

Journeys With God

2 Thessalonians

Chapter 2

The Road Upward:

Revisiting the Future

Chapter 2 Summary

2 Thessalonians 2:1 - Look Up

Now, we ask you, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

Truth to Learn

In the midst of your suffering, look up! He is coming soon!

Behind the Words

The word translated “now” is *de*. This particle serves to introduce a new topic. It is most often translated as “and” or “but.”

“Concerning” is translated from the Greek preposition *huper* (hyper). This word generally means “over” or “above.” But, it can also mean “about,” “concerning,” or “with respect to.”

Parousia is the Greek noun translated “coming.” This word is derived from *pareimi*, meaning “to be present.” *Parousia* can refer either to the presence of something or it can refer to the coming of someone into one’s presence.

“Gathering together” is from the verb *episunagōgē*. This is a double compound word made up of *epi*, meaning “upon,” *sun*, meaning “with” or “together with,” and *agō*, meaning “to lead.” Putting these all together we see that *episunagōgē* literally means “to lead or bring together upon a place.” In other words, it means “a gathering together into one place.”

Meaning Explained

The Apostle Paul spent most of the first chapter of this letter talking about God’s righteous judgment: grace for believers and tortuous, blazing fire for unbelievers. This was necessary to reassure the Christians in Thessalonica that God is always righteous. Now he builds on that concept and proceeds to explain to them that God has not deserted them. The reason they needed this reassurance is that there were some false teachers in the church who were teaching that the rapture had already come and they had been left behind. Not only that, they were teaching that the Day of the Lord (the time of God’s judgment of mankind) had begun.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Therefore, Paul now will explain to them (and to us) some of the truths that he had previously taught them. We need to keep in mind that there is a difference between the Day of Christ (the rapture) and the Day of the Lord (the time of God’s judgment). By maintaining this critical distinction, we will be able to clearly see through some of the confusion that various teachers have taught concerning this second chapter of 2 Thessalonians.

Paul starts off this chapter talking about the rapture. He describes it as “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” This “coming of our Lord” is not a reference to the time of God’s judgment, but to the event that is the culmination of God’s grace. This is clear because he couples it with the “gathering together to Him.” The only future event spoken of in these terms is the rapture, when all Christians (those living as well as those who have previously died physically) “will be caught up together ... to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Application

Throughout history, Christians have been persecuted and have suffered at the hands of non-believers. More Christians are suffering today than at any time in the past. But, don't despair, my friends, God is coming soon. When He does, He will take us out of the world. Then, He will judge our persecutors while we enjoy fellowship with our Savior.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 - No, Not Yet

that you not be quickly shaken in mind nor troubled, either by a spirit or by a message or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ is come.

Truth to Learn

All Christians need to read and study the Bible for themselves.

Behind the Words

In the previous verse, the words “we ask” are from *erōtaō*, meaning “to make a request.” Then, this verse starts out with *eis to*, which is one of Paul’s favorite idioms, indicating the subject of Paul’s request. Today, we might say, “Please ... don’t be quickly shaken ...”

“quickly” is translated from *tacheōs*, meaning “quickly,” “hastily,” or “soon.”

The word “shaken” is from *saleuō*, which is based on the noun *salos*, meaning “an ocean wave.” It is a picture of a ship being buffeted by waves. Thus, *saleuō* means “to be rocked back and forth” or “to be shaken up.”

“Troubled” is from the verb *throeō*, based on the noun *throos*, meaning “the loud, disturbing noise of a riotous crowd.” Thus, *throeō* (expressed here in the passive voice) means “to be troubled, disturbed, or terrified.”

Logos is the Greek word translated “message.” It literally refers to intelligence or a word, discourse, or saying as an expression of that intelligence.

The words “is come” are translated from the verb *enistēmi*, which is a compound word made up of *en*, meaning “in” or “with” and *histēmi*, meaning “to stand.” Thus, it means “to be present” or “to be at hand.” It is expressed here in the perfect tense, which in Greek means an action that occurred in the past, but with present ongoing effect, where the emphasis is on the effect. In other words, Paul is using this word to mean that the day of Christ has come and is now here.

Meaning Explained

When Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy started the church in Thessalonica, they apparently had given instruction in the soon return of Christ to gather all believers to Himself (the Rapture) and the ensuing judgment of God against the unbelieving world (the Tribulation and future judgments). In his first letter to this church, Paul gave additional instruction regarding the rapture (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**). Now he tells them not to be easily shaken or disturbed by false teachings regarding these events.

There were three possible sources of these false teachings. The first is “by a spirit.” This indicates that this teaching was supposedly given to a “spirit-filled” teacher or prophet speaking by direct revelation from God. The second is “by a message,” implying that it is a message given verbally, probably as part of a sermon. The third is “by a letter,” indicating a written message. Understand that it was not uncommon during the early years of the church for letters to be sent by imposters claiming to be Paul or another of the apostles.

Before we finish, we need to observe that the word translated “Christ” (*christos*) is disputed. The earliest and best manuscripts have the word translated “Lord” (*kurios*) instead. This is an important distinction since, as Paul has taught previously, the Day of Christ refers to the Rapture, but the Day of the Lord refers to God’s judgment against the world. The message of these false

teachers was not that the rapture had already happened, but that the Tribulation had begun. Given the persecution and tribulation they were suffering, it would have been fairly easy to convince the Thessalonians that this was true. In the following verses, Paul will tell us of several things that must occur before the Tribulation will begin.

