι στέγων” v. 5) As a result, he sent Timothy to check on them because of his deep concern and love.⁶ Specifically, he sent him to strengthen ([στηρίξαι](#)) and encourage ([παρακαλέσαι](#)) them (v. 2) and learn of their condition in the faith (v. 5). Paul also wished them to know that the persecution he was experiencing had been foreseen (v. 3-4; [Acts 9.16, 14.22](#)). He sent Timothy “to establish and encourage you concerning your faith” (εἰς τὸ ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν). This should be the work of all who minister and teach: believers need to understand what they believe, why they believe it, and be encouraged in their

knowledge of the Scriptures.

[1Th 3:6](#) Ἄρτι δὲ ἐλθόντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ' ὑμῶν καὶ εὐαγγελισαμένου ἡμῖν τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν, καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνησίαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς,

[1Th 3:7](#) διὰ τοῦτο παρεκλήθημεν, ἀδελφοί, ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν πίστεως,

[1Th 3:8](#) ὅτι νῦν ζῶμεν ἐὰν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ.

[1Th 3:9](#) τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣν χαίρομεν δι' ὑμᾶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν,

[1Th 3:10](#) νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ δεόμενοι εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν;

[1Th 3:11](#) Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς·

[1Th 3:12](#) ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας, καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς,

[1Th 3:13](#) εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἀγιωσύνῃ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ.

Timothy returned and reported good news to Paul of the Thessalonians' faith and love and their reciprocal desire to see him. Of primary comfort was their *faith* (v. 7)—they were holding to the doctrines learned from Paul. This comforted the apostle in the midst of his own troubles (v. 7) so that he wrote, “because now we *live*—if you stand firm in the Lord” (v. 8). He prayed “night and day” to see them and to “complete the things lacking in your faith.” What things did Paul have in mind?

Paul summarized these concerns in the next few verses and throughout the remainder of the letter: 1) that God would direct his way to them (v. 11), 2) that God might increase ([πλεονάσαι](#)) and abound ([περισεύσαι](#))² their love for one

another (v. 12), 3) that God would establish their hearts blameless in holiness in His coming presence ([παρουσία](#)) with his saints (cf. [1 Thessalonians 2.19](#)). In the next chapter Paul wrote specifically of the procedural aspects of the Lord's return.

[1Th 4:1](#) Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον.

[1Th 4:2](#) οἴδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδώκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.

[1Th 4:3](#) τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας,

[1Th 4:4](#) εἰδέναί ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ,

[1Th 4:5](#) μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν,

[1Th 4:6](#) τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἕκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προείπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα.

[1Th 4:7](#) οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία ἀλλ' ἐν ἁγιασμῷ.

[1Th 4:8](#) τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν καὶ διδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς.

[1Th 4:9](#) Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους·

[1Th 4:10](#) καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς τοὺς ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον,

[1Th 4:11](#) καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν,

[1Th 4:12](#) ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἕξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to continue to excel in the instruction he had given them in living a Christian life (v.

1). Paul's doctrine was not a result of his own initiative; it came "through the Lord Jesus" (διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, v. 2) and "the will of God" (θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 3). The risen Lord commissioned Paul as the "apostle of grace," the "apostle of the Gentiles" ([Romans 11.13](#)) and laid a new foundation of truths we call Christianity ([1 Corinthians 3.10](#) cf. [Acts 11.26](#)). These truths came from his special commission as the apostle of the Gentiles and the revelations he received from the risen Lord. Paul declared he was the "first," the "prototype," and the "pattern" ([πρῶτος](#), [ὑποτύπωσις](#), [1 Timothy 1.15-16](#)) of a new order. He is to Christianity what Abraham and Moses were to Judaism. From Paul come doctrines he called "secrets" (μυστήριον) for prior to him no one knew them. One of these secrets was the Pre-Tribulation Rapture ([1 Thessalonians 4.15](#); [1 Corinthians 15.51](#)).

The intended result of his teaching was "your sanctification" (ὁ ἁγιασμὸς ὑμῶν). Paul warned the Thessalonians to abstain from sexual immorality (v. 3-5) and not live like Gentiles who did not know God. They should avoid cheating one's Christian brother and declared God would punish such behavior (διότι ἔκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, v. 6). Paul adamantly taught believers are under grace and that Christian living operates wholly apart from the Mosaic Law. This glorious status does not give believers license to sin. On the contrary, Paul taught God had chosen believers not for impurity but for holiness and warned that one who rejected this instruction was not rejecting man but God and the indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 7-8). All true believers wish to please the One who died and rose from the dead for them and gave them eternal life.

The Doctrinal Content of the First Letter: The Order of the Rapture ([1 Thessalonians 4.13-5.11](#))

[1Th 4:13](#) Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπησθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα.

[1Th 4:14](#) εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ.

[1Th 4:15](#) τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας·

[1Th 4:16](#) ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον,

[1Th 4:17](#) ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα.

[1Th 4:18](#) ὥστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις.

Verses 13-18 reveal the order of the Lord's return for all who have believed Paul's gospel. Paul declared he did not wish the Thessalonians to be ignorant ([ἀγνοεῖν](#)) about believers were "asleep" ([κοιμωμένων](#), v. 13). This word is used for "sleep" and euphemistically for "death." It is found 19x in the New Testament and Paul used it 10x ([1 Corinthians 7.39](#), [11.30](#), [15.6](#), [18](#), [20,51](#); [1 Thessalonians 4.13-15](#)). All of Paul's uses were the latter sense: for death. Half of Paul's uses referred to the Rapture. The reason Paul did not want the Thessalonians to be ignorant was that he did not want them to grieve (over death) as οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα, "the rest who have no hope" (v. 13). For the unbeliever, death is a subject with extremely heavy baggage. Deep down, every person (even atheists) knows God exists. Every person knows he is accountable to Him. This is the source of man's fear of death. Death means an encounter with the holy, righteous God. Believers, while not welcoming death, have no reason to fear it. Every true believer lives with the faith that Christ has paid for his sins and that God has clothed him with Christ's righteousness ([Romans 3.22](#), [26](#)). Every believer has God's promise of resurrection and eternal life. The believer knows his fate and the fate of those who have trusted Christ. This is the great divide between believers and unbelievers.

