

2 Thessalonians 2 - Prerequisites for the Day of the Lord: Departure, Antichrist, Restrainer Removed, Destruction of Antichrist & Followers

II. Doctrinal correction (2 Thess 2:1-17)

- (1) Problem stated (2:1-2)
- (2) Prerequisites of the Day of the Lord (2:3-10)
 - (A) Apostasy (2:3a)
 - (B) Revealing of the man of lawlessness (2:3b-12)
 - (a) Description of the man of lawlessness (2:3b-4)
 - (b) Removal of the restrainer (2:5-7)
 - (c) Destruction of the lawless one (2:8-9)
 - (d) The destruction of the lawless one's followers (2:10-12)
- (3) The contrasting destiny of the righteous (2:13-17)
 - (A) Thanksgiving for their calling (2:13-14)
 - (B) Exhortation to stand firm (2:15)
 - (C) Prayer for strength (2:16-17)

2 Thessalonians 2

II. Doctrinal correction (2 Thess 2:1-17)

- (1) Problem stated (2:1-2)

1 Now we ask you, brothers *and sisters*, **regarding** the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our **gathering together to Him**,

1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

1 Now we ask you, brothers, regarding the coming of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and our gathering together to him,

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

- Paul now gets to the reason for writing his second letter to them: to correct their bad eschatology, which originated in the forged letter that was sent to them

- "Now we ask" - *erōtaō de*, denotes a change in subject or topic; very similar to the peri de construction Paul used in 1 Thess 4:9; 5:1
- Paul is no longer talking about the Second Coming, which was the topic in 2 Thess 1 in his name, to now discussing the Rapture again
- "...regarding" - *hyper*, controls both nouns: "the coming" (*parousia*) and "the gathering together" (*episynagōgē*)
- Since the article (*hyper*) appears before *parousia* and is not repeated before *episynagōgē*, indicates that these are complimentary elements in one event
- "...coming" - *parousia*
- "...gathering together" - *episynagōgē*, a reference to the Rapture
- Post-Tribulationists agree that Paul refers to the Rapture in this passage, but equate it as a post-Tribulational Rapture, equating it with Matt 24:29-31
- *episynagōgē* is actually three words combined to make one: *epi* (upon), *syn* (together), and *ago* (to lead), or "to lead upon together"
- The same Greek word is used to describe the "gathering together" that Jesus tried to do of Israel at His first coming, but they rejected Him instead (Cf. Matt 23:37-39); He will be successful regathering Israel together to Himself at His Second Coming (Cf. Matt 24:31)
- "...to Him" - better translated "up to Him"

2 that you not be **quickly shaken** from your composure or be **disturbed** either **by a spirit**, or a **message**, or a **letter as if from us**, to the effect that **the day of the Lord has come**.

2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

2 not to be so quickly upset or alarmed when someone claims that we said, either by some spirit, conversation, or letter that the Day of the Lord has already come.

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

- "...quickly" - *tachos*, soon, after so short a period of time; the same word used to describe the apostasy of the Galatians (Cf. Gal 1:6)

— Many of the believers seem to have been overwhelmed, thrown into shock, by the false teachers telling them that they were already in the Day of the Lord

— This happened a very short time after Paul had taught them on this same subject

- "...shaken" - *saleuō*, aorist passive infinitive, meaning to agitate, to cause to totter like a reed (Cf. Matt 11:7); passive tense points to an outside force

— The same word is used in Acts 16:26 to describe the physical shaking during an earthquake. What happened in Thessalonica was a "shaking" but it wasn't physical, it was theological.

- In this case, a theological “earthquake” had gone off in Thessalonica because they had received a forged letter, allegedly from Paul, saying they were in the Tribulation period
- “...disturbed” - *threo*, present passive infinitive meaning frightened, alarmed; to cry aloud as in pain or tumult; literally, to be put into a state of shock
- It is interesting that *threo* is used in Matt 24:6 and Mark 13:7 in the same context about the Tribulation, or the Day of the Lord, with the same warning by Christ that Paul uses here
- “...by a spirit” - maybe some type of private vision someone had; alleged prophetic revelation
- “...a message” - recent teaching of other recognized authorities
- “...a letter” - an epistle, similar to Paul's first epistle to them (1 Thessalonians)
- “...as if from us” - what had so quickly shaken them up theologically was someone had distributed a forged letter, as if it was written by Paul, telling them that the Day of the Lord (Tribulation) had begun, and that they had missed the Rapture
- As new believers, with their teacher absent, they were shaken and confused because of the apparent inconsistency between Paul's initial teaching and first epistle, and his alleged letter to them.
- Paul authenticates his second epistle to the Thessalonians (Cf. 3:17) so that they aren't duped by another forged letter, as if he wrote it
- “...to the effect” - the subject matter or this spirit, message or letter; the topic
- “...the day of the Lord has come” - a “day” is an evening, then a morning. The “evening” is the darkest hours, which refer to the Tribulation, and the morning is when light begins to shine, which is the inauguration of the kingdom.
- If Paul taught a post-Tribulational Rapture, this wouldn't be so upsetting to the Thessalonians. They would have expected persecution and suffering prior to the Rapture. However, this is obviously not what Paul taught them about the Rapture...he taught them a pre-Tribulational Rapture.
- “...the Day of Christ” [KJV] - a mistranslation; the Greek is clearly “the Day of the Lord.” The “Day of Christ” is a positive, happy event (the Rapture), but the Day of the Lord always pertains to judgment.
- This is important because many people try to put the Rapture into the Day of the Lord time period, and use this verse to bolster that argument. However, the Greek here clearly does not say “Day of Christ” but rather “Day of the Lord.”
- The Thessalonians had a number of reasons to believe that they were in the Tribulation:
 1. The forged letter
 2. They were under persecution
 3. They were new believers
 4. Because of the persecution they were under, some of their own had died
 5. Paul was not present, so they couldn't ask him about their circumstances directly

- 6. They had nowhere to turn for truth because they did not have a NT yet
 - So a forged letter, along with bad circumstances, involving new believers, and you have a situation ripe for misunderstanding and panic
 - These believers already knew about the Day of the Lord because Paul wrote about it in his first epistle (Cf. 1 Thess 5:2-3)
 - Over the next 10 verses (v3-12), Paul will lay out five events that will happen, in chronological order, during the Day of the Lord. His point is that since none of these events had yet taken place, they could be assured that they were not in the Tribulation period.
 - His objective is to provide more detailed information about this time period, as well as comfort these believers that they did not miss the Rapture and that they were not in the Day of the Lord. The persecution they were experiencing is normative for a Church Age believer.

(2) Prerequisites of the Day of the Lord (2:3-10)

This is the heart of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, his primary purpose for writing to them again so soon after his first letter. His goal was to quell their panic that the persecution they were under, as well as the forged letter they received as if from Paul himself, made them think they were in the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation) and had missed the Rapture. In v3-12, Paul assures them that they are not in the Tribulation, and gives them five events that will take place before and during the Day of the Lord. Because the Thessalonians had not seen nor heard of these events, they can be assured that they were not in the Day of the Lord.

(A) Apostasy (2:3a)

(B) Revealing of the man of lawlessness (2:3b-12)

(a) Description of the man of lawlessness (2:3b-4)

3 No one is to deceive you in any way! For *it will not come* unless **the apostasy** comes **first**, and the **man of lawlessness** is **revealed**, the **son of destruction**,

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

3 Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, for it will not come unless the rebellion takes place first and the man of sin, who is destined for destruction, is revealed.

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

- "...it" - the Day of the Lord; the Tribulation period

- "...the" - definite article that references something in particular; the word *apostasía* prefaced by the Greek article ("the") means that Paul is pointing to a particular type of departure clearly known to the Thessalonians. It identifies each event (of the three above)

as unique (there are no other events like them). It likely denoted a previous reference made by Paul.

- "...apostasy" - *apostasia*, a falling away; a departure. A compound word: *apos* = away from, and *histēmi* = to stand.

— It can refer to a physical departure, a spiritual departure, or a rebellion. It is not a technical word, thus the specific meaning must be based on the context in which it is used.