Application

Very few preachers or teachers intentionally teach false doctrine; they simply teach what they have been taught or what they believe based on their own study. It is critical for us to read and study the Bible for ourselves and verify all such teaching (see **Acts 17:11**). No matter how great the teacher or preacher, don't believe their message without verifying it yourself based on your own study of what the Bible teaches!

2 Thessalonians 2:3 - Two Preceding Events

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *it will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Truth to Learn

The Tribulation won't begin until a couple of other things happen first.

Behind the Words

“Deceive” is translated from the Greek verb *exapataō*, made up of *ek*, used as an intensifier, and *apataō*, meaning “to deceive” or “to seduce.” Thus, *exapataō* means “to completely deceive.” It is expressed here in the subjunctive mood, indicating possibility or probability. Therefore, the opening part of this verse should read, “No one might completely deceive you ...”

The words “*it will not come*” are not in the Greek text; however, they are implied by the context and are appropriately inserted.

The words “falling away” are translated from the Greek noun *apostasia*. This word is based on the verb *aphistēmi*, which is made up of *apo*, meaning “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, meaning “to stand” or “to place.” Thus, *aphistēmi*, means “to put away” or “to remove.” So, the noun *apostasia* refers to “the departure.” It can refer to a departure from a place or from a set of ideals. The English word apostasy primarily refers to a departure from the core beliefs of Christianity, but the Greek word could also refer to a physical departure.

Anomia is the Greek word translated “lawlessness.” It is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” or “without” and *nomos*, meaning “a law.” Thus, this word describes someone who does not acknowledge or obey the law.

“Destruction” is from the Greek noun *apoliea*, which is made up of *apo*, meaning “from” or “away from,” used here as an intensifier, and *ollumi*, meaning “to destroy.” Thus, *apoliea* refers to “complete destruction.”

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse we noted that Paul is talking about how the Thessalonian Christians had been fooled into believing that the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation) had already begun. In today's verse he instructs us regarding certain events that must occur before the Tribulation can begin.

He says, “no one should completely deceive you ...” The reason we shouldn't be fooled into thinking the Tribulation is upon us is because it won't happen until a couple of other things happen. The first thing that must occur is the *apostasia*; however, there is much debate as to what this specifically refers to. Some believe that it refers to the Rapture, when the church is removed from the earth. Others note that the only other use of the word in the New Testament is the following:

... that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses ... (Acts 21:21)

Secular writers of the first century use the word to refer to political revolt as well as the religious movement away from fundamental Judaism. So, it is unclear as to whether Paul is referring to a religious apostasy or to the rapture. Based on the context of Paul's teaching here, it is most reasonable to view this as a reference to the rapture of the church.

The other event that must occur before the Tribulation is the “man of lawlessness” must be revealed. This is most likely a reference to the one we call “antichrist,” although only the Apostle John uses that designation. Only after the *apostasia* and the revealing of the “man of lawlessness” can the Tribulation begin.

Application

It's very clear to many of us that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord are both very near. Until that day, keep your focus on God and listen for the trumpet blast!

2 Thessalonians 2:4 - The Man of Lawlessness

who opposes and exalts himself above all *who are* called God or object of worship, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Truth to Learn

The “man of sin” will be revealed before the Day of the Lord.

Behind the Words

The verb translated “opposes” is *antikeimai*. This word is made up of *anti*, meaning “opposite” or “against” and *keimai*, meaning “to lie outstretched.” Thus, it literally means “to lie against.” *Antikeimai* means “to be an *opposer* or an adversary.”

“Exalts himself” is translated from the verb *huperairomai*, which is composed of *huper* (or hyper), meaning “above” or “over” and a form of *airō*, meaning “to lift up.” Hence, it means “to lift above” or “to exalt.” It is expressed as a present passive participle, so it could literally be translated as “the one exalting himself.”

The word translated “called” is *legō*, which originally meant “to lay something down.” Later, however, it came to mean “to utter definite words,” that is, to speak or to say something. This word has a number of nuances of meaning as it is used in New Testament Greek. Thus it can mean “to verbally lay before, that is, to put forth an idea, to say or speak, or to call something by name,”

Sebasma is the word translated “object of worship.” This word means “something that is venerated or worshipped.”

“Displaying” is from the verb *apodeiknumi*, which means “to show off” or “to exhibit something.”

Meaning Explained

Paul has just written about the two events that will precede the Day of the Lord, which begins with the Tribulation. The Tribulation is identified in **Daniel 9:24-27** as the seventieth week (of years). In **Daniel 9:27** he talks about how “the prince who is to come” will establish a seven year covenant (with Israel). In the middle of that week (after three and one-half years), this prince will perform an abominable act which causes desolation. In Matthew chapter twenty-four, Jesus Christ also describes this act as “the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet.”

In today’s verse Paul gives us more information regarding this abominable act. This person, who Paul calls “the man of lawlessness,” is the person referred to by Daniel as “the prince who is to come.” He is also referred to by the Apostle John as “the antichrist” (**1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7**). According to Paul, this person will proclaim himself to be God, and he will demonstrate his deity by sitting in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, exhibiting himself as God.

This man of sin, whom Paul also calls “the lawless one” in verse eight, is described in Revelation chapter thirteen as “the beast out of the sea.” He will be controlled by Satan (the dragon) and will be worshipped as a god by the people on earth during the second half of Daniel’s seventieth week:

So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. (**Revelation 13:4-5**)

This "man of lawlessness" may very well be alive today, but he has not yet been revealed. Neither has the *apostasia* occurred yet, so (as Paul has been teaching) the Day of the Lord has not yet come upon us.