In verse 14 is Paul's gospel: the death and resurrection of Christ for our sins (cf. [1 Corinthians 15.1-4](#)). Herein lies assurance of salvation. All who have *believed* Christ has died and risen from the dead for them have salvation as a present possession and rest in the hope of resurrection. This salvation is based on trust *alone*, wholly apart from works ([Ephesians 2.8-9](#)). Those who have died (κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ)—literally, “were put asleep through Jesus” and have believed Paul's gospel will participate in the Rapture.

Verse 15 begins Paul's exposition of the order of the Rapture. As noted above, the Rapture was a doctrine God had kept hidden. No one knew about it until the ascended Lord revealed it to Paul. Thus, Paul wrote τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου “for this we are telling you is by the word of the Lord.” This means Paul received the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture by divine revelation. He revealed that when the Lord comes in the air, those who are alive in Christ will not precede those who have died in Christ. Paul's use of “we” in “we who are alive and remain” indicated he thought the Lord would return in his lifetime. Paul was wrong about the timing. God did not reveal His timing to the great apostle. God's timing is a most guarded secret. He tells men *what* will happen but not *when* it will happen. Paul had no idea nearly 20 centuries would elapse. Why has God allowed so much time to pass? The brief answer is that God is merciful. When the Rapture occurs, it will trigger the Day of the Lord—His wrath. He has delayed it for nearly 2,000 years so a maximum number of people might be saved under Paul's glorious gospel of grace. But while hundreds of years have passed, God remains faithful. He keeps His word. When He says something will happen, it will happen.



Behold, I tell you a secret (1
Corinthians 15.51)

The Lord's descent from heaven will occur after three initiating actions: 1) a shout, 2) the voice of an archangel, and 3) the trumpet of God. The Lord will vacate heaven with a shout (κέλευσμα) which will alert heaven to the great event of the resurrection of the Church, the body of Christ. The Greek word translated "shout" is a galvanizing command, e.g., "Now!" Concomitant to the Lord's shout will be the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. These commands signal the rising of the dead in Christ (the body of Christ). Trumpets are instruments that herald action. Historically, they have announced special or celebratory events or signaled troops in battle. This trumpet is called "trumpet of God"—a designation different from the trumpets of Revelation. Paul also called it the "last trumpet" ([1 Corinthians 15.52](#)). It was so named for it heralds completion of the Church, the body Christ. It will signal the celebratory rallying of believers to the Lord who will meet Him in resplendent, eternal, resurrection bodies. This "trumpet of God" has nothing to do with the trumpets of Revelation ([Revelation 8.6](#)) which herald God's judgment. Nothing in Paul's writings on the Rapture contain a hint of judgment. On the contrary, his language is that of glorious

expectation and hope. The book of Revelation concerns Israel and the nations in the last days; the Church is nowhere to be found.

An instant after the dead in Christ are raised, all who are alive in Christ on earth are transformed. We will be snatched from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. The word for “snatched” is [ἄρπαγησόμεθα](#). The verb is a future passive indicative: the subject receives the action. In other words, believers will do nothing. The Lord Himself will seize us, transform us, and cause us to meet Him in the air. Notice this gathering occurs in the air. The Lord does not come to earth as He will in His second coming at the end of the Tribulation ([Acts 1.9-11](#); [Zechariah 14.4](#)). Our meeting with Him will be an eternal one. We will live with Him forever.

Finally, Paul wrote, “παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις” (v. 18). The verb [παρακαλεῖτε](#) is a present active imperative—a command. The present tense indicates ongoing action. Our God-given orders are “keep encouraging one another with these words”—the hope and truth of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture.

Order of the Rapture: Each in his order (1 Corinthians 15.23)	
The Lord descends with a shout with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God	1 Thessalonians 4.16
The dead in Christ rise first	1 Thessalonians 4.16
Those who are alive and remain rise next	1 Thessalonians 4.17
Both groups unite with the Lord in the air to be with Him forever	1 Thessalonians 4.17
We are commanded to comfort one another with this truth	1 Thessalonians 4.18

[1Th 5:1](#) Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρεῖαν

ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι,

[1Th 5:2](#) αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται.

[1Th 5:3](#) ὅταν λέγωσιν· Εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος ὡσπερ ἡ ὠδὶν τῇ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν.

[1Th 5:4](#) ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτῃς καταλάβῃ,

[1Th 5:5](#) πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους·

[1Th 5:6](#) ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ, ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν.

[1Th 5:7](#) οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν, καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν·

[1Th 5:8](#) ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν, ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας·

[1Th 5:9](#) ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

[1Th 5:10](#) τοῦ ἀποθανόντος περὶ ἡμῶν ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν.

[1Th 5:11](#) διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε.

The Deliverance of the Believer From the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord

The conjunctive *Περὶ δὲ* of verse 1 sets this section apart from what Paul wrote in the previous chapter in verses 13-18. Paul explicitly stated members of the Church, the body of Christ, would not experience God's wrath. He wrote that his readers did not need him to write anything regarding the Day of the Lord (v. 1). He had taught them about prophetic events when he was with them. Paul reiterated that the Day of the Lord will come "as a thief in the night" (ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται)—suddenly and unexpectedly (v. 2). The verb *ἔρχεται* is a present middle (deponent) indicative. The present tense "is coming" emphasizes the

ongoing certitude of the event but carries a future sense (cf. [John 14.3](#)). During this time, the mainstream media will be proclaiming “Peace and safety” (εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια). The verb λέγωσιν is a present active subjunctive and has the sense “while they are saying.” A state of complacency will exist in the world. In the midst of this false security, disaster will fall (v. 3). Those who declare “peace and safety” are unbelievers who will fall prey to Satan’s deceit and God’s earthly judgment.

Let the reader compare Paul’s language of verses 3-9 and note the black bold and black bold bracketed pronouns. The bold pronouns refer to unbelievers. The bracketed bold pronouns are believers. A dramatic contrast exists between “they,” “them” (unbelievers) and “we,” “us” (believers). Everything in Paul’s language indicated believers would not experience the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation. “They” (unbelievers) will fall under the “night” of the Tribulation. “We” (believers) are sons of light and will be delivered from darkness (vv. 4-5).