— This is a very controversial word: the question is *what is it a departure from*? It is either a departure from previously known truth (spiritual/doctrinal apostasy) or a physical departure (the Rapture)?

(1) A spiritual/doctrinal departure (Acts 21:21) - a departure from previously known truth

(A) A spiritual departure of the Church (pre-Rapture) - a doctrinal departure of the Church, before the Rapture (denies imminence)

- A spiritual departure refers to a deliberate abandonment ("falling away") from a formerly professed position or view; a defection; a rejection of a former allegiance. Used to denote a political or military rebellion.
- It does not mean simply disbelieving, but an aggressive and positive revolt (Cf. Acts 21:21; Heb 3:12); setting oneself in opposition to God
- The specific "apostasy" Paul referred to here had not yet taken place, thus this specific event was yet future; however, the NT teaches that apostasy had already arrived in the first century (Cf. Acts 20:27-32; 1 Tim 4:1-5; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 3-4,17-21)
- In the LXX: a rebellion against God (Joshua 22:22)
- In the NT (Acts 21:21; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 4:3-4; Heb 3:12)

(B) A spiritual departure of the world (post-Rapture) - what do unbelievers have to depart from? See note: **God's Estimate of the Lost** below.

(C) The apostasy of Israel (Dan 9:27) - Israel as a nation has never accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah, so what would they be departing from doctrinally? They rejected their Messiah (Cf. Matt 12:24), and from that time Jesus pronounced on them judicial blindness and placed them under judgment (Cf. Rom 10:21). The nation is still under this cloak of judgment today, until they acknowledge their mistake and ask Jesus to be their King (Cf. Hosea 5:15; Matt 23:39).

(2) A physical departure (Acts 12:10; 2 Cor 12:8) - a departure from something physical, referring to the Rapture of the Church (the minority view)

- There are at least six reasons why *apostasia* should be understood as a physical departure rather than a spiritual departure:

- Doctrinal departures have been normal throughout the Church Age (Cf. Acts 20:29-31; compare Acts 19:10 to 2 Tim 1:15; Rev 2:4-5). 2:7 implies that apostasy had already begun when Paul wrote 2 Thess.
- 2 Thess was an early epistle; doctrinal departure was not the focus of Paul or the apostles early in their ministry. The importance of apostasy grew later (2 Tim; 2 Peter; Jude; all written in the 60s AD). Nowhere in 1&2 Thess does Paul deal with doctrinal integrity.
- The definite article translated "the" in front of the noun "falling away" and "man of sin." This points to the "falling away" as specific and time-bound, just as the appearance of the "man of sin" will be specific and an instantaneous event in future history. Such an instantaneous manifestation does not fit well with the notion of a spiritual departure.
- The noun *apostasia* can refer to a physical departure. The only other place *apostasia* is used in the NT is Acts 21:21, but in a completely different context. Context is the critical factor to determine this: the larger context of 2 Thess is the Day of the Lord; the closer context is the Rapture ("our gathering together to Him," v1), thus both the larger and immediate context is the Rapture.
- The verb *aphistēmi* can refer to a physical departure. It is used 15x in the NT, and only 3x means a spiritual departure (Luke 8:13; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb 3:12). 12x it refers to a physical departure (Luke 2:37; 4:13; 13:27; Acts 5:37-38; 12:10; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29; 2 Cor 12:8; 1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 2:19).
- The extended context (1 & 2 Thess) favors a physical departure instead of a spiritual departure. More is learned about the Rapture in 1 Thess than anywhere else in Scripture. Nowhere in either epistle does Paul reference a spiritual departure (other than 2 Thess 2:3).

— For detailed arguments for/against each of these views, see [2 Thessalonians 07-15 The Departure First - Parts 1-9 \(2 Thess 2:3a\)](#).

For additional information on this topic, see:

[House-A Defense of the Rapture - 2 Thess 2:3](#)

[Ice-The "Departure" in 2 Thess 2:3](#)

[Woods-2 Thess 2:3a-Spiritual or Physical Departure? \(3\)](#)

[Gunn-2 Thessalonians 2:13: A Rapture Passage?](#)

[Rapture 18 2 Thess 2:3a - Part 1](#)

[Rapture 19 2 Thess 2:3a - Part 2](#)

[Rapture 20 2 Thess 2:3a - Part 3](#)

- "...first" - *prōton*, first, beforehand, prior; earlier or first in a chronology of events

— If you believe that *apostasia* refers to the doctrinal departure of the church instead of a physical departure, then Paul is putting a prerequisite event that must take place prior to the Rapture happening, which denies imminency

- "...man" - *anthrōpos*, a male human being; same word used to describe the Antichrist in Rev 13:18

— Some use 1 John 4:2-3 to argue that the Antichrist will be a spirit, but it means that the Antichrist will be preceded by the "spirit" of the Antichrist

— 2:7 mentions the "mystery of lawlessness" that will precede the "man of lawlessness", just like the "spirit of Antichrist" will precede the Antichrist himself

— There have been at least three men in biblical history who have been "types" of the Antichrist: Nimrod (Gen 11); Antiochus Epiphanes (165 BC, Dan 8); Titus of Rome (70 AD, Dan 9:26)

- "...lawlessness" - *anomia*, the Antichrist will completely negate and disregard God's principles and God's laws; he will reject everything that God has setup as a law (Cf. Dan 7:25)

- "...revealed" - *apokalyptō*, revelation; aorist tense: a definite time when the veil will be removed

— So the *apostasia* (Rapture) will happen first, then the Antichrist will be revealed. Both "events" (Rapture and revelation of Antichrist) take place prior to the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period.

— The Antichrist's rise to power before the Tribulation begins is a biblical necessity. Since the Tribulation begins with the signing of the seven-year covenant between Israel and the Antichrist (Dan 9:27), it is necessary for the Antichrist to be in sufficient political power to sign such a covenant. This covenant begins the seven-year Tribulation. The Antichrist's self-exaltation will take place halfway through the Tribulation (3-1/2 years). Therefore, the church will not see any of the activities of the Antichrist.

— The noun form of *apokalyptō* is the name of the Book of Revelation

— The Antichrist, the "man of lawlessness" will at some point be "unveiled" or "revealed"; meaning that today, he is "veiled" or unknown

— Why isn't he revealed today? Because something is keeping him unrevealed right now (the Restrainer, v6-7). The Antichrist is not revealed until the 1st Seal judgment (Rev 6:1-2).

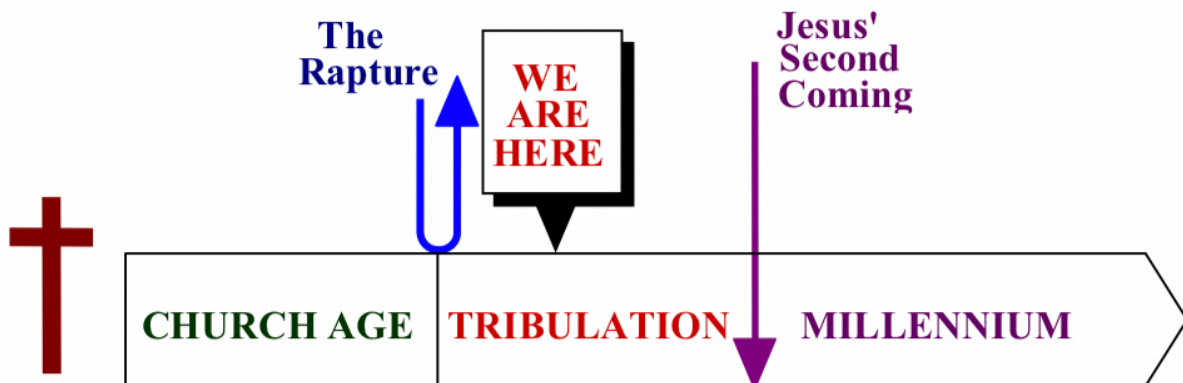
- "...son of destruction" - or "son of perdition"; this is a name for the coming Antichrist

— He is called the "son of destruction" because Jesus will personally destroy him at the Second Coming (Cf. v8; Dan 9:27; Rev 19:20); he is marked by God for destruction