Application

World events are rapidly shaping up that point to the fact that the Day of the Lord is close at hand. But it has not yet arrived and we still have time to proclaim the gospel message. It is up to all Christians to proclaim the good news of salvation through the blood of Christ. Are you proclaiming it?

2 Thessalonians 2:5 - Learn God's Truth!

Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these *things*?

Truth to Learn

Your faith depends on a good understanding of God's truth.

Behind the Words

"Remember" is translated from the Greek verb *mnēmoneuō*, meaning "to exercise memory" or "to remember." The English word mnemonic (a device to assist in memorizing something) is based on this word.

The word "still" is from the adverb *eti*. This word is a reference to things in the past. It is most often translated "yet" or "still."

The words "I was telling" are translated from the Greek verb *legō*, which literally means "to lay forth." Figuratively, it means "to relate in words" or "to tell." It is expressed here in the imperfect tense indicating past, continuous action.

Houtos is the Greek word translated "these things." In the singular it means "this." In the current verse it is expressed as a neuter plural, so it means "these" with "things" being implied.

Meaning Explained

Shortly after starting the church in Thessalonica, Paul was forced to make a sudden departure. Having stayed for a while in Berea and then Athens, Paul moved on to Corinth from where he wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians. The purpose of that first letter was to comfort and encourage the Christians in Thessalonica in the face of the persecution they were suffering. As part of that letter, Paul also related to them some further teaching to clear up a misunderstanding they had regarding the Day of Christ (the Rapture) and the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation).

Sometime after that first letter was written, the Thessalonian church had received some false teaching (supposedly from Paul) indicating that the Day of the Lord had already begun. As a result, Paul wrote this second letter, to give them further encouragement and to clarify what he had already taught them. The primary theme of this second letter is to let them know some of the things that must first take place before the Day of the Lord will begin. He said that two events had to take place first: the *apostasia* (referring either to the Rapture or to a large-scale departure from the basic tenets of the Christian faith), and the revealing of the "man of sin," also known to us as the antichrist.

Now that Paul has given them instruction regarding these two events, he asks them, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these *things*?" This makes it very evident that when he first started the church there, Paul gave them specific instruction regarding the Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord.

Do you see how easily false teaching can creep into the church? Every true Christian is eager to learn more about his or her faith and can get easily led astray without constantly reading the Bible and listening to good fundamental preaching. It's no wonder that there are so many divisions within the church.

Application

Read the Bible and listen to good preaching, but always check what you hear against what is written in the Bible! Your faith will only be as strong as your understanding of God's truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:6 - Holy Spirit Power

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

Truth to Learn

Only God can completely control Satan.

Behind the Words

The words “you know” are from the Greek verb *eidō*, which means “to see with perception,” or “to know.” It is expressed here in the perfect tense, indicating a past completed action with an ongoing effect, where the emphasis is on the effect.

“Restraining” is translated from *katechō*. This word is made up of *kata*, meaning “down,” but used here as an intensifier and *echō*, meaning “to have” or “to hold.” Thus, *katechō* means “to hold firmly” or “to suppress.”

“Revealed” is from *apokaluptō*, which is made up of *apo*, meaning “from” or “away from” and *kaluptō*, meaning “to cover” or “to conceal.” Therefore, *apokaluptō* means “to uncover” or “to reveal.”

Meaning Explained

This verse is another one that is cryptic enough that theologians and Bible scholars have been discussing it for centuries. But before we talk about that which is not perfectly clear, let’s talk about what is very clear. The people in Thessalonica did know what Paul was talking about. He clearly tells them, “You have known in the past and now know perfectly well what is restraining.” Apparently, Paul had previously taught them about this restraining force so that he didn’t need to be specific about it in this letter.

Unfortunately for us, since Paul wasn’t specific about this restraining force, we don’t know for sure what it is. Some of the suggested explanations include human government, preaching of the gospel, the Jewish nation, the church, Michael the Archangel, and the Holy Spirit. Although we can’t know for certain, we can come to a pretty good logical conclusion based on what we know from other portions of Scripture.

As described in **2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4: 8-10**, this “man of sin” or “lawless one” accomplishes his deeds through the power of Satan. We know that nothing about mankind can restrain Satan. And, Michael the Archangel would not even bring an accusation against him:

Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (**Jude 1:9**)

But we do know someone who is more powerful than Satan:

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (**1 John 4:4**)

So, we can logically conclude that Paul must be talking about the Holy Spirit as that which restrains the power of Satan, preventing him from revealing the “man of sin” until God’s appointed time.

Application

Even though we are told in **James 4:7** that resisting the Devil will cause him to flee, we don't have the power to stop him. Only God can do that. Battling Satan and his demons can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit, and even then, we only know victory when we are submitted to God.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 - The Restraining One

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so until He may be out of the way.*

Truth to Learn

The restraining one is probably a reference to the Holy Spirit.

Behind the Words

The word “**mystery**” is transliterated from the Greek noun *musterion*. This word is used at least twenty other times in the New Testament. In each case it describes a truth that has previously been hidden but that is now being made known.

“**Lawlessness**” is from *anomia*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” or “without” and *nomos*, meaning “law.” So, *anomia* literally means “without law” or “lawless.”

The word “**already**” is translated from *ēdē*, which is an adverb of time meaning “now,” “even now,” or “already.”

“**May be**” is from the verb *ginomai*, meaning “to begin to be” or “to become.” It is expressed here in the subjunctive mood, indicating probability or possibility. Thus it is translated as “should become” or “may be.”

The words “**out of the way**” are translated from the Greek words *ek mesou*. *Ek* means “out” or “out of” and *mesou*, a form of *mesos*, means “in the midst, either in time or position.” Therefore *ek mesou* means “out of the midst.”