*³ While **they** are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon **them** suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and **they** will not escape. ⁴ But **[you]**, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake **[you]** like a thief; ⁵ for **[you]** are all sons of light and sons of day. **[We]** are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let **[us]** not sleep as others do, but let **[us]** be alert and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since **[we]** are of the day, let **[us]** be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined **[us]** for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

In verses 6-8, Paul counseled the Thessalonians to be “alert

and sober” along with Paul’s familiar trilogy of encouragement: faith, love, and hope. Paul concluded this section by restating believers will not experience God’s wrath (cf. [1 Thessalonians 1.10](#)). He wrote ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν “God has not set us in the place for wrath” (v. 9). The verb [ἔθετο](#) is a second aorist middle indicative. Even though the event of God’s wrath is future, the believer’s deliverance is regarded as a past event. It is certain—God has given His word. In the middle voice, the subject acts in relationship to itself. In this context, it has the sense, “God placed us in respect to Himself not for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This salvation is not deliverance from sin and death—believers possess that already. This salvation is the saving of the body, the acquisition of a resurrection body—the believer’s glorification and rescue from the wrath God will unleash upon the earth.

The Believer’s Threefold Salvation			
Justification	Salvation from the penalty of sin	Past	Past forensic declaration and possession of Christ’s righteousness
Sanctification	Salvation from the power of sin	Present	Present work of the Holy Spirit to deliver us from sin’s power
Glorification	Salvation from the presence of sin	Future	Future deliverance of our mortal bodies from sin and death

Paul closed the section with his gospel, “who died for us” (τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, v. 10). The purpose of His death was “so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.” This refers back to what he wrote in [1 Thessalonians 4.13-17](#). He closed this verse as he had that passage—διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε—to encourage and edify one another with this truth (v. 11). Again, the

verbs παρακαλεῖτε and οἰκοδομεῖτε are imperatives. Paul commanded us to encourage one another with the truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

[1Th 5:12](#) Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς,

[1Th 5:13](#) καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

[1Th 5:14](#) παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους, ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν, μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας.

[1Th 5:15](#) ὁρᾶτε μὴ τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τινι ἀποδῶ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.

[1Th 5:16](#) πάντοτε χαίρετε,

[1Th 5:17](#) ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε,

[1Th 5:18](#) ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε· τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς.

[1Th 5:19](#) τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε,

[1Th 5:20](#) προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε·

[1Th 5:21](#) πάντα δὲ δοκιμάζετε, τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε,

[1Th 5:22](#) ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε.

[1Th 5:23](#) Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθείη.

[1Th 5:24](#) πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.

[1Th 5:25](#) Ἀδελφοί, προσεύχεσθε περὶ ἡμῶν.

[1Th 5:26](#) ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι ἀγίῳ.

[1Th 5:27](#) ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν κύριον ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς.

[1Th 5:28](#) ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μεθ' ὑμῶν.

Paul closed the letter with his usual statements of care, concern, and encouragement. These included a request to appreciate and esteem those who were in charge over them (v. 13) as well as the following pithy counsel (all imperatives). Every believer should strive to live according to these words of wisdom—which read like a creedal statement for Christian

living:

1. Admonish the unruly (v. 14)
2. Encourage the fainthearted (v. 14)
3. Help the weak (v. 14)
4. Be patient with all (v. 14)
5. Repay no one evil for evil (v. 15)
6. Seek good for one another and all (v. 15)
7. Rejoice always (v. 16)
8. Pray without ceasing (v. 17)
9. In everything give thanks (v. 18)
10. Do not quench the Spirit (v. 19)
11. Do not despise prophecy (v. 20)
12. Examine everything carefully (v. 21)
13. Hold to that which is good (v. 21)
14. Abstain from all appearance of evil (v. 22)

Paul wished God to sanctify them and that their spirit, soul, and body ⁸ be preserved blameless at the presence or coming (ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ) of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 23). More encouraging words were, “Faithful is the one calling you who will also make it happen” (v. 24). Paul had long goodbyes: an indicator of his love and tender-heartedness. He asked for their prayers (v. 25) and that they greet one another with a holy kiss (v. 26).

Paul’s final admonition is the strongest statement he gave in regard to the reading of his letters. Paul “adjured” (ἐννοκίζω, present active indicative)⁹ by the Lord that this letter be read to *all* believers (v. 27; cf. [Colossians 4.16](#); [2 Thessalonians 3.14](#)). This was strong language. The verb ἐννοκίζω means to place under an oath. Thus, Paul put the Thessalonians (and us!) under obligation to read 1 Thessalonians. Since the primary doctrine of 1 Thessalonians was the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, every believer is obliged to know this vital truth. It is not too strong to state that Christians who do not follow this charge disobey the Lord

Jesus Christ since we are under orders to know and encourage one another with this doctrine. Paul closed the letter with his singular salutation –Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μεθ’ ὑμῶν (cf. [2 Thessalonians 3.17-18](#))–the apostle of grace!

2 Thessalonians

Introduction

This letter follows up on Paul’s first letter. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians for two purposes: 1) to correct the false teaching that the suffering the Thessalonians were experiencing was the Day of the Lord and 2) to elaborate on the personage of the one who will come and claim to be God. John called this individual the Beast, the Antichrist. Paul’s instruction in these two areas contain the doctrinal content of the letter.

Comment

ΠΡΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΕΙΣ Β

[2Th 1:1](#) Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ·

[2Th 1:2](#) χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Paul and his friends Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy ([1 Thessalonians 1.1](#)) greeted their beloved Thessalonians. Paul saluted his readers with the words which identified his apostleship, “Grace and peace” (χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

[2Th 1:3](#) Εὐχαριστεῖν ὀφείλομεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, καθὼς ἄξιόν ἐστιν, ὅτι ὑπεραυξάνει ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καὶ πλεονάζει ἡ ἀγάπη ἐνὸς ἐκάστου πάντων ὑμῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους,

[2Th 1:4](#) ὥστε αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐγκαυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς ὑμῶν καὶ πίστεως ἐν