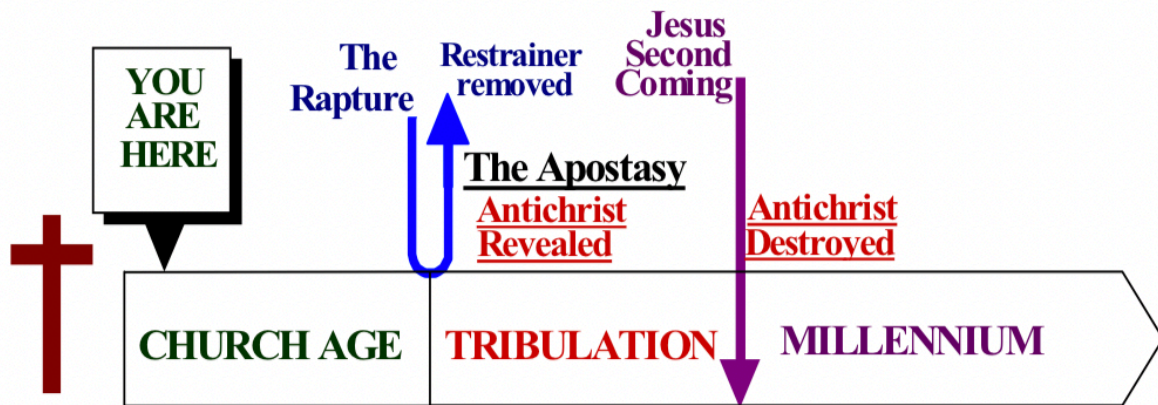
— The only other person in Scripture named "son of destruction" was Judas Iscariot (Cf. John 17:12), who was possessed by Satan (Cf. John 13:27)

A summary translation of v2-3: We urge you not to be shaken into thinking that the day of the Lord has come, because when we told you before about the coming of the Lord to take you home, we indicated that you would not go under the wrath that would follow!

The Thessalonians' False Idea



Paul's Correction of their Error



God's Estimate of the Lost

- Lost (Luke 19:10)
- Perishing (John 3:16)
- Condemned (John 3:18)
- Lovers of darkness / evil (John 3:19-21)
- Under divine wrath (John 3:36)
- Without spiritual life (John 3:36)
- Of their father the devil (John 8:44)

- Dead (Eph 2:1)
- Demonically energized (Eph 2:2)
- Depraved (Eph 2:3a)
- Doomed (Eph 2:3b)
- Held captive (Col 1:13; 2 Tim 2:6; Acts 26:17-18)
- Unable to receive truth (1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 4:3-4)
- Under the control of Satan's world system (1 John 5:19)
- Filled with all unrighteousness (Rom 1:29-32)
- Unable to seek God (Rom 3:10-18)
- Conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5)
- Desperately wicked (Jer 17:9)

4 who opposes and **exalts** himself above **every so-called god** or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in **the temple** of God, **displaying himself as being God**.

4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

4 He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship. As a result, he seats himself in the sanctuary of God and himself declares that he is God.

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

- Once "the departure" happens and the Antichrist shows up on the scene, what is he going to do?

— This verse begins to describe who the Antichrist is, his personality (Cf. Dan 11:36)

— Many argue that the Antichrist will be Muslim or Jewish, neither of which are true according to Rev 13:1 (the beast came up "out of the sea" or mass of Gentile humanity)

- "...exalts" - this "exaltation" will take place at the midpoint of the Tribulation in the Abomination of Desolation (Cf. Matt 24:15)

— Paul is describing an event that the prophet Daniel described in Dan 9:27, written 600 years before Christ

— In Dan 11:31, Daniel makes another prediction about a similar event, but not perpetrated by the Antichrist, but rather a Greek king (Antiochus Epiphanes). This prophecy was already fulfilled (~165 BC) just as Daniel wrote it, and is a prefigurement for the Dan 9:27; 2 Thess 2:4 prophecies, which will be fulfilled by the Antichrist.

— This event, often called the Abomination of Desolation, occurs at the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation period (Cf. Matt 24:15; Rev 13:15)

— The Antichrist will "take his seat" in the rebuilt Jewish temple and proclaim himself to be Israel's messiah (it will likely be an "image" of the Antichrist with the ability to speak)

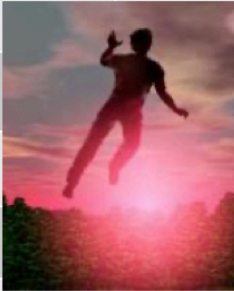
- "...every so-called god" - all heathen divinities. Overshadows Vatican, Islam, New Age, etc. Self-deification, in its climax. "Anti-christ" = pseudo-christ.
 - "...the temple" - *naos*, inner "Holy of Holies" (vs. Greek, *hieron*, temple complex); the third temple (Tribulation temple, Cf. Rev 11:1-2)
 - Paul's use of the definite article excludes any temple or building other than God's Temple
 - This argues for the rebuilding of a Jewish temple, in Jerusalem, prior to the Tribulation (Cf. Dan 11:36)
 - Amillennialists, who do not believe in the future reign of Christ on the present earth, take this temple as the one that stood in Jerusalem when Paul wrote this epistle. However, the Antichrist had not yet appeared when Paul wrote, nor has he appeared yet (Cf. 1 John 2:18).
 - The early church fathers understood a literal, eschatological Jewish Temple [Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V.30.4]
 - "...displaying himself as being God" - it's no surprise that the Antichrist will follow in the footsteps of Satan. He will replicate the original sin of Lucifer, and why Satan originally fell.
 - At his fall, Satan said "I will ascend above the clouds (God's glory); I will make myself like the Most High" (Is 14:14). That was the deal-breaker, and he lost his position in the heavenlies and was cast out of heaven.
 - In the Garden of Eden, Satan offered Eve wisdom without submission to God (Cf. Gen 3:5)
 - By the time the event of the abomination of desolation occurs, knowledge of the Bible will be nearly non-existent. It's won't seem strange or out of sorts to the majority of the world's population that this beloved Antichrist declares himself to be god in the temple.
- [Dan 11:31; Matt 24:15; Rev 13:15]

The Antichrist will not gain full political and religious control until he wars against the ten kings and kills three of them. The other seven kings will then submit to him. It is only when the last of these three kings has been killed, leading to complete submission of the other seven kings, that the Antichrist will be free to take over full global dictatorship and to carry out the events of v4.

(b) Removal of the restrainer (2:5-7)

- 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?
- 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?
- 5 Don't you remember that I repeatedly told you about these things when I was still with you?
- 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

- Paul is not covering new material in this epistle...he's reviewing what he had already taught them while he was with them in Thessalonica, and what he wrote in the first epistle (1 Thessalonians)
- Understanding this fact is the key to understanding why Paul uses so many different words to describe the Rapture (see chart: **Paul's Various Rapture Terms** below)
- This verse also calls into question the prevalent idea that new believers shouldn't be taught about Bible prophecy until they are more mature
- Eschatology was obviously a major part of Paul's initial teaching while he was in Thessalonica; he reminds them of things he had taught them while he was still with them. He obviously did not regard prophecy as too deep, or unimportant, or controversial for even new Christians.
- Many people today downplay the importance of this part of God's revelation, however Paul believed prophetic truth was a vital part of the whole counsel of God, essential to victorious Christian living.
- The teaching of eschatology to this new church was likely the reason for their "greatly enlarged" faith (1:3)
- Paul was in Thessalonica for only 6-12 months when he planted the church, and during that time he obviously taught the new believers there about the Rapture and Bible prophecy. In this second epistle to them, he is reviewing topics that he had already taught them in person and wrote to them about.