Meaning Explained

In this current chapter, Paul has been focusing on the Day of the Lord, that period of time when God will judge the inhabitants of the earth. Back in verse three, he told us that this day will not come until the *apostasia* occurs and the “man of lawlessness” is revealed. But, Paul taught us that the “man of lawlessness,” whom the Apostle John calls “the antichrist,” will not be revealed until the restraining force is taken out of the way.

As we discussed in yesterday’s verse, we don’t know for certain what this restraining force is, but it seems reasonable to conclude that it is the Holy Spirit of God. The primary argument against such a conclusion is the fact that in yesterday’s verse it was referred to as a “restraining thing” (neuter article and verb in the Greek), whereas in today’s verse He is referred to with a masculine article and verb (literally, “the restraining one”). This is not a problem when you realize that Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit both in the neuter and the masculine. In John’s gospel, He refers to the Holy Spirit as “the helper” (neuter) and as “the spirit of truth” (neuter), but He also refers to the Holy Spirit as “He,” which is a masculine pronoun in the Greek (see **John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-14**).

The “mystery of lawlessness” is probably a reference to the fact that sin and lawlessness are already present in the world, but will be revealed in full force after the restraining one is taken out of the midst. This may be a reference to the rapture, when the church and the indwelling of the Spirit are taken off the earth. Keep in mind, however, that the Holy Spirit is God, who is everywhere present at all times. We know that the Holy Spirit will still be present and active during the Tribulation because people will be saved during that terrible time, but He will not be restraining evil during that time like He is today.

Application

I firmly believe that the church will not be present for any part of the Tribulation, which is very comforting. However, that doesn't mean our work is done. We need to be witnesses of the gospel of Christ more and more as that day approaches.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 - Glorious Second Coming

And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

Truth to Learn

Jesus will destroy the antichrist at His second coming.

Behind the Words

“Consume” is translated from the Greek verb *anaireō*. This word is made up of *ana*, meaning “up,” used here as an intensifier and *haireō*, meaning “to take.” Thus, *anaireō* means “to take away” or “to abolish.” This is the word used of a public execution.

The word “breath” is from *pneuma*, which literally means “breath,” but it is frequently used as a metaphor for spirit.

Stomatos is the word translated “mouth.” It specifically refers to “the opening through which breathing or blowing occurs.”

“Destroy” is translated from *katargeō*, which is made up of the intensifier *kata* and *argeō*, meaning “to be idle.” So we see that *katargeō* means “to render completely inactive or useless.”

Epiphaneia is the Greek word translated “brightness.” It is composed of *epi*, meaning “over” or “upon” and *phainō*, which means “to shine.” Thus, *epiphaneia* refers to our Lord's shining brightness or His Shekinah glory.

The word “coming” is from *parousia*, which refers to “presence” or “arrival.”

Meaning Explained

In the previous two verses Paul talked about the restraining force, which we concluded is most likely the Holy Spirit that is holding back the full force of lawlessness in the world. After the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, the “man of sin” or “the lawless one,” as Paul calls him here, will be revealed and allowed to take control of the people of the world.

Once this person (whom the Apostle John calls the antichrist) is revealed, the Day of the Lord will begin. This is the time, beginning with the Tribulation, during which God will judge “the inhabitants of the earth” (see **Revelation 8:13; 12:12; 17:2**). In these passages, the word translated “inhabitants” is a form of *katoikeō*, meaning “to dwell permanently in a fixed dwelling.” Believers are never referred to as “inhabitants of the earth.” Instead, we are said to dwell (Greek word *skēnoō*, meaning “to pitch a tent and encamp”) here.

At the end of the seven year Tribulation (the last half of which Jesus referred to as “great tribulation” in **Matthew 24:21**), Jesus Christ will return to earth. His glorious return and His complete victory over the armies of the antichrist (also called the Beast), the antichrist himself, the False Prophet, and Satan is described in **Revelation 19:11 – 20:2**. This is the “second coming” of Christ which is spoken of throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Application

Fortunately for Christians, we will not be here when the Tribulation begins. The Apostle John makes it clear that Christians will be kept “out of” this time of trouble. (In **Revelation 3:10**, where John says “... keep you from the hour of trial ...” the word “from” is translated from the Greek word *ek*, which literally means “out of.”) The rapture could occur any day now. If you have friends or loved ones who aren’t saved, now is the time to witness to them. Don’t wait!

2 Thessalonians 2:9 - Counterfeit Miracles

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Truth to Learn

Miracles do not prove that someone is “from God.”

Behind the Words

The word translated “coming” is *parousia*, the same word used in the previous verse in reference to Christ’s second coming.

“According” is translated from *kata*, which primarily means “down” or “down upon.” However, it is used metaphorically to express a relationship of one thing to another.” In other words, it means “in accordance with,” and in such a case is translated as “according to.”

“Working” is from the Greek noun *energeia*. It is made up of *en*, meaning “in” and *ergon*, meaning “work” or “power.” Therefore, *energeia* refers to the “operation” or “effective power” of something.

The word “Satan” is transliterated from the Hebrew word *sātān*, which means “an adversary.” As such, it has become the proper name of our adversary.

The words “signs” and “wonders” are from the Greek words *sēmeion* and *teras*. These two words both refer to miraculous events, but *teras* (wonders) refers to the extraordinary character of the event whereas *sēmeion* refers to the spiritual significance of the event.

“Lying” is translated from the Greek word *pseudon*, meaning “a lie” or “a falsehood,” that which is not based on the truth.