πᾶσιν τοῖς διωγμοῖς ὑμῶν καὶ ταῖς θλίψεσιν αἷς ἀνέχεσθε,
[2Th 1:5](#) ἔνδειγμα τῆς δικαίας κρίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ καταξιωθῆναι ὑμᾶς τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑπὲρ ἧς καὶ πάσχετε,
[2Th 1:6](#) εἶπερ δίκαιον παρὰ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι τοῖς θλίβουσιν ὑμᾶς θλίψιν
[2Th 1:7](#) καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ἄνεσιν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ
[2Th 1:8](#) ἐν φλογὶ πυρός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσι θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ,
[2Th 1:9](#) οἵτινες δίκην τίσουσιν ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ,
[2Th 1:10](#) ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐνδοξασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ καὶ θαυμασθῆναι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, ὅτι ἐπιστεύθη τὸ μαρτύριον ἡμῶν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.
[2Th 1:11](#) εἰς ὃ καὶ προσευχόμεθα πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιῶσῃ τῆς κλήσεως ὃ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ πληρῶσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει,
[2Th 1:12](#) ὅπως ἐνδοξασθῇ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν αὐτῷ, κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Paul wrote they “owed” ([ὀφείλομεν](#)) the Thessalonians constant thanks for their abundantly increasing ([ὑπεραυξάνει](#)) faith (or faithfulness) and their love for one another (v. 3). Nothing pleased Paul more than to receive this knowledge. The Thessalonians’ endurance and faithfulness in the midst of persecution ([διωγμοῖς](#)) and distress ([θλίψεσιν](#)) was such a stalwart testimony that Paul boasted about them among the churches ([καυχᾶσθαι](#)¹⁰ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ θεοῦ). Look at the Thessalonians! Can anyone compare? Paul stated such suffering indicated their worthiness of the kingdom of God and that their persecution demonstrated God’s justice of repaying their suffering with His judgment (vv. 5-6 cf. [Romans 12.19](#); [Deuteronomy 32.35](#)). The wrath of God Paul cited was two-fold: His earthly judgment of a world rejecting the gospel (by worship of the Beast) (vv. 7-8) and His eternal punishment of

those who have rejected the truth and His love and mercy (v. 9). The phrase “rest with us” ([ἄνεσιν](#) μεθ’ ἡμῶν) in verse 7 is a reference to the Rapture. The word ἄνεσιν means a relief from persecution. Members of the Church, the body of Christ, will “rest” during the period when Christ will exercise His wrath upon earth. Christ’s return will demonstrate His faithfulness to all who have trusted Him (v. 10). Paul closed this section with his declaration that they prayed for them always (v. 11) and that they might be faithful so that the name of the Lord Jesus would be glorified in them and they in Him (v. 12).

The Doctrinal Content of the Second Letter: Correcting False Teaching that Believers Will Experience the Tribulation ([2 Thessalonians 2.1-3.5](#))

[2Th 2:1](#) Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν,

[2Th 2:2](#) εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς μηδὲ θροεῖσθαι μήτε διὰ πνεύματος μήτε διὰ λόγου μήτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι’ ἡμῶν, ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου.

[2Th 2:3](#) μή τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον· ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας,

[2Th 2:4](#) ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύοντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός.

[2Th 2:5](#) οὐ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ἔτι ὦν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταῦτα ἔλεγον ὑμῖν;

[2Th 2:6](#) καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε, εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ·

[2Th 2:7](#) τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται.

[2Th 2:8](#) καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ,

[2Th 2:9](#) οὗ ἔστιν ἡ παρουσία κατ’ ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους

[2Th 2:10](#) καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ' ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς·

[2Th 2:11](#) καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει,

[2Th 2:12](#) ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.

Chapter two contains the doctrinal portion of the letter. Having greeted and encouraged the Thessalonians, Paul wrote to correct the false teaching that believers will experience the Tribulation and provide more explanation concerning future events. This response had become necessary because someone had forged a letter pretending to be Paul and stated that the suffering the Thessalonians were undergoing was the Day of the Lord.¹¹ Learning of this Paul responded quickly to correct this error. Paul besought ([Ἐρωτῶμεν](#)) the Thessalonians “by the coming or presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and assembling with Him” (ὕπερ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν). Thus, Paul asked the Thessalonians on the basis of the Lord’s sure return and our meeting Him in the air (cf. [1 Thessalonians 4.17](#)) not to be disturbed in their thinking (εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς μήτε θροεῖσθαι) by a spirit, or by a teaching, or by a purported “letter as if from us” (ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι’ ἡμῶν) that the Day of the Lord had come (v. 2). Paul cited three possible sources of deceit: 1) a spirit 2) a teaching 3) a forged letter. Especially interesting is Paul’s citing a “spirit.” This referred to a Satanically controlled spirit attempting to deceive them. From Paul’s words, we can ascertain that Satan is intently interested in deceiving believers as to the truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Paul cautioned to let no one deceive ([ἐξαπατήσῃ](#)) them. To prevent deception, Paul gave them a concrete marker for the appearance of the Day of the Lord. He wrote that before it comes there will first (πρῶτον) come ἡ ἀποστασία. What did this mean?

Examination of Ἀποστασία

The word [ἀποστασία](#) occurs twice in the Scriptures—here and [Acts 21.21](#). In Luke’s record, James and company questioned Paul about what they had heard—that he was teaching Jews to depart from or forsake Moses. The verb associated with ἀποστασία is [ἀφίστημι](#) and occurs 15x in the New Testament. It formed from the preposition ἀπό (away from) and the verb ἵστημι (“stand”—from which we derive words such as “antihistamine).” Paul used this word 5x if we include Hebrews: [2 Corinthians 12.8](#); [1 Timothy 4.1, 6.5](#); [2 Timothy 2.19](#); [Hebrews 3.12](#). The only other writer to use it was Luke (as in the case of the noun): [Luke 2.37, 4:13, 8.13, 13.27](#); [Acts 5.37-38, 12.10, 15.38, 19.9, 22.29](#). The chart below shows the usage of these two words.