Paul's Various Rapture Terms		
<u><i>parousia</i></u>		<u>2 Thess 2:1</u>
<u><i>episynagōgē</i></u>		<u>2 Thess. 2:1</u>
<u><i>apokalypsis</i></u>		<u>1 Cor 1:7</u>
<u><i>epiphaneia</i></u>		<u>Titus 2:13</u>
<u><i>rhyomai</i></u>		<u>1 Thess 1:10</u>
<u><i>harpazō</i></u>		<u>1 Thess 4:17</u>
<u><i>apostasia</i></u>		<u>2 Thess 2:3a</u>

6 And **youknow** what **restrain***him* now, so that **he** will be revealed **in his time**.

6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

6 You know what it is that is now holding him back, so that he will be revealed when his time comes.

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

- "...you know" - the Thessalonian church knew what was now restraining the Antichrist, and that he would be revealed in "his time"

- The key point of Paul's teaching is that the takeover of the Jewish Temple and the Antichrist's self-declaration of deity will be restrained until the Restrainer is removed. It is only after the Restrainer is removed that the events of v4 (the Abomination of Desolation) takes place.

- "...restrains" - *katechon*, withholds, to hold back; neuter gender in Greek

— The neuter present participle presents this restraint as an impersonal operative force. Jesus' teaching on the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room fluctuated between neuter and masculine genders, depending on whether the speaker thinks of natural agreement (masculine because of the Spirit's personality) or grammatical (neuter because of the noun *pneuma*) (Cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14, et al).

— Most pre-Millennial, pre-Tribulational scholars believe this "Restrainer" refers to the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit, through the agency of the Church

- "...him" - the Antichrist

— The Antichrist ("him") cannot come onto the world stage yet because the something or someone is restraining him

- "...he...his" - refers to the Antichrist

- "...in his time" - *kairos*, "in the season of him"

— The Antichrist is to come at just the right and appropriate period of world history. The iniquity of the Gentiles will be piled up, and judgment through his evilness will be due upon the nations.

— There is a "fullness of time" for Christ (Gal 4:4); so also for the "man of sin"

The "Restrainer" is currently holding back the revelation of the Antichrist. To understand this, we have to understand what event kicks off the seven-year Tribulation period. Many people mistakenly believe it is the Rapture, but that's not accurate. The seven-year countdown will begin when the Antichrist signs a peace treaty/pact with unbelieving Israel (called "a treaty with Sheol" in Is 28). For this to take place, the Antichrist must be in power.

Once the Antichrist brings peace to Israel through this covenant, Israel will believe that the Antichrist is their messiah and follow him. They won't realize that he isn't their messiah until the midpoint of the Tribulation. This treaty, however, cannot be entered in to until "the apostasy" (v3) comes first.

7 For the **mystery of lawlessness** is already at **work**; only **He who now restrains** *will do so until* **He is removed**.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.

7 For the secret of this lawlessness is already at work, but only until the person now holding it back gets out of the way.

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

- The Antichrist, who enters into a peace treaty with Israel which kicks off the Tribulation, cannot just pop onto the scene until Someone who is restraining him is removed. Let's call it/Him "the Restrainer."

— Whoever "the Restrainer" is must be very powerful because it is literally holding back Satan's man of the hour (v9). Satan is going to perfectly express Himself through the Antichrist.

— The Antichrist, who will obviously be very powerful, derives his power from Satan. Yet he cannot come onto the world stage until "the Restrainer" (more powerful than Satan) is removed.

- "...mystery of lawlessness" - a reference to the satanic influence that works in conjunction with human sin.

— Within the context of this chapter, the mystery of lawlessness during the Tribulation is preparing the way for the entrance of the Antichrist, once the restraint of the Holy Spirit is removed.

— Prior to the Tribulation, it refers to the "stage-setting" events that are preparing the world for the prophetic events of the end times.

— At the same time, Satan and fallen human beings will work in tandem to produce an evil that exceeds what humanity could produce alone. A cooperative evil that originates in the sinful hearts of man and the spiritual realm of Satan.

— "mystery" - the revelation of a future climax of lawlessness that would follow the removal of the Restrainer

— Paul uses the term in connection with revelation and publication (Rom 16:26; 1 Cor 2:6-12; Eph 1:9; 3:3-5; Col 1:25-27)

— "lawlessness" - with a definite article, denotes the definite aim of the devil to overthrow the law of God and establish his own rule (not merely disorder and violation of the law in general)

— Asserting the absence of moral absolutes; right and wrong, etc.

— Notice: the "man of lawlessness is revealed" (v3), but the "mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (as of 2000 years ago) (Cf. 1 John 4:3)

- "...is already at work" - refers to the active operation of some supernatural power (Cf. 1 Thess 2:13, the working of the Word of God in the readers)
- This "spirit of the Antichrist" will be in the world long before the Antichrist himself shows up. This "spirit" was present back in the first century (51 AD).
- Before the Antichrist shows up publicly, during the Church Age there has been and will continue to be a "mystery of lawlessness" that is present in the world. Before the Antichrist shows up, the world will be enveloped by the "spirit of the Antichrist."
- Because of this, there have been and will continue to be many people who share the characteristics of the Antichrist (see chart: **How Satan Imitates God and the Antichrist Imitates Jesus Christ** below)
- This is why it's important for Church Age believers to know and understand biblical information about the Antichrist. The characteristics about the Antichrist will be prefigured many times throughout history until the real Antichrist is revealed.
- This emphasizes the need for Christians in the Church Age to know how to recognize truth from error. If they don't, they'll be pulled into deception after deception, which won't affect your salvation, but it will affect your fellowship with and growth in Christ.
- If Church Age believers are not testing the spirits to know and understand truth, they will be deceived (not by *the* Antichrist) by the "little" antichrists who will always be present until the advent of the Antichrist.
- Key verses in Scripture that warn believers to "test the spirits": Deut 13:1-5; Prov 30:6; Is 8:19-20; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor 14:29; Gal 1:8-9; 1 Thess 5:20-21; 2 Peter 3:16-17; 1 John 4:1; Jude 3; Rev 2:2; 22:17-19
- "...He who now restrains" - *katechō*, the "Restrainer"; masculine gender in Greek
- The Restrainer changed in gender from neuter (v6) to masculine (v7) in Greek. This change in gender from neuter to masculine is a great description of the Holy Spirit.
- The Greek noun for Spirit is *pneuma* which is a neuter noun in Greek. However, when Jesus described the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room (John 14:16-17; 16:7-8), He used the neuter gender, then used the masculine pronoun "He/Him."
- When Paul uses the neuter (v6) then switches to the masculine pronoun (v7) to describe the Restrainer, he is describing the Holy Spirit in the same way Jesus did in John 14 and John 16. "Spirit" (*pneuma*) is a neuter noun, but is described using masculine pronouns (He/Him).
- Who is the "Restrainer"?
- If you ask 10 theologians, you'll get 8 different opinions/views about who the Restrainer is. The top 5 suspects are:
 1. Rome - many in the early church believed this "Restrainer" was the Roman Empire. But the Roman Empire is long gone today, and the "Restrainer" is still active.

2. Satan - this is odd because the "man of lawlessness" will be the ultimate Satanic masterpiece (Cf. v9). If Satan was holding back his own man, that would make no sense.
3. Human government - God created government (Noahic Covenant) to restrain evil in the post-flood world. The problem is that government is run by people with a sin nature and a tendency toward corruption. If governments tend toward corruption, how does the government restrain evil?
4. Michael the archangel - the problem with this view, of which there is little to no evidence to support, is the shift in gender for "restrains" in 2 Thess 2:6-7. The first use of "restrain" (v6) is neuter, the second use of "restrains" (v7) is masculine. In addition, Jude 9 makes it clear that Michael the archangel wants nothing to do with contending with Satan. Michael's primary role is the protection of Israel (Cf. Dan 12:1).
5. Holy Spirit - there are three primary reasons to believe the restrainer is the Holy Spirit:
 - (A) The Holy Spirit is omnipotent (2 Thess 2:9)

- Whomever or whatever the restrainer is, he/it has to be powerful enough to restrain Satan's disclosure and revealing of the Antichrist.
- There's no question that the Holy Spirit has both the power and ability to hold back the Antichrist, Satan's chosen man, until the right time.

(B) The Holy Spirit is active in the world (Gen 6:3; John 16:7-11)

- The Holy Spirit has ministries in the believer, He has ministries in the church, and He has ministries in the world.
- The Holy Spirit here is being identified by one of His ministries rather than by name. Here, He is identified by His ministry of restraint.