The words “of the lawless one” do not appear in the Greek text, but have been added for clarity.

A literal translation of the Greek text for this verse begins, “whose coming is according to ...”

From the grammatical construction of this and the previous verse it is clear that this verse is talking about “the lawless one” mentioned in the previous verse.

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse, Paul talked about the revealing of the “lawless one” and parenthetically commented on how he will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ. In typical Pauline fashion, he now contrasts the coming of our Lord and the coming (or appearing) of the antichrist. The antichrist will come on the scene accompanied by miraculous events. These events will display power, signs, and wonders. According to Jesus, these will prove to be a very powerful deception:

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24)

According to **Revelation 13:1-18**, these miraculous signs and wonders (even calling fire down from heaven) will so convince the “earth dwellers” that the “lawless one” is a god, that these people will worship him as a god and even receive his mark on their hand or forehead.

It is important to note here that not all miracles are of God. The devil and his agents can, do, and will perform supernatural acts that will deceive many.

Application

Do not be deceived, my Christian friends, by people performing miraculous feats, even doing so in the name of God. If what these people proclaim is not in complete agreement with God's Word, do not believe them! Read your Bible; search the Scriptures daily (**Acts 17:10**).

2 Thessalonians 2:10 - Unrighteous Deception

and with all deception of unrighteousness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Truth to Learn

The world ruler during the Tribulation will be a great deceiver.

Behind the Words

Apatē is the Greek word translated “deception.” It refers to that which is deceitful or a delusion (something that is perceived despite strong evidence to the contrary).

The word “unrighteousness” is from *adikia*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” or “without” and *dikē*, meaning “that which is right or just.” Thus, *adikia* means “not right” or “not just.”

“Perish” is from the Greek verb *apollumi*, which is made up of *apo*, meaning “from” or “away from” and *ollumi*, meaning “to destroy.” Therefore, *apollumi* means “to completely destroy.” The word does not imply complete annihilation (cessation of being), but physical destruction.

The word “receive” is translated from the verb *dechomai*, which means “to take to oneself” or “to deliberately and readily accept something offered.”

“Saved” is translated from *sodzō*, which means “to preserve safe from danger, loss, or destruction.”

Meaning Explained

The Apostle Paul has been teaching the Christians in Thessalonica about the Day of the Lord. False teachers had told them that this day of God’s judgment against the “permanent earth dwellers” had already arrived. Why do I call them “permanent earth dwellers?” Because throughout the book of Revelation, the unbelievers are referred to as *katoikountes epi tēs gēs*, which means “those who are permanently dwelling on the earth.” This expression is in contrast to believers who are said to be “sojourners and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11)

In response to the false teaching about the Day of the Lord, Paul explained that this time of God’s wrath would not happen until two specific events occurred. The first is the *apostasia*, either a reference to a great “falling away” from true faith or to the rapture of the church. The second event is the revealing of “the lawless one,” the antichrist.

He taught that this “lawless one” would become evident because of great signs and miraculous deeds which will be performed through the power of our great adversary, Satan. Paul now gives some more details about how this future world ruler will become evident.

The antichrist will be a great deceiver who, like a modern day illusionist, will use deception to convince people that he is righteous. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:4, he will declare himself to be a god, and the great signs and wonders that he and his false prophet perform will convince many that he really is a god. To a Bible believing Christian, this seems hard to believe. We know that there is only one true God, but those who reject the truth taught in the Bible (the permanent earth dwellers) will readily accept this imposter for who he claims to be.

True Christians not only believe the truth about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, but they have a love of the truth taught in Scripture. We love to read our Bibles and we love to learn the truth about God's desire to have a personal relationship with us. But, the unbelievers in the last days will not have this love of the truth and will be easily deceived. As a result, they will not receive salvation, but will, instead, perish in the lake of fire for all eternity.

Application

Do you love the truth of God's Word? If so, hold fast to sound Biblical teaching. If not, prepare yourself to be easily deceived.

2 Thessalonians 2:11 - Hardened Hearts

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, so they will believe the lie,

Truth to Learn

Hardening one's heart toward God is never a good idea.

Behind the Words

The expression “for this reason” is translated from the Greek words *dia touto*, which literally mean “through this.”

“Will send” is from *pempō*, meaning “to dispatch” or “to send.” It is expressed here in the present tense, indicating current action. However, this may be seen as a “prophetic present tense” in which the action is spoken of as current with regard to the future events (when the antichrist is revealed). For this reason, most translations express this as a future tense.

Energeia is the word translated “strong.” It is composed of *en*, meaning “in” and *ergon*, meaning “work.” Thus, *energeia* refers literally to something that is engaged in work. In other words it means “working” or “energizing.”

“Delusion” is from *planē*, which means “a wandering out of the right way” or “a straying from what is right.” Objectively, it refers to that which is a fraud, a deception, or a delusion.

The word translated “lie” is *pseudos*, of which we saw another form in verse nine. It refers to something that is not truthful. Some translations say “a lie” but the definite article is included in the text, so the proper translation is “the lie.”

Meaning Explained

Because this verse starts off with “for this reason,” we have to determine what it is referring to. It is a reference to “...because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” It is because the earth dwellers, living at the time when the lawless one is revealed, refuse to believe God's truth that God will send them an “energized deception.”