	Pauline Passage	Qualifier
ἀποστασία		
2 Thessalonians 2.3	Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the ἀποστασία comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,	Physical withdrawal
Acts 21.21	and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.	“depart from Moses”
ἀφίστημι		
2 Corinthians 12.8	Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.	Physical withdrawal

1 Timothy 4.1	But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,	“depart from the faith”
1 Timothy 6.5	Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (KJV) ¹²	Physical withdrawal ¹³
2 Timothy 2.19	Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.”	“depart from wickedness”
Hebrews 3.12	Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.	“depart from the living God”

1. Only Luke and Paul used the noun and verbs ἀποστασία and ἀφίστημι. Paul used ἀποστασία with the definite article “ἡ”—“ἡ ἀποστασία.” Unlike English, in Greek, a definite article is unnecessary to make a noun definite. A noun can be definite without an article depending on the context. The definite article was used originally as a weak demonstrative pronoun, i.e., “this,” “that,” “these,” “those.” Its inclusion draws attention to the object. Paul’s use of the definite article ἡ with ἀποστασία emphasized its identity: “THE departure.” This “departure” was synonymous with ἀρπάζω of [1 Thessalonians 4.17](#).
2. Paul used the noun ἀποστασία and verb ἀφίστημι to denote

both a physical and a figurative departure and sometimes included a qualifying phrase, e.g., “from x.”

3. Paul did not teach the Thessalonians about apostasy. He taught them the Rapture. He taught that God would remove believers from experiencing the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation ([1 Thessalonians 1.10](#); [5.9](#)). Paul taught them the sequential aspects of the Rapture in [1 Thessalonians 4.13-18](#). His comments in his follow-up letter reinforced this teaching. It makes little interpretive sense for ἡ ἀποστασία to mean “the apostasy” when Paul had made no mention of it before, especially since Paul’s response in 2 Thessalonians is an echo of his teaching of 1 Thessalonians.
4. Early English Bibles translated ἀποστασία as “departure” or “departing” e.g., Tyndale (1525), Coverdale (1535), Matthew (1537), Great (1539), Geneva (1560). Jerome’s Latin Vulgate (circa 400 A.D.) translated ἀποστασία with “discessio,” “departure.” What these men believed about the Rapture is unknown. What can be said is that they translated accurately.
5. Paul’s purpose in writing was to correct the claim of some that the suffering of the Thessalonians was the Day of the Lord. To combat this error, Paul provided a concrete indicator to refute such false teaching: a sign of the Day of the Lord. This indicator was ἡ ἀποστασία, “the departure,” the physical removal of believers from the earth. In other words, the Day of the Lord would not come until after the Lord had removed His Church. “Apostasy” is not a helpful indicator of the Day of the Lord either for the Thessalonians or for us. It is too vague. Apostasy has existed since Adam’s disobedience. At the end of his life Paul wrote that all believers in Asia (where he had labored tirelessly) had turned against him ([2 Timothy 1.15](#)). If that was not apostasy what was? A helpful sign must be concrete and definite.
6. Paul wrote, “ἡ ἀποστασία comes first and the man of the lawlessness is revealed, the son of the destruction”

(verse 3). The conjunctive “and” (καὶ) is a resultant temporal conjunction with the sense “and then.” This sense is supported by verses 7-8. The chart below shows the relationship:

Revelation of the Timing of the Appearance of the Beast		
Passage	Part 1	Part 2
v. 3	Let no one be deceived (you, for it will not come unless (ὄχι ἄν) the 6 demands come first (πρῶτον).	and (καὶ) the sin of the Antichrist is revealed, the sin of the destruction.
v. 7-8	For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only he who now restrains will do so until (ὅτι) he is taken out of the way.	Then (καὶ) (καὶ) that lawless one will be revealed when the Lord will (καὶ) along with the breath of his mouth will bring to an end by the appearance of his coming.

Verses 3b and 8 describe the advent of the Antichrist and are parallel one another. Verses 3a and verse 7 are also parallel. When ἡ ἀποστασία, “the departure,” occurs the “man of the lawlessness is revealed.” In the same way, after “he who now restrains is removed” the “lawless one is revealed.” Verse 3 has the temporal indicators, ἐὰν μὴ “unless” and πρῶτον “first” in addition to καὶ. Paul always used πρῶτος in its primary sense: “first” as in order or succession. Verses 7 and 8 have the temporal indicators ἕως “until” and καὶ τότε “and then.”

What did Paul mean by “he who now restrains?” The Holy Spirit permanently indwells believers today. He is God’s “down payment” (ἀρραβών) of salvation (2 Corinthians 1.22, 5.5; Ephesians 1.13-14). God’s removal of believers means the Holy Spirit will be removed in terms of human restraint on evil. After this occurs, no believers will exist on earth; no human witness of God will remain. The Holy Spirit Himself will not be removed since, as God, He is omnipresent. Even though God will remove human witness of Himself, men and women will be saved because of God’s grace and faithfulness. We can only speculate how this will begin.

Two key points are involved in Paul’s statement about the advent of the Antichrist. One is that believers, few as we are, exercise restraint upon evil and prevent the advent of the Antichrist. The second is that God’s completion of the Church, the body of Christ, is a strategic move in God’s plan. He has been building His Church for almost 2,000 years. When He completes it, He will refocus on Israel and fulfill His promises to them (Romans 11.25). As a counter move, Satan will prepare his man to deceive the nations and rule the world. The

Scriptures are silent about how quickly the Antichrist will rise to power. It may begin immediately following the Rapture. It may take a generation. A delay would give time for people to forget the Rapture. It would also provide time for Jews who are still in Gentile countries to flee to Israel. Satan is the great counterfeiter. He imitates God in his attempt to be God. Jesus lived 30 years before He began His ministry. Satan could exercise a similar plan for his man, the false Christ, the Beast.

Thus, Paul set forth the following prophetic schedule:

1. All who have died believing Paul's gospel will be raised first to meet the Lord in the air.
2. All who have believed Paul's gospel who are alive will follow to meet the Lord in the air.
3. The Lord's return for His Church will remove the restraining power of the Holy Spirit in terms of the restraint believers exercise over the advent of the Antichrist.
4. Satan will initiate his plan to reveal the Beast, the Antichrist; the prophesied Day of the Lord, the Tribulation will move forward.

Paul's statements that believers will not experience the Tribulation ([1 Thessalonians 1.10](#), [5.3-9](#)) along with the grammatical and textual evidence that ἡ ἀποστασία refers to "the departure," the Rapture, not "apostasy" demonstrates the error of the view that believers of Paul's gospel will experience the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation.

Two individuals are called ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, "the son of perdition" or "the son of destruction" in Scripture: Judas Iscariot ([John 17.12](#)) and the Antichrist. Judas was indwelt by Satan; the Antichrist will be also. Judas was not demon-possessed. He was devil-possessed. Jesus declared, "ὑμῶν εἷς διάβολός ἐστιν" ([John 6.70](#)). The Lord used the word διάβολός not δαιμόνιον. Most translations read, "one of you is a

devil.” This is a case in which the anarthrous noun is definite without the definite article (only one Devil exists). A more accurate translation is “one of you is *the* Devil.” [Revelation 13](#) and [17](#) indicate Satan will indwell the Antichrist, the Beast.

