

# Stand Strong In Difficult Days (Life Before the Tribulation)

*“With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15 NLT*



This chapter has applications for TODAY and the FUTURE end times teaching. It also contains information about the end times not found anywhere else in the Bible. These events occur just before the 7-year tribulation period.

**Setting** - Previously, when Paul had been with the Thessalonians, he taught them about the end times and the rapture. However, after Paul moved on to new cities to do his missionary and church planting work, they received letters from an imposter masquerading as Paul. The imposter wrote that the day of the Lord, the time of God’s wrath and judgment (The tribulation period) had already started. This alarmed the Thessalonians because they feared that they had missed the rapture, as Paul taught them in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The **backstory** to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. *“<sup>1</sup> Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him [the rapture 1 Thess. 4:13-18]. <sup>2</sup> Don’t be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don’t believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us.” (NLT)*

The remaining verses of 2 Thess. 2 are a clarification of the events before the tribulation period, the rapture, and the need for God’s people to stand strong when life is difficult. Paul gives 3 basic exhortations: (1) **Don’t be easily shaken or alarmed** (2:2). (2) **Don’t believe or be fooled by misrepresentation** (2:2-3). (3) **Stand strong & keep a grip on the scriptures** (2:15).

## Central lesson

**Stand strong in the Lord’s strength & keep a grip on His Word.**

### What is “the day of the Lord”?

This is not a 24-hour day, but a period that is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah 13:6; Zephaniah 1:14-16; Joel 2:31. It is a time when God will judge evil in the world and save His people, especially Israel.

In this context and comparing other New Testament passages, *“the day of the Lord”* is the period covering the **7-year tribulation, Christ’s return to the earth, the millennium, and the final judgment** depicted in Revelation 6-20. This is supported by 2 Peter 3:10. *“But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.”*

### Life Before the Tribulation—3 Major Events...

1. The **REBELLION** - the falling away from the Faith, the apostasy, (2:3). The definite article “the” points to a specific moment when God’s truth will be rejected by those who once believed it (at least intellectually). *“<sup>3</sup> Don’t be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God...”*

The word “*rebellion*” is ἀποστασία (ap-os-tas-ee’-ah) meaning—**defection, apostasy, revolt**. A turning away from God is already happening in our time. Church attendance is seriously declining, the Bible and Christianity are facing skepticism and hostility, prayer, Bible reading, nativity displays are disallowed in schools and public property, mainline denominations are becoming more liberal & progressive, and people are “deconstructing” their faith and embracing atheism, etc.

2. The **REVEALING** of the Antichrist (2:3-4) and widespread deception (2:9-12).

*“<sup>3</sup> Don’t be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until... the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction.<sup>4</sup> He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.”*

3. The **REMOVAL** of the restrainer—and the rapture (2:6-8).

*“<sup>6</sup> And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed only when his time comes. <sup>7</sup> For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way. <sup>8</sup> Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed...”*

Paul states in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 that the Antichrist is not able to be revealed because there is a restrainer who is “**holding it back.**” The Greek aorist tense for the verb “**revealed**” (v.6) indicates that this disclosure will be a **decisive act** that will take place at a **definite moment in history**—when the restrainer is removed. In verse 7, Paul refers to the restrainer in the **masculine** - “**the one**” (NLT) “**he**” (NIV) who will eventually “**steps out of the way.**” That is, remove Himself (Gk. Middle voice). The Greek word for **restraining** is masculine gender.

**Who is the “restrainer”?** Some have suggested the Roman Empire, Human Government, the church, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only person with sufficient supernatural power to restrain the satanically empowered Antichrist. The *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* explains: **“Though many explanations for ‘the restrainer’ have been offered...in light of the supernatural character of ‘the one holding back,’ the use of the masculine article in verse 7 (the neuter article here [v.6] is because the Greek word for ‘spirit’ is neuter), it is best to understand ‘the restrainer’ as the Holy Spirit...”**

**The timing of the rapture?** The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian **permanently** (cf. John 14:16&17; 1 Cor. 6:19&20). If the Holy Spirit must be removed before Antichrist’s public unveiling, then **all believers must also be removed** (raptured) at the same time. Revelation 6:2 indicates that the Antichrist will rise to power at the beginning of the tribulation period. This means the removal of the Holy Spirit and the rapture of the church must precede the tribulation period. This is a reversal of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit will function as He did in the Old Testament era.

## Conclusion

**Stand strong in the Lord’s strength & keep a grip on His Word.**

**Action Steps:** ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday’s Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus. ► Read Revelation 5. *What do you learn about Jesus?*