This immediately brings to mind what happened to the Pharaoh of Egypt when Moses delivered God's demand that he let the children of Israel leave Egypt. Reading Exodus chapters seven through ten we see a progression of “Pharaoh's heart grew hard” (**Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:9, 32**) to Pharaoh hardened his heart,” (**Exodus 8:15; 9:12, 34, 35**) to the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart” (**Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27**). Initially it was Pharaoh's own sinful nature that caused his heart to become hardened against God. Then Pharaoh consciously hardened his own heart against God. Finally, in an act of judgment against him, God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Even today, many people have a hardened heart toward God and the gospel message. In the last days the earth dwellers will have consciously hardened their own hearts against God, “refusing to receive the love of the truth.” Finally, God will send such energized deception on the part of the antichrist that they will not be able to believe the truth but will believe the lie conveyed to them. Paul vividly describes this progression in his letter to the Christians in Rome (**Romans 1:18-32**).

So what is this lie? Perhaps it began with Satan's message to Eve, "[and you will be like God.](#)" In today's secular humanism it is believed that we are our own god. In the final days, there will be one who deceptively "proves" himself to be God.

Application

Refusing to listen to God's truth can have terrible consequences. Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean it can't happen to you. Remember what happened to Jonah?

2 Thessalonians 2:12 - Truth Rejected

that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth but were well pleased with unrighteousness.

Truth to Learn

Judgment is coming! We need to spread the good news now.

Behind the Words

The words “they ... may be judged” are translated from the Greek verb *krinō*, which means “to separate,” “to decide between good and evil,” or “to judge.” It is expressed here in the subjunctive mood indicating possibility or probability.

“Did not believe” is from the verb *pisteuō*, meaning “to believe” or “to have faith.” It is expressed here as an aorist participle, so it could be translated as “having not believed.”

Alētheia is the word translated “truth.” It is composed of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and a form of *lanthanō*, meaning “to be hidden.” Thus, *alētheia* refers to that which is not hidden, that which is obviously apparent, or that which is true.

“Were well pleased” is from the verb *eudokeō*, which is made up of *eu*, meaning “good” or “well” and *dokeō*, meaning “to think.” Hence, *eudokeō* means “to think well of” or “to be pleased with.” It is expressed here as an aorist participle, so it could be translated as “having been pleased.”

The word “unrighteousness” is from *adikia*, which is made up of *a*, meaning “not” or “without” and a form of *dikē*, meaning “that which is right or just.” Thus, *adikia* refers to “that which is not right” or “that which is not just.”

Meaning Explained

The Apostle Paul has been talking about the events that will precede the coming of the Day of the Lord, when God will pour out His wrath on the inhabitants of the earth. The two specific events mentioned are the *apostasía* and the revealing of the “lawless one,” the person we commonly refer to as the antichrist. His appearance on the scene will be accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders that will convince the “earth dwellers” that he is a god.

In the previous verse, Paul told us that the unbelievers on the earth at that time will be fooled into believing in the deity of the antichrist because God will send a powerful deception. In other words, God will allow the antichrist and his false prophet to perform these signs and miracles, and He will cause the “earth dwellers” to believe in these miraculous events and to accept the antichrist as a god.

Now Paul tells us a little more about those who will be deceived by the antichrist. First of all, they are unbelievers. That is, they will not believe in the truth of God as written in the Bible. Even today, many people believe that the Bible is just a collection of fables and restrictive rules. The other thing we are told about these unbelievers is that they will think that unrighteousness is good. They will have completely thrown off the mantle of God’s influence in their lives.

As a result, these earth dwellers will be judged by God. This judgment will come in two forms. The first is all the terrible judgments that God will execute on the earth in the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments described in the book of Revelation. But, worse than that, at the end of their

earthly lives they will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment where they will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity.

Application

Some of us may find it difficult to witness the gospel message to those around us, but we need to redouble our efforts. A day is coming soon when this truth will be completely rejected.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - Believe the Truth

But we are obliged to give thanks to God always for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

Truth to Learn

Belief in the truth is of critical importance to everyone.

Behind the Words

The word “obliged” is translated from *opheilō*, which means “to be indebted” or “to owe something to someone.”

“Give thanks” is from the verb *eucharisteō*, which is made up of *eu*, meaning “good” and a form of *charidzomai*, meaning “to give” or “to grant.” It means “to show oneself grateful” or “to be thankful.”

The Greek word translated “beginning” is *archē*, meaning “the beginning.” When it is used without a definite article (the) or a direct object, as it is here, it nearly always refers to the very beginning (of time).

Haireō is the verb translated “chose.” This word means “to take.” When expressed in the middle voice (subject acting on itself), as it is here, it means “to take to oneself” or “to choose for oneself.”

“Salvation” is translated from *soteria*, which means “preservation from danger or destruction.”

The word “sanctification” is *hagiasmos*, which is based on the verb *hagiazō*, meaning “to sanctify.” To sanctify something means to set it apart from common usage unto usage devoted to God. Thus, sanctification carries the meaning of being set apart or separated. Sanctification and holiness are often used interchangeably, both indicating separation from sin and dedication to God.

Meaning Explained

Discussion among Christians regarding election versus the responsibility of man is often charged with emotion and bias. Those who hold to the doctrine of election will often quote today’s verse or **Ephesians 1:4**,

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

While those who hold to the doctrine of “free will” will often quote **Romans 10:13**,

For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The fact is that both election (God’s choosing of who will be saved) and the responsibility of man (man’s decision to accept Christ as Lord and Savior) are taught in the New Testament and both are true. We can’t understand how they can both be true anymore than we can understand how God can be three persons and still be one God.

In today’s verse Paul very clearly states that from the beginning (of everything) God chose us for salvation. It was not based on anything we would do, for then it would not be His choice, but

ours alone. This choice, according to Paul, was accomplished through an act of the Holy Spirit who set us apart (sanctified us) for Himself and through belief in the truth of the Gospel.