In verse 4, Paul wrote the “son of the perdition” opposes and exalts himself above every god or object of worship and seats himself in the Temple ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός “showing himself that he is God.” The word [ἀποδεικνύντα](#) is a present active participle which means he “keeps showing himself as God” or “demonstrating he is God.” Peter used the word ἀποδεικνύντα in his sermon on the day of Pentecost to convince the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah ([Acts 2.22](#)). Peter declared Jesus had proved He was the Messiah with miracles, wonders, and signs. The Antichrist will provide such proofs to convince the world he is God. Jesus spoke of the “abomination of desolation” ([Matthew 24.15](#)) and commanded Jews in Judea flee to the mountains. What greater abomination can be imagined than for the Beast to enter the Holy of Holies, declare Himself to be God, and set up an image of himself? Jesus also warned the Jews of His day not to be deceived by miraculous signs ([Matthew 24.23-24](#)). Paul reminded his readers he had taught these things when he was with them (v. 5). Faith needs constant refreshment.

What was the “secret of the lawlessness that already is working” (μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας, v. 7)? Paul’s point in the passage was to correct the error being perpetrated upon the Thessalonians that the suffering they were experiencing was the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord. Given this context, it seems “the secret of the lawlessness” was the Satanic deceit that believers of Paul’s gospel would undergo the Day of the Lord. Satan’s deluding influence will intensify after believers are removed from the earth. At the present time, his ability to deceive is the ability to confuse and rob believers of their hope of the Pre-Tribulational

Rapture. Taken across time, it probably means Satan has someone he has prepared for his purposes in every generation.

In verse 8, Paul assured the Thessalonians that the Lord will slay the Antichrist with the breath of His mouth (τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ) and defeat him by the appearance of His coming or presence (τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ). The Antichrist will come with the ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ, “activity of Satan.” The word [ἐνέργειαν](#) is used only for supernatural power. The activities of the Antichrist will be supernatural in nature: ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους, “in all power, and signs, and false (or lying) wonders (v. 9). Those deluded by him will perish.

Paul wrote in verse 10 that the Antichrist will come καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ τῆς ἀδικίας. This is best read as “and in all deception of the unrighteousness.” Paul made clear in the following verses what he meant by τῆς ἀδικίας. The demise of those who follow “the unrighteousness” will be self-inflicted for “they did not embrace ([ἐδέξαντο](#), aorist middle indicative) the love of the truth (τῆς ἀληθείας) so as to be saved (εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς).” This verse teaches salvation is a choice—men choose or reject God.

In verse 11, Paul explained that because men have chosen to reject the truth, “God sends them an erring ([πλάνης](#)—from which we get “planet”—wandering) influence (ἐνέργειαν, cf. v. 9). This verse echoes Paul’s teaching in [Romans 1.24](#), [26](#), [28](#). Because men rejected truth God “gave them over” to evil. The remainder of verse 11 is translated poorly in most Bible versions: πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει. The NASB reads “so that they will believe what is false.” The KJV is better but also misses the point, “that they should believe a lie.” The NIV has it right: “so that they will believe the lie.” However, it is clear the NIV translators did not understand the meaning of their translation. But they are to be commended for being good translators—their primary task. The noun ψεύδει is definite having the article τῷ. As such, Paul had a particular lie in

mind. It was not just any lie—it was THE LIE. What is THE LIE? Satan’s great lie to the woman in the garden was that when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that they could be as □□□□□□□□ “gods” knowing good and evil.¹⁴ The Antichrist will promote the lie and people will believe it.

Verse 12 explains the righteous basis of God’s judgment: ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, “in order that all those not having believed the truth may be judged but enjoyed the unrighteousness” (v. 12). The verse has two nouns with the definite article: τῇ ἀληθείᾳ and τῇ ἀδικίᾳ. Paul’s inclusion of the definite article indicates a parallelism with verses 10 and 11. The NIV translators, who translated verse 11 correctly, correctly translated the definite article with “truth” in verse 12 but ignored it with the noun “unrighteousness” (ἀδικίᾳ). They failed to understand the significance of the definite article and the meaning of the text.¹⁵

“The truth,” “the lie,” and “the unrighteousness” are parallel terms of Paul’s teaching. The chart below shows the parallelism of τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, τῷ ψεύδει and τῇ ἀδικίᾳ in Paul’s teaching. Parallelism was a favorite literary device in Hebrew composition. It is found frequently in the Psalms and also in prophetic writings. Paul was schooled in the Scriptures so it was natural for him to employ such conventions. “The truth” will be the gospel of the kingdom: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. “The lie” and “the unrighteousness” are synonymous terms and refer to Satan’s lie that we can be God and that the Antichrist is God.

THE LIE, THE TRUTH, and THE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS		
2 Thessalonians 2.10	τῆς ἀληθείας “the truth” ¹⁶	τῆς ἀδικίας “the unrighteousness”

2 Thessalonians 2.11		τῷ ψεύδει “the lie”
2 Thessalonians 2.12	τῇ ἀληθείᾳ “the truth”	τῇ ἀδικίᾳ “the unrighteousness”

[2Th 2:13](#) Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὀφείλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου, ὅτι εἴλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας,

[2Th 2:14](#) εἰς ὃ ἐκάλεσεν ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν, εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

[2Th 2:15](#) ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν.

[2Th 2:16](#) Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν, ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν ἐν χάριτι,

[2Th 2:17](#) παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίξαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ.

In verse 13, Paul expressed the same language of thanksgiving he used in the first chapter in which he declared, “because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater” ([2 Thessalonians 1.3](#)). This thanksgiving involved the Thessalonian’s behavior. Here, Paul thanked God because they were “brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.” This thanksgiving involved the Thessalonians standing and state. From God’s perspective, Christians are “having been loved by the Lord” (ἠγαπημένοι is a perfect passive participle) which emphasizes God’s love for us from eternity. God manifested His love for He chose (εἴλατο, aorist middle indicate, i.e., chose us for Himself) us from the beginning for salvation ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας “by means of sanctification of the Spirit and by belief of the truth.” This statement contains both the Godward and the manward sides of salvation.