(C) The Holy Spirit view handles the switch in gender (neuter -> masculine) between v6 and v7

- *Pneuma* (a neuter noun) is often used for the Holy Spirit, and Jesus often referred to the Holy Spirit as "He." So the Bible uses both the neuter and the masculine to refer to the Holy Spirit, much like Paul does with "restrains" in v6-7.

— If the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit, present and indwelling the Church, then why doesn't Paul just say it plainly? Likely because he identified the Holy Spirit has the "restrainer" during his ministry and teaching in Thessalonica. His second epistle to them is a "review class" (Cf. v5). See note: **TheRestrainer** below.

- "...will do so" - continue to restrain; hold back

- "...until" - there is a time limit upon the present restraint. This all cannot happen while the Church is still in the world.

- "...He" - masculine gender, referring to "the one restraining"

— By this change in gender, we can conclude that whoever is restraining the appearance of the Antichrist has to be a living entity, not a thing. And he has to be very powerful since

according to v9 the Antichrist's appearance is a work of Satan.

- "...is removed" - *ginomai*, aorist tense refers to a definite event. Subjunctive mode leaves the time undetermined.

— The Restrainer is not removed (as if by a higher power), but "removes Himself"; He is not taken out of the way, but rather takes Himself out of the way.

— The Restrainer (the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church) must "remove Himself" before the Antichrist can be revealed. Thus, Spirit-indwelt believers must be removed from the earth prior to the advent/revealing of the Antichrist.

— This verse lays out the Rapture of the Church as a prerequisite condition for the revelation of the Antichrist to the world

— The purpose of His withdrawal is to allow sin to expend itself in an accelerated way, forcing a quick separation of the chaff and wheat

— Some question whether "removed" is an accurate translation of *ginomai*. The most common translation is "to be, or become." However, you have to put the word in context to understand where the Restrainer is "to be." The Greek words that follow *ginomai* are *ek* ("out of") and implies both time and place, and *mesos*, which means "middle" or "midst."

— Put the whole thought together and you see the Restrainer has "to be out of the midst" of the time and place He's currently in before the Lawless One can be revealed. 400 years ago the KJV translators decided that the English phrase "taken out of the way" while not a literal translation, best conveyed Paul's intent. Most modern translations agree.

— The Restrainer (Holy Spirit) withdraws only as a Restrainer of wickedness, not as the sovereign Convictor and Regenerator of sinners; this is evident by the huge number of people who come to salvation after the Rapture and during the Tribulation, as no one can come to salvation apart from His work.

- The interpretation of the Holy Spirit as the Restrainer contributes to the doctrine of the pre-Tribulational Rapture:

1. The Restrainer holds back the revelation of the Antichrist (v6-7)
2. The Restrainer = the omnipotent Holy Spirit (v9)
3. The Holy Spirit permanently indwells all Christians (John 14:16; Rom 8:9)
4. Spirit indwelt Christians must first be removed prior to the advent of the Antichrist

— So in order for the seven-year Tribulation period to begin, the Holy Spirit's (Restrainer's) ministry has to stop. That means that the "containers" (Church Age believers) in which the Holy Spirit permanently indwells must leave.

— Paul uses this to comfort the Thessalonian church about the forged letter that they received, claiming that they were already in the Tribulation period. If the Tribulation period had begun at that time, Paul says, the Thessalonian believers wouldn't be here because their very presence in the world was stopping ("restraining") the Antichrist.

[1 John 4:3]

The Restrainer

Why did Paul not simply come out and use the words "Holy Spirit" in 2:6-7? In Scripture, it is common for the Holy Spirit to be identified by a particular ministry that He provides. In John 14:17, the Holy Spirit is identified by His "ministry of truth." In John 14:26, He is identified by His ministry as a "Helper." In Rom 8:6, He is identified by His ministry of "providing spiritual life." The Holy Spirit has a role in restraining evil in the world (Gen 6:3; Is 59:19). In this passage, Paul similarly points out the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit without expressly mentioning the specific name "Holy Spirit." So in 2 Thess 2 when Paul calls the Holy Spirit "the Restrainer" he is identifying the Holy Spirit by His ministry, which in the case is thwarting Satan's present purpose in bringing forth the Antichrist.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit assumed a special relationship to the Church as its Indweller (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). He came to abide with the Church forever. After completion of His work in the Church, He will resume the relation to mankind that He had before Pentecost. The Greek word for Spirit is neuter (v6). The personality of the Restrainer in v7 is masculine (Cf. John 15:26; 16:13-14; Eph 1:13-14).

In addition, we need to understand that both 1 Thess, and especially 2 Thess are a "review class" on what Paul had already taught them about this during his three week visit with them. Paul wrote both epistles a very short time after he left Thessalonica. In 2 Thess 2:5, Paul reminded them that he had discussed the Antichrist and the Restrainer openly with them during his visit. In 2 Thess, Paul is simply reviewing prior material that he communicated with them verbally when he planted the church. So it shouldn't bother us that Paul doesn't say "Holy Spirit" specifically because he has already gone over this doctrine when he was with them in person, and in his second epistle he is just reminding them of what he said earlier.

This identification of the Restrainer, widely held in the early church, is most appealing. This view may also reflect apostolic teaching. The special presence of the Spirit as the Indweller of saints will terminate abruptly at the *harpazō* as it began abruptly at Pentecost. Once the body of Christ has been caught away to heaven, the Spirit's ministry will revert back to what He did for believers during the OT period. His function of restraining evil through the body of Christ (John 16:7-11; 1 John 4:4) will cease, similarly to the way he terminated his striving in the days of Noah (Gen 6:3). At that point the reins will be removed from lawlessness and the Satanically-inspired rebellion will begin. It appears that *to katechon* ("what is holding back") was well-known at Thessalonica as a title for the Holy Spirit on whom the readers had come to depend in their personal attempts to combat lawlessness (1 Thess 1:6; 4:8; 5:19; 2 Thess 2:13).

Six Reasons the Restrainer Refers to the Holy Spirit

1. The Wicked One is a personality and his operations include the realm of the spiritual. The Restrainer must likewise be a personality and of a spiritual order, to resist the wiles of the Devil and to hold Antichrist in check until the time of his revealing.
2. To achieve all that is to be accomplished, the Restrainer must be a member of the Godhead. He must be stronger than the Man of Sin and stronger than Satan.
3. This present age is in a particular sense the "dispensation of the Spirit," for He works in a way uncommon to other ages as an abiding Presence within the children of God.
4. The work of the Spirit since His advent has included the restraint of evil. The Spirit is God's Righteous Agent for the age, and there are many reasons to be grateful for His restraining hand upon this world's iniquity. None but the Lawful One could restrain this world's iniquity.
5. It is not difficult to establish that although the Spirit was not resident on earth during OT days, whatever restraint exerted was by the Spirit (Is 59:19). The wickedness of Noah's day and the fact that life went on as usual in blindness to impending destruction is used of the Spirit in vivid portrayal of careless and wicked men upon whom Tribulation judgment shall fall.
6. By mere elimination, the Holy Spirit must be the Restrainer. All other possibilities fall short of meeting the requirements of one who is to hold in check the forces of evil until the manifestation of Antichrist.

In light of this Scriptural parallel, it is exceedingly significant that in the days immediately preceding the destruction of the flood, the restraining work of the Spirit is emphasized. However, even if the Spirit is the restraining force, He Himself will not be removed. The emphasis in v7 refers to the Restrainer's change in activity rather than His change in location. The words Paul used in v7 (ἐκ μέσου γένηται, *ginomai ek mesos*, "taken out of the way") refer to "a voluntary withdrawal to another sphere." This is also its meaning in ancient Greek literature. Though His restraining ministry, perhaps through the church or civil government, will be removed, this does not mean that the Holy Spirit will remove Himself from the world. After all, apart from the influence of the Spirit, there can be no miracle such as conversion.

Who/What is NOT the Restrainer

The State Of Israel

Paul knew Israel was in its last days, and would be absent for most of the Church Age. If he didn't learn it from his time with the Lord in Arabia (Gal 1:11-24) he certainly knew it from his attendance at the council in Jerusalem. There, James disclosed that Israel was being set aside until the Lord took from among the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:13-18). And Jesus said that when the Antichrist makes his appearance many in Israel will

accept him, thinking he's the Messiah (Is 28:15; John 5:43). Besides, Israel is a nation, not a being.