Paul's reason for talking about this here is not to correct any error in the church, but to contrast the "permanent earth dwellers," about whom he has been talking, with believers. Those who will follow the antichrist will not believe the truth because God will cause them to believe the lie. We who are saved by the Spirit believe the truth because God chose us to do so.

Application

The real key to salvation is belief in God's truth as presented in the Bible. Do you believe the truth?

2 Thessalonians 2:14 - Let Your Light Shine!

to which He called you by our gospel, unto the acquisition of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Truth to Learn

In heaven we will shine with the brilliant glory of God.

Behind the Words

The word “called” is translated from *kaleō*, which means “to invite someone to come or to go somewhere or do something.”

“Gospel” is from *euangellion*, which is a compound word made up of *eu*, meaning “good” or “well” and a form of *angello*, meaning “to proclaim” or “to tell.” Thus, *euangellion* literally means “good news.”

Peripoiēsis is the Greek noun translated “acquisition.” This word is composed of *peri*, meaning “around,” indicating acquisition, and *poieō*, meaning “to make” or “to do.” Thus, the noun *peripoiēsis* literally means, “the things gathered around oneself.” It is a picture of someone gathering possessions all around himself or herself. The verb form of this word is most often translated as “gather, acquire, or purchase.”

The word “glory” is from the Greek noun *doxa*, which primarily means “thought or opinion, especially favorable human opinion.” In a secondary sense it means “reputation, praise, honor, or splendor.” *Doxa* is often used to refer to the splendid appearance or brightness of God’s Shekinah glory. This seems to be the sense in which it is used here.

Meaning Explained

Once again we have a verse that is linked to a previous thought, so we have to look back at a previous verse to see what the connection is. The words “to which” are a reference to “salvation” in the previous verse. Not only were we chosen by God for salvation, as we learned in yesterday’s verse, but He then called us to this salvation by the gospel message.

This is a good verse for those who claim that if God chose who would be saved, then we don’t have to worry about witnessing to others. After all, if God chose them, then they’ll get saved without us having to do anything. However, according to Paul in this verse, it is through the proclamation of the gospel message that we are called to salvation. This should be very familiar to those who have carefully read the eighth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome. There he said,

Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (**Romans 8:30**)

Also notice that both in **Romans 8:30** and in today’s verse, the ultimate consummation of our salvation will be that we will have the same magnificent glory as God. I believe that the reason Adam and Eve suddenly knew that they were naked after eating the forbidden fruit is because they lost this glory. In the future, when we are completely justified (without sin) we will have the same Shekinah glory as God. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were no longer justified and lost that glory. And, the prophet Daniel alluded to this glory when he said,

Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever. (**Daniel 12:3**)

Application

Some day we will shine as brightly as the stars. Until that day, let your gospel light shine and share the good news with everyone you meet.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 - Stand Firm and Hold Fast

Therefore, brothers, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

Truth to Learn

We must learn truth and hold fast to what we know is true.

Behind the Words

“Stand fast” is from the *stēkō*, which is derived from the verb *histēmi*, meaning “to stand.” As it is used in the New Testament, *stēkō* means “to stand firm in faith and duty.” It is expressed here in the imperative mood, indicating a command.

The word “hold” is translated from *krateō*, which is based on the word *kratos*, meaning “strength.” *Krateō* means “to take hold of” or “become the master of.” It implies a degree of force with which one brings a person or thing wholly under one’s power, even when resistance is encountered. It, too, is expressed here in the imperative mood, indicating a command.

Paradosis is the Greek word translated “traditions.” It is based on *paradidōmi*, meaning “to deliver teaching.” Thus, *paradosis* refers to doctrine, instruction, or a tradition delivered or communicated from one person to another (usually orally).

The words “you were taught” are from the verb *didaskō*, meaning “to teach.”

The words “whether” and “or” are both translated from *eite*, which is made up of *ei*, meaning “whether” and *te*, meaning “and.” This word is used to set items in contrast or opposition to one another. It is used at the beginning of the comparison and again between the two things being compared.

Meaning Explained

You may recall from earlier in this letter that the Christians in Thessalonica were disturbed because false teachers had come to them and taught that the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation) had already come. Some of these false teachers had even claimed that their false teaching had come from the Apostle Paul and his companions.

Now, having taught them about the things that must happen before the Day of the Lord, Paul teaches them how to detect and avoid such false teachings in the future. He starts off with a command to stand fast, that is, to not waver back and forth between good doctrine and bad. He adds to this the command to master the good teaching and hold firmly to it.

Keep in mind that in the first century of the church, the only “Scripture” that Christians had was what we call “the Old Testament.” Paul and others were traveling from area to area preaching the new truths and they and others of the Apostles had begun sending letters to churches teaching the truths of the Christian faith. In some cases it was hard for the people to distinguish between good doctrine and false teaching. Therefore, Paul taught them to hold fast to the teaching that they knew to be genuine. This would help them to identify false teaching from others.

In some ways, it is just as easy for us to be deceived by false teaching. If we don’t regularly read and study the Bible for ourselves, instead simply depending on what we are taught by others, it is easy to accept teaching that is not true.

Now, a quick word about traditions. Just because a church has held to long taught traditions, doesn’t mean that they are the truth. The word here translated “traditions” refers specifically to

good doctrine and sound teaching. Again, we must be familiar enough with what the Bible actually teaches in order to distinguish between long held traditions and good doctrine.

Application

In these last days it is especially important to know what the Bible teaches. In **2 Timothy 4:3** Paul warned Timothy that many will not want sound doctrine. Stand firm in the faith and hold on dearly to what you know is truth. Don't be deceived!