How were the Thessalonians saved? Paul declared in verse 14 that God called them through τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν “our gospel.” Paul’s gospel was that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead ([1 Corinthians 15.1-4](#)). Believing this was how the Thessalonians had been saved. The result was “the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. [Romans 8.17](#), [21-23](#); [1 John 3.2](#)). Thus, Paul commanded the Thessalonians to “stand fast” and “master” ([κρατεῖτε](#) means to master or take possession of) his teachings (v. 15). Paul closed this doctrinal section of encouragement with the words, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word” (verses 16-17).

[2Th 3:1](#) Τὸ λοιπὸν προσεύχεσθε, ἀδελφοί, περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου τρέχη καὶ δοξάζεται καθὼς καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς,

[2Th 3:2](#) καὶ ἵνα ῥυσθῶμεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀτόπων καὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων, οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις.

[2Th 3:3](#) πιστὸς δέ ἐστιν ὁ κύριος, ὃς στηρίξει ὑμᾶς καὶ φυλάξει ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

[2Th 3:4](#) πεποίθαμεν δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ἃ παραγγέλλομεν καὶ ποιεῖτε καὶ ποιήσετε.

[2Th 3:5](#) ὁ δὲ κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The last chapter contains Paul’s final instructions, requests, and encouragements. He entreated the Thessalonians to pray that the Word (specifically, his doctrine) spread rapidly and have success as it had with them (v. 1) and that they would be rescued from perverse and evil men for not all have the faith or believe (v. 2). This last statement applied to the Jews who were persecuting Paul but it may also indicate traitors or false Christians. Paul could also have had in mind the rescue as the Rapture since he used the same word (ῥυσθῶμεν) in [1 Thessalonians 1.10](#). While not all have faith (v. 2), the Lord is faithful and will strengthen and protect from τοῦ πονηροῦ

“the evil” or “the evil one,” i.e., Satan (v. 3). Paul’s inclusion of the definite article with the noun likely referred to Satan. Paul was persuaded by the Lord that the Thessalonians were doing and would continue to do what he was commanding ([παραγγέλλομεν](#)) and wished the Lord to guide them into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ (vv. 4-5).

[2Th 3:6](#) Παραγγέλλομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἣν παρελάβοσαν παρ’ ἡμῶν.

[2Th 3:7](#) αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε πῶς δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἠτακτήσαμεν ἐν ὑμῖν

[2Th 3:8](#) οὐδὲ δωρεὰν ἄρτον ἐφάγομεν παρά τινος, ἀλλ’ ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαί τινα ὑμῶν·

[2Th 3:9](#) οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ’ ἵνα ἑαυτοὺς τύπον δῶμεν ὑμῖν εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς.

[2Th 3:10](#) καὶ γὰρ ὅτε ἦμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο παρηγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω.

[2Th 3:11](#) ἀκούομεν γὰρ τινὰς περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως, μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους·

[2Th 3:12](#) τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις παραγγέλλομεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ ἵνα μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι τὸν ἑαυτῶν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν.

[2Th 3:13](#) ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες.

Paul commanded the Thessalonians by the authority of Christ (ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) to avoid a believer leading an unruly life ([ἀτάκτως](#)) contrary to Paul’s teachings ([παράδοσις](#)) (v. 6). Paul counseled the Thessalonians that it was necessary for them “to imitate us” (μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς, cf. [1 Corinthians 4.16](#), [11.1](#); [Ephesians 5.1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1.6](#), [2.14](#); [2 Thessalonians 2.9](#)). Specifically, he reminded them that they had not lived disorderly or eaten anyone’s bread without paying for it when they had been with them. Instead,

they had worked night and day to earn their own money not to be a burden to them (vv. 7-8). Paul stated they had worked not from obligation but to provide an example ([τύπον](#)) to the Thessalonians to imitate ([εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι](#)) (v. 9). He reminded them of the command they had given them while they were with them: [εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω](#), “if any is not willing to work, neither shall he eat” (v. 10). The word “eat” ([ἐσθιέτω](#)) is a present active imperative, a command. Christianity has no place for welfare without work. Embedded in our fallen nature is a desire to obtain something for nothing. Christians are not immune to such weakness and Paul heard the Thessalonians were guilty of it and acting as busybodies—a symptom of laziness (v. 11). Paul commanded and exhorted those guilty to go to work, to stop minding other people’s business (v. 12), and not to grow weary in doing good (v. 13).

[2Th 3:14](#) [Εἰ δέ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, τοῦτον σημειοῦσθε, μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐντραπῇ.](#)

[2Th 3:15](#) [καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἠγεῖσθε, ἀλλὰ νοουθετεῖτε ὡς ἀδελφόν.](#)

Paul’s instructions were serious. He commanded that a believer who did not follow his instructions in his letter ([διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς](#)) be identified ([σημειοῦσθε](#)—present middle imperative) and avoided ([συναναμίγνυσθε](#)—present middle imperative). The purpose of such avoidance was to shame ([ἐντραπῇ](#)) a believer into right behavior (v. 14). But Paul also commanded that he was not to be regarded with hostility but exhorted ([νουθετεῖτε](#)—present active imperative) as a brother (v. 15).

[2Th 3:16](#) [Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δώη ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ. ὁ κύριος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.](#)

[2Th 3:17](#) [Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου, ὃ ἐστὶν σημεῖον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ. οὕτως γράφω.](#)

[2Th 3:18](#) [ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.](#)

Paul closed his letter with a wish for the Lord to give them peace in every situation and that the Lord would be with them all (v. 16). To ensure Pauline authenticity (especially given the forged letter) Paul stated he had written the greeting with his own hand as a sign ([σημεῖον](#)) of authenticity for all his letters (v. 17). That sign was the signature: ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” No more appropriate signature was possible. Paul—the apostle of grace!