The Roman Empire

The predominant view in the early church, and the restraining power was embodied in the person of the emperor. Today, it is the candidate preferred by those who believe all end times prophecies were fulfilled by 70 AD (preterists). This is interesting to me because their candidate for the Antichrist is the Roman Emperor Nero. So rather than restraining the man of lawlessness, the Roman Empire was responsible for bringing the Antichrist to power, and rather than being taken out of the way so Nero could be revealed, they made him their leader. Many who believe in the future fulfillment of end times prophecies see this chain of events repeating itself with a revived Roman Empire and the real Antichrist. Also, like Israel, the Roman Empire was a political entity, not a being.

Law And Government

The general principle of law and government and the rule of law has been a restrainer of sorts by establishing rules for acceptable behavior among people. Paul even teaches that the rightful duty of government is the restraint of evil (Rom 13:1-7). This is especially true in cases where legal systems have been based on Judeo-Christian principles. But as we are increasingly coming to realize, a system of law and government is powerless unless the subjects of the system are voluntarily obedient. And once again we don't use masculine personal pronouns in reference to a system. In addition, human government will reach its zenith during the Tribulation, with the Antichrist presiding over a one-world government (Dan 7:23; Rev 13:7,16-18). How can human government restrain the Antichrist when the Antichrist will control the world through an all-powerful human government?

Michael the Archangel

That brings us to the Archangel Michael. In the Book of Daniel, Michael is seen as Israel's protector (Dan 10:21; 12:1). But Paul never spoke of him at all, and in the entire NT he's only mentioned 2x, once when he was disputing with Satan for the body of Moses (Jude 9), and once in his expulsion of Satan from Heaven just before the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Rev 12:7-9).

According to Dan 12:1 Michael will arise to protect the believing Remnant of Israel at the same time. That means having just expelled Satan from heaven, Michael would have to rush to defend the Remnant of Israel against him as Satan unleashes his full fury against God's people on Earth (Rev 12:13-17).

So here are the major problems with seeing Michael as the restrainer. First, how could Paul have expected us to know he was referring to Michael as the restrainer if in all his writings he never once mentioned Michael in any context at all? If Paul had told the Thessalonians that Michael is the restrainer, would he have failed to mention it in any of his letters? I don't think so. And second, how could Michael stand aside to permit Satan's power to be

unleashed without restraint while at the same time standing up to protect Israel from the very thing he has just enabled Satan to let loose upon them. It doesn't make sense. In addition, it's clear from Jude 9 that Michael does not like or want to fight with Satan. See [Rapture 10 When is the Rapture? - Part 6 \(2 Thess 2:6-7\)](#) and [Rapture 46 Pre-Wrath - Part 5 \(1 Thess 4:18\)](#) for more information about the Restrainer.

(c) Destruction of the lawless one (2:8-9)

8 **Then** that lawless one **will be revealed**, whom **the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth** and **bring to an end** by the appearance of His coming;

8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

8 Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of his mouth, rendering him powerless by the manifestation of his coming.

8 And then shall that Wicked [One] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

- After the Rapture, "the lawless one" will have greater freedom to enact his lawless policies. He will do things that will eventually result in his being identified as the Antichrist.

- "Then" - *tote*, this emphatically asserts that the "lawless one" will at some future time be uncovered, after the Restrainer removes Himself from His work of restraining

- The context of the passage now shifts from before the Tribulation period to during the Tribulation period. From this point on, the power of the Antichrist will be unrestrained, allowing him to do Satan's worst work.

- Isn't it interesting that we (believers) are never instructed to look for the rising up of this sinister personage (the Antichrist), who occupies such a large place in prophecy?!

- "...will be revealed" - *apokalyptō*, unveiling, uncover, disclose; same word (except in verb form) where we get the name of the book of Revelation

- "...the Lord will eliminate" - the Antichrist will get his day in the sun (for 42 months, Rev 13:5), but then he'll be wiped out at the Second Coming (Cf. "a complete destruction" in Dan 9:27). The destruction of the Antichrist's world system will be destroyed "in one day" (Rev 18:8), even "in one hour" (Rev 18:10).

- "...with the breath of His mouth" - an odd thing to say until you understand OT prophecy. Is 11:4 says: And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

- The "breath of His mouth" equates with the "sharp sword" of Rev 19:15, which He uses to "strike down the nations"

- "...bring to an end" - *katargeō*, defeated but not annihilated; same used by Paul to describe our flesh/sin nature (Rom 6:6)

— The Lord's "appearance" (*epiphaneia*, 1:10) is a different and later event in His "coming" (*parousia*) than the "gathering" (*episynagoges*) event (v1). The first event is the Rapture; the second is the Second Coming.

9 *that is*, the one whose **coming** is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all **power** and **false signs** and **wonders**,

9 *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

9 The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the power of Satan. He will use every kind of power, including miraculous signs, lying wonders,

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

- "...coming" - *paraousia*, suggests a parody of Christ's coming

- "...power" - *dynamis*, the cause of the miracle; the inherent power producing it; translated as "miracles" in Matt 11:20, referring to the miracles that Jesus had performed

- "...false" - *pseudos*, inauthentic, counterfeit (Cf. Dan 11:36). This refers to the results of the miracles, not with their lack of genuineness or supernatural origin.

— These signs and wonders are called "false" not because they won't actually happen (because they will), but because they will come from the wrong source: Satan, not God.

- "...signs" - *sēmeion*, used in John 20:30 to describe all of the signs/miracles that Jesus performed during His ministry, as described in John's Gospel, to authenticate Him as the Messiah

- "...wonders" - *teras*, miracles that elicit awe (Cf. Acts 2:22)

— Each of these Greek words are used to describe the miracles that Jesus performed during His ministry, which means that the miracles that the Antichrist will perform during the Tribulation will be just as real and authentic as those that Jesus performed.

— Satan's power to perform miracles is absolutely real and true, which is why we can't authenticate truth based on a miracle. This is why Scripture over and over calls on us to test every experience (1 John 4:1).

— Satan, as a created being, does not have the same power that Jesus has (Satan is not omnipotent), but from the human perspective the miracles and signs that Satan will perform through the Antichrist will appear so real and authentic that they will look like things that Jesus would have done (and did do).

— So the Antichrist is going to "put on a show" on par with what Jesus did during His ministry as far as miracles go, but the miracles he performs will be "lying" signs because they don't come from God, they don't represent truth, and they are designed to deceive the masses.

— Many people today are looking for signs and wonders in order to prove the existence of God. And one day, according to this verse, they are going to get the signs and wonders show, but the problem is that they will be "false" signs and wonders performed by the Antichrist under the power and "in accord with the activity" of Satan.

- The Antichrist will appear very similar to Jesus Christ. That is the main thrust of this verse: that the Antichrist will perform miracles, signs, and wonders on par with the miracles that Jesus performed.

— The prefix "Anti" can mean "against" but it can also mean "in place of."

- See [Satanic/Demonic Miracles in Scripture](#) for a complete list of every miracle in Scripture powered by Satan.

(d) The destruction of the lawless one's followers (2:10-12)

10 and with all the **deception** of wickedness for **those who perish**, because **they did not accept** the love of the truth **so as to be saved**.

10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

10 and every type of evil to deceive those who are dying, those who refused to love the truth that would save them.

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

- These people are in a state of delusion, not because they aren't elect (as Calvinism teaches), but because they did not "accept" the free gift of salvation

— They received opportunity after opportunity to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they refused to do it. Thus, they are in a state of delusion; they are deceived.