2 Thessalonians 2:16 - Eternal Comfort and Hope

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, the *One* having loved us and having given *us* everlasting comfort and good hope by grace,

Truth to Learn

Our God promises eternal comfort and real hope for Christians.

Behind the Words

The word “may” is not actually in this verse, but is part of the verb “comfort” in the following verse. In other words, Paul is saying “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ ... comfort you ...”

The word translated “**himself**” is *autos*, meaning “him, her, or it.” It serves to give emphasis to the person or thing being spoken of. In Greek, word order is used for emphasis and in this case *autos* is the first word in the sentence. Therefore, Paul is emphasizing “our Lord Jesus Christ **Himself**.”

“**Having loved us**” is from a form of *agapē*, which specifically refers to “a self-sacrificing love.” It is a verb of action, not just emotion and is most often used to describe the love that God demonstrates. It is expressed here as a singular verb.

Aiōnios is the word translated as “everlasting.” It literally refers to “an age” as a long duration of time. Hence, it is the word used to express that which is perpetual, everlasting, or eternal.

The word “**comfort**” is translated from *paraklēsis*, which is made up of *para*, meaning “beside” and a form of *kaleō*, meaning “to call.” It is used here to express the encouragement and comfort given by one who has been called alongside as a helper or comforter.

“**Hope**” is translated from *elpis*, which represents “hope,” not as just a wish, but as something that is fully expected.

Meaning Explained

Having just concluded this portion of his teaching, the Apostle Paul now expresses a prayer of benediction for the Thessalonian Christians. Paul has been teaching about the Day of the Lord in which God, in the person of Jesus Christ, will judge the inhabitants of the earth. Therefore, it is appropriate that he emphasizes the work of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, in giving us comfort and hope. This is the only place in any of Paul’s writings where he mentions God the Son before God the Father when the two are spoken of together.

He specifically identifies the Lord Jesus Christ as separate from the God the Father by the use of the conjunction “and.” However, at the same time, he shows the unity of the Godhead by using singular verbs (“has loved” and “has given”). Note also that the verbs “comfort” and “establish” in the following verse are also expressed in the singular form. Since in Greek, just as in English, the subject and verb of a sentence must agree in number, Paul is making a strong statement here that the Father and the Son are separate persons, but one God.

Now look at what Christians have already been given. The first thing is comfort. Our guide, who walks with us throughout our journey in this life, gives us comfort and encouragement as we travel. However, it is not just for this life, but for all eternity. Our guide, our God, also gives us hope. No matter what happens to us here, we have complete hope, and assurance, that we will spend eternity in a place of peace and comfort where we will eternally praise Him. It is not just a

wish or a dream. It is real and we can count on it because God has promised it to us, and what God promises He always delivers.

Application

No matter what trial or difficulty you may be undergoing right now, as a Christian you have the guarantee of future peace and comfort in the presence of God. Stop and think about that for a minute or two.

2 Thessalonians 2:17 - Comfort For Our Walk

comfort your hearts and may He establish *you* in every good word and work.

Truth to Learn

Comfort is God's doing, but walking in faith is up to you.

Behind the Words

“Comfort” is translated from the Greek verb *parakaleō*. This word has the same root as the word translated “consolation” in yesterday’s verse. It means “to comfort, encourage, and challenge” just as a coach does for an athlete. It is expressed here in the rare optative mood; there are less than 70 uses of the optative mood in the New Testament. The optative is the mood used when a writer is expressing an action as possible.

Kardia is the word translated “heart.” The English word “cardiology” (the study of the heart) is obviously from this Greek word. It refers not only to the physical heart, but figuratively to “the seat and center of human life, including thoughts and feelings.”

The word “establish” is from *stēridzō*, which is derived from *histemi*, meaning “to stand or to set in place.” *Stēridzō* means “to make firm” or “to place securely.” This verb, as a parallel verb with *parakaleō* (comfort), is also expressed in the optative mood.

Agathos is the word translated “good.” This word refers to the general character or quality of goodness.

Ergon is the Greek word translated “work.” It refers to “something done or performed, an act or a deed.”

Meaning Explained

Today’s verse is directly connected with the previous one. In fact, grammatically, verse sixteen is the subject of the sentence and this verse is the predicate. You will recall that in the previous verse Paul equated the Father and Jesus Christ as one by using singular verbs with the plural subject. He continues that form in today’s verse. Though this sentence has a plural subject (Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father), the verbs “comfort” and “establish” are singular verbs.

There are two key lessons to learn from Paul’s prayer. The first is that our God is the one who comforts our hearts and who makes our standing firm. In his teachings at the Last Supper in the upper room, Jesus said this to His disciples:

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled or usefulness.

“Word” is from the Greek noun *logos*, which refers to “an expression of intellect.” That is “a word or a

heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

In other words, He said, “Don’t allow your hearts to be troubled or afraid.” Modern day psychology indicates that worry and fear are the results of our own minds; that is, we do it to ourselves. Comfort and peace, on the other hand, are the result of outside agents working on us

to sooth us. Paul is praying for God to be that outside agent working on us both to comfort us and to make our standing firm.

The other thing we learn from today's verse is that the Christian life is not just about what we claim to be. We all know people who profess to be Christian, but the manner in which they live their lives does not demonstrate true faith. In other words, don't just talk the talk, also walk the walk. Let your Christian witness be the way you act and the way you treat others. You may know the words of Christianity, but do you do the works?

Application

Think about your faith this way: If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Remember, don't just talk the talk, walk the walk!