Conclusion

This study is provided to encourage believers of the importance of the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture and adherence to it. Acceptance of this key doctrine which belongs to the body of Christ is necessary for the believer’s Christian maturity and obedience. Paul taught this doctrine early in his ministry in his letters to the Thessalonians. It was basic, fundamental Christianity. God superintended the order of the Pauline epistles Paul wrote to churches. The letters to the Thessalonians occur first chronologically but falls last in the canon. With regard to this, E. W. Bullinger made the following point:¹⁷

It is useless to teach Christians the truths connected with the Lord’s Coming until they have learned the truths in the other Epistles. Until they know and understand from Romans what they are by nature, and what God has made them to be IN Christ Jesus,—sons and heirs, joint-heirs with Christ ([Rom. 8:17](#)); until they know and understand that even now God has “blessed them with all spiritual blessing in the heaven—lies IN Christ” ([Eph. 1:3](#)), they have no place for, and no understanding of, the truths concerning His return from heaven.

To sum up : – The saved sinner is shown
IN ROMANS, as dead and risen with Christ:
IN EPHESIANS, as seated in the heavenlies IN Christ:

IN THESSALONIANS, in glory for ever with Christ.

¹ Lydia, a Jewish woman, has the distinction of being the first convert in Europe. The Lord “opened” Lydia’s heart. Luke used this term most frequently to convey spiritual understanding ([Luke 24.31-32](#), [45](#); [Acts 17.3](#)).

² The Greek text is from the [Society of Biblical Literature](#) and is available for download.

³ Paul is the only apostle who commanded believers to copy or imitate him. See the author’s study, “[Follow Paul?](#)”

⁴ Israel had a long history of being unfaithful to God and serving idols. But the “Babylonian Captivity,” in which Nebuchadnezzar took Israel captive, seems to have cured them of this sin. We find no record of Israel practicing idolatry afterward.

⁵ The verb ῥύομαι is a present middle or passive deponent participle but its sense is active, “who delivers” or “who rescues.” Likewise, ἔρχομαι is a present middle or passive deponent participle with an active sense, “which is coming.” Deponent verbs such as ῥύομαι and ἔρχομαι are normally found in their middle or passive forms since their active endings have disappeared. The forms are middle or passive but the sense is active.

⁶ Paul, Silas, and Timothy ministered in Thessalonica together ([Acts 17.1-9](#)). Paul and Silas left for Berea and left Timothy with the Thessalonians ([Acts 17.10](#)). Timothy rejoined Paul and Silas in Berea and Paul departed for Athens ([Acts 17.13-15](#)). Timothy rejoined Paul in Athens and afterward, Paul sent him back to the Thessalonians ([1 Thessalonians 3.1](#)). Paul departed Athens for Corinth where he stayed eighteen months ([Acts 18.11](#)). Timothy returned to Corinth and gave Paul his report on the Thessalonians’ status ([1 Thessalonians 3.6](#); [Acts 18.5](#)). Unclear is whether Silas accompanied Timothy.

⁷ Both verbs are in the optative mood which expresses a wish. Thus, “May the Lord increase and abound you in love towards

one another.”

⁸ This is as clear a statement as exists in Scripture that man is a tripartite being composed of body, soul, and spirit. The body houses soul and spirit. The soul has mind, emotion, and will (cf. Hebrew 4.12). The spirit is that part that communicates with God.

⁹ Some manuscripts have [ὀρκίζω](#). The word ἐνορκίζω is formed by prepending the preposition ἐν + ὀρκίζω. No other instances of ἐνορκίζω exist besides [1 Thessalonians 5.27](#). Other instances of ὀρκίζω are [Mark 5.7](#) and [Acts 19.13](#). No essential difference exists in the two words.

¹⁰ The word ἐνκαυχᾶσθαι of the critical text is suspect. Paul used the verb καυχάομαι frequently but always without ἐν. No important meaning change is at stake. It’s a technical issue.

¹¹ The KJV reads “day of Christ.” The KJV is based largely upon the Majority text which along with the second corrector of D, written as D², (9th century) reads “Day of Christ” instead of “Day of the Lord.” Earlier evidence in all forms (manuscripts, versions, fathers) supports the text “Day of the Lord.” Also in support of “Day of the Lord” is Paul’s usage of ἐνίστημι in [2 Thessalonians 2.2](#). Paul used this term in [Romans 8.38](#); [1 Corinthians 3.22](#), [7.26](#); [Galatians 1.4](#); [2 Thessalonians 2.2](#), [2 Timothy 3.1](#); [Hebrews 9.9](#). In almost every instance he used it to mean things “present.” In the first two usages, he distinguished it from future occurrences (οὔτε ἐνεστώτα οὔτε μέλλοντα; εἴτε ἐνεστώτα εἴτε μέλλοντα). A reading of “day in Christ” would read, “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 present.” Such a reading does not make sense. The Thessalonians knew the day of Christ (Rapture) had not taken place because they were still there. The issue—what they were being taught by false teachers—was that they were experiencing the day of the Lord. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to correct this false teaching. Thus, the correct reading is “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 the Lord is present (or has come).” This is the better reading and fits the context of Paul’s subject.

¹² See Brian R. Keller’s fine [study](#) on the textual issue of [1 Timothy 6.5](#). Some manuscripts do not have the text, ἀφίστασο ἀπὸ τῶν τοιούτων, “depart from such.”

¹³ Physical withdrawal is most likely in view (cf. [2 Thessalonians 3.6](#)). But one could make a case for psychological withdrawal. If that were the case, the qualifier would be “from perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth.”

¹⁴ The text of Genesis 3.5 reads, ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ. The word ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓ occurs twice. The word may be translated “God” or “gods” depending on the context. The first occurrence should be translated “God” and the second, “gods.” Satan’s temptation of Eve was not that she could be like “God.” That would have been a step too far. Satan was shrewd and subtle (Genesis 3.1) and knew he could not convince the woman that she and Adam could be like God Himself. The woman was too smart and too reverent to God to think this. But Satan thought he had a good chance to get the woman to believe they could become “gods,” that is, become like the divine beings who attended and guarded God’s throne in heaven. Satan deceived her God into thinking that God withholding something the couple should have and that by eating from the Tree they could join the privileged society of divine beings, the gods of the divine council, who served God around His throne.

¹⁵ My intent is not to be overly critical of translators but that we must be careful about the text. Even recognized scholars can be theologically ignorant and poor translators.

¹⁶ The KJV (Byz) and the critical text differ. The KJV includes the article, τῆς ἀδικίας, while the critical text reads

without it, ἀδικίας. Given the whole passage, I am inclined to think the Byz reading is correct. However, even if the critical text reading of ἀδικίας is correct, it makes little difference as to meaning for a noun can be definite without the article.

¹⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, [Appendix 192](#).

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