— When the human heart becomes so hardened, God will cease striving with them and gives them over to what they really want, which is rejection of Christ and truth

— This is a judgment that is far worse than any judgment in the book of Revelation

- "...deception" - as Jesus was explaining to Peter, James, John, and Andrew the signs leading up to the end of the age, the first thing He described was deception (Matt 24:4-5,11)

— Jesus doesn't give us ways to counter the false teachers who will deceive many; it's almost as if He presents their presence as inevitable

— Why/how are these people so deceived? Because the Antichrist will perform miracles, signs, and wonders on par with what Jesus did (Cf. v9; Rev 13:2-4,12-14; 17:8)

- "...those who perish" - same word used in John 3:16; the entire reason Jesus came into the world was to provide a path to salvation so that the human race would not perish

— But if a person rejects the free gift of salvation, they are left with nothing but eventual destruction, which Jesus came into the world to protect us from

- "...they" - notice the pronoun (not "we" (v13), referring to Paul and the Thessalonian believers) but "they" (referring to the earth dwellers [unbelievers] during the Tribulation)
- "...did not accept" - did not believe; in this verse, "accept" is a synonym for "believe"
- These unbelievers put themselves in a position to perish because they rejected the "love of the truth" that would've led them to salvation (John 3:19)
- Some conclude that "them that perish" and "they received not the love of the truth" describe those who heard the gospel before the Rapture, rejected it, and will be unable to be saved during the Tribulation. However, it seems more likely that these phrases describe all unbelievers in the Tribulation, not just those who heard the gospel and rejected it before the Rapture.
- They are in this position of their own free will...
- But didn't God harden Pharaoh's heart? Yes He did, but not until the 6th plague. Many people misinterpret this exchange in Exodus and believe that the reason Pharaoh didn't believe and release the Israelites is because he couldn't because God hardened his heart. Not true.
- God said in Ex 4:21, "I will" harden Pharaoh's heart. Then Pharaoh hardened his own heart at least 6x (Ex 7:13; 7:22; 8:15; 8:19; 8:32; 9:7) before God actually hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex 9:12).
- No one who is currently or who will end up in hell can ever look back at God and accuse Him of being unjust and not giving them any opportunity for salvation, not even Pharaoh.
- These "earth dwellers" during the Tribulation period are in the position to receive the deluding influence from God because they have put themselves into that position over and over and over again by rejecting the truth of the gospel
- "...so as to be saved" - God's Word is mandatory for someone to be saved (justified) and for progressive sanctification (Cf. John 17:17; 1 Tim 3:15; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23)

11 For this reason God will send upon them a **deluding influence** so that they will believe what is false,

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

11 For this reason, God will send them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe **[the] lie**:

- "...deluding influence" - it is God who sends the deluding influence to confirm those who have already rejected Him in unbelief

— Those who refuse to believe and accept the truth will find that judgment comes upon them in the form of an inability to accept the truth

— It is both a punishment/judgment and a moral result of their rejection of truth

- These verses reflect the OT concept that God is sovereign even in the activities of the powers of evil (Cf. Ex 4:21; Joshua 11:20; 1 Kings 22:19-23; 1 Chr 21:1). The result will be that men will believe that which is false, as Satan works through the Antichrist.
- The most severe judgment God gives is to give one over to a reprobate mind, to remove His hand from a person, and confirm them in their unbelief (Cf. Matt 10:28)
- It is amazing the things people will believe once they reject the truth: evolution, transgenderism, astrology, etc.
- Once you reject the truth, you're a sitting duck for all kinds of deception. Israel, because they did not believe in their Messiah 2000 years ago, will be open to believe in the Antichrist (Cf. John 5:43).
- The earth dwellers during the Tribulation period will be ripe to believe deception. The first Seal judgment, they will believe in the Antichrist (Matt 24:5; Rev 6:2).
- "...[the] lie" [KJV] - *pseudei*, definite article dative neuter singular = "the lie"; a specific lie that the Antichrist states: that he is the messiah

12 in order that they all **may be judged** who **did not believe the truth**, but **took pleasure in wickedness**.

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

12 Then all who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

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

- God sends this judgment of delusion on the followers of the Antichrist because He is a God of judgment

- "...may be judged" - *krinō*, subjunctive mood (mood of possibility), meaning that when God brings this deluding judgment upon these people during the Tribulation He won't do it arbitrarily (because they were somehow not "elected") but because they didn't believe in His Son out of their own free will

— Verse 10 says they "did not accept the love of the truth." Because they wouldn't believe in the right object for salvation (Jesus Christ), God says He will bring a deluding influence so they will be confirmed in their belief of the wrong thing

— Those who show up at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15) will be there by their own choosing, not because God sent them there

— No one is forced or "elected" to show up at the Great White Throne judgment...they will be there because of their rejection of Jesus Christ as their Savior, by their own free will (Cf. John 3:36)

- "...did not believe the truth" - it doesn't say that these people did not have the ability to believe the truth; it says that they didn't believe the truth that they had full opportunity to believe in for salvation

— Reformed Theology (Calvinism) believes in Total Depravity, which they define as man is so depraved that he cannot even believe the gospel. They define "depravity" as "inability."

— Because of this, they believe that God has to impart something on the front end of salvation: the "gift" of faith. They believe that God needs to regenerate a person before they place their faith in Christ, otherwise the person has no ability to believe on their own (Cf. John 5:40).

— Unfortunately, in their belief system, the only people who receive the "gift" of faith are the "elect"...those God has chosen beforehand to be saved. Everyone else God purposely sends to hell.

— This unbiblical belief system opens the door for people to show up at the Great White Throne judgment and accuse God of injustice and unfairness because they never had the opportunity to be saved.

— If this belief system was true, why would God have to bring on this deluding influence to unbelievers during the Tribulation period? Couldn't God just say that they weren't "elected" so He did not give them the "gift" of faith, so they are unable to be saved?

— There is an actual YouTube video of the late R.C. Sproul, a devout Calvinist/Reformed Theologian, speaking on the subject of "double-predestination" (the belief that God "elected" those who were saved, but also "elected" those who couldn't be saved and will be sent to hell). He stated unequivocally that if you make it to heaven and your mother did not, you will rejoice (because God will also be rejoicing) that your mother is in hell, because that's why she was created. God predestined her to go there.

- "...took pleasure in wickedness" - the explanation of why these unbelievers never placed their faith in Christ (Cf. John 3:19-21)

Scripture's Four Judgments				
NAME	SHEEP AND GOAT	JUDGMENT OF THE JEWS	BEMA SEAT	GREAT WHITE THRONE
SCRIPTURE	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	1 Cor 3:10-15	Rev 20:11-15
LOCATION	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	Heaven	Earth
AUDIENCE	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	Church Age believers	All unsaved
WHEN	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	After Rapture	After Millennium
PURPOSE	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	Reward believers	Degree of punishment in hell
EVALUATION	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	Works taken through fire	If not in the Book; judged by books

Some use 2 Thess 2:10-12 to teach that if someone hears the gospel during the Church Age, understands it, but rejects it and they miss the Rapture, they are included in the audience that these verses address (unbelievers who will be judged by the deluding influence of God during the Tribulation).

That's not what these verses are saying. It's understandable why someone would teach that (to create urgency for salvation), and that's a good thing, but there are plenty of blessings that people who fall into this category will forfeit, however they will still have plenty of opportunity to believe in Christ during the Tribulation. Unfortunately, it's highly likely that if they do come to Christ during the Tribulation, they will be martyred for their faith.

The gospel will be preached aggressively around the world during the Tribulation period, by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7:1-8; Cf. 14:6), the Two Witnesses (Rev 11:3), so there will be plenty of opportunity for those who may have heard the gospel during the Church Age and didn't accept it, to accept it during the Tribulation.

The problem with this interpretation is that it's dealing with an issue that is out of the context of this passage. The only thing this passage is dealing with is what unbelievers in the Tribulation will experience. It's not dealing at all with people who reject the gospel during the Church Age and miss the Rapture.

Thomas Ice

"Salvation in the Tribulation," online: www.pre-trib.org, accessed 20 April 2024, 1.



"...the context of the entire passage relates to what will happen in the forthcoming Tribulation period. The context for when 'they did not receive the love of the truth' in verse 10 clearly will be taking place during the Tribulation. The 2nd Thessalonians 2 passage is talking about the response of unbelievers during the Tribulation. If the passage were referring to an unbelieving response prior to the Tribulation, with a result that such a decision would impact one's destiny during the Tribulation, then the passage would have probably been worded differently in order to convey such a message. Since it is not so configured, then there is no support for the belief that a person's rejection of the Gospel necessarily seals his fate if he . . .

Thomas Ice

"Salvation in the Tribulation," online: www.pre-trib.org, accessed 20 April 2024, 1.



...enters the Tribulation. Specific support that verses 8–12 encompass events that will transpire in the Tribulation begins in verse 8, which says, 'And then that lawless one will be revealed . . .' In other words, 'then' denotes a shift from the current Church Age into a future era: the Tribulation. Nothing in verses 8–12 takes any part of that passage out of the context of the Tribulation. All, in my opinion, would agree that verses 8–9 refer to things the Antichrist will do during the Tribulation. Verse 10 is clearly related to its preceding context and speaks of something that will take place during the Tribulation."

For additional information on this passage, see the following:

[2 Thess 2:1-12](#)

[Couch-Post-Tribulationism and 2 Thess 2:1-12](#)

[Feinberg, Paul-The Rapture and 2 Thess 2](#)

(3) The contrasting destiny of the righteous (2:13-17)

(A) Thanksgiving for their calling (2:13-14)

13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers *and sisters* beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.**

13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, 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.

13 At all times we are obligated to thank God for you, brothers who are loved by the Lord, because God chose you to be the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through faith in the truth.

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

- "But" - initiates the contrast between the destiny of the Antichrist's followers (v10-12) with the destiny of the righteous (v13-17)

- "...we" - notice Paul's switch in pronouns beginning in this verse, as compared with the first 12 verses, where he used "they/them"

- This is evidence that the church will not be present during the time period that v10-12 describes, namely the Tribulation

- "...always give thanks to God" - much of Paul's prayer life that we see in Scripture is not Paul asking for things, but rather it is him giving thanks for what God has already done (Cf. Phil 4:4)

- Here, rather than being upset that they believed a forged letter that was outside of his character and what he had previously taught them while he was with them, he instead thanks God that they are saved. He's counting his blessings.

- "...God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation" - see [Soteriology 02 Election \(2 Peter 3:9\)](#) for a complete overview of the doctrine of election.

- "...sanctification" - Paul gives us a clue that he is referring to the second tense of salvation

- "...by the Spirit" - you cannot over-emphasize this little phrase enough: we cannot sanctify ourselves! Unless we are obedient to the promptings of the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, all we're going to do in our Christian walk is fail (Gal 5:16).

- God never intended His commands in the second tense of salvation to be executed under human power and self-will. This is why so many Christians are frustrated in their Christian life...because they are trying to do the right thing in the wrong way.

- Many Reformed Theologians today are saying that once a person comes to Christ, the old nature passes away. This teaching comes from a misinterpretation of 2 Cor 5:17. Fact is,

once you come to Christ you're much more aware of your sin nature than you ever were before.

- "...faith in the truth" - belief in the gospel, but in the context it is in contrast to "those who did not believe the truth" (v12)

— Paul is clear here that our sanctification by the Spirit is through faith in the truth

A paraphrase of 2 Thess 2:13: We ought to thank God always for you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you, a first fruit of the European mission, for deliverance by means of the Rapture from the judgments that shall befall those who follow the man of lawlessness in the Tribulation. God made this choice by setting you who believe the truth apart from those who will believe the Antichrist's lie.

14 It was for **this He called** you through our gospel, that you may obtain **the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

14 With this purpose in mind, he called you through our proclamation of the gospel so that you would obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

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

- "...this" - refers back to the "sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth"

- "...He called" - *kaleō*, best described by Jesus in John 16:7-11 as the "convincing" ministry of the Holy Spirit to unbelievers, convicting them of the single sin that will keep them out of heaven and cause them to die in their sins: unbelief in Jesus Christ (Cf. Rom 8:30)

- "...the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" - the doxological purpose of God, to bring glory to Himself

(B) Exhortation to stand firm (2:15)

15 So then, brothers *and sisters*, **stand firm** and hold on to the **traditions** which you were taught, whether **by word of mouth or by letter from us**.

15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

15 So then, brothers, stand firm, and cling to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

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

- "...stand firm" - Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to stand firm and not be "shaken" (v2) by false teaching or false teachers by "holding on to the traditions" that Paul taught them originally, and not believing teacher or even letters they received (as if from Paul) that contradicted his teaching
- The Thessalonians were living in an age of spiritual deception, as we are today. When Paul spoke of the end times, he specifically warned against spiritual deception (1 Tim 4:1f).
- "...traditions" - sometimes tradition is a bad thing (Cf. Mark 7:13); the difference between good tradition and bad tradition is known by whose tradition it is
- In Mark 7:13, it was the Pharisees/religious leader's traditions; what Paul is talking about here are God's traditions. Any tradition that contradicts biblical truth, we are to throw it out.
- "...by word of *mouth* or by letter from us" - how are we to recognize a tradition as good or bad? If the tradition was past down by "us" (the apostles), either by word of mouth (in person teaching) or by letter/epistle.
- If the tradition came through the teachings or writings of an apostle, it was good; if it did not, it was not
- While this sounds somewhat arrogant, Paul was an apostle, a person designated to be a conduit of divine revelation. So Paul, and all of the apostles, had a right (even obligation) to say this (Cf. 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Peter 3:2).

(C) Prayer for strength (2:16-17)

16 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**,

16 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,

16 May our Lord Jesus, the Messiah himself, and may God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,

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

- "...loved" - *agapē*, the highest form of love: unconditional, self-sacrificing; eager to give and not get

- "...given" - interesting that right after mentioning *agapē* love, Paul describes what God has given to us (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 1 Cor 13:4-7)

1. "...eternal comfort" - when the Holy Spirit indwells a believer at the point of faith, He gives that believer comfort, exhortation, and encouragement (2 Cor 1:3-4)
2. "...good hope" - as a result of the Spirit's "sealing" of every believer, we have a "good" hope because my arrival in glory is a done deal because of the Holy Spirit's eternal relationship with the believer

- Hope (*elpis*) in the Bible is never an "I hope so" it's always an "I know so"; it is never used to describe some uncertainty, such as "I hope the stock market goes up." It's always used to describe a certainty in God.
- It's not an "I *hope* this works out" thing, it's an "I *know* this works out" thing
 - "...by grace" - if a believer does not have the complete 100% assurance of their salvation, they are not living up to their privileges in Christ
 - Many times this is because we think we don't deserve it, and that's a correct thought: we don't deserve it
 - But God has decided to not deal with sinful humanity based on what they deserve; He has decided to deal with sinful humanity on the basis of grace
 - Grace is the most radical idea ever proposed to mankind. It is completely and totally contrary to how our world works and the way we think and act. It is counter-intuitive.
 - The way the world works is...you please your boss, you get a raise or promotion; if you please your teacher, you get good grades; you please your parents, you get privileges. You have to do something to earn favor first before you actually receive it.
 - But then God comes along and says, I'm going to deal with you on that basis. Instead, I'm going to give you favor, give you blessings, that you have not done anything to deserve (nor could you do anything to deserve).
 - It's such a foreign idea to us that we have a hard time believing it and accepting it. So we as human beings are always trying to insert some type of work we need to do into the equation in order for grace to make sense to us.
 - Because grace is so contrary to everything we see, hear, and experience, we think it cannot be true, so we need to hear the principles of grace taught over and over again, repeated constantly, so that we understand and are reminded constantly of what it is.

Definition of Eternal Security



“The new birth has given every believer the confident assurance of God’s certain and future blessings. The word ‘hope’ in the Bible does not involve anxious wishing or uncertainty; rather it means a confident assurance of something yet future. Unlike the empty and false hopes of this world-system, God has given believers a ‘living hope’ of guaranteed future blessings ‘by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’...”

Dennis Rokser, *Shall Never Perish Forever*, p. 53

17 comfort and **strengthen your hearts** in every good work and word.

17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good action and word.

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

- This is a prayer that the God who, by His grace, has already given us so much, would give us even more

- "...strengthen your hearts" - we're so obsessed with the outer/physical being that we often forget/ignore our heart

— God cares about our hearts, and knows that when our hearts/inner man are strengthened, it will be evident on the outside (Eph 3:16)

— God wants to strengthen our inner self so that we can be productive for Him, in both our actions and our words