

2 Thessalonians - Why You Don't Have to FEAR the Future



- Do the conditions of the world and the circumstances of your life cause you to be fearful about the future? If so, what scares you the most?

The believers in the ancient city of Thessalonica were **living in fear of the future**. Apparently, a letter was sent to the church with Paul's name on it that suggested that the Tribulation period—"the Day of the Lord"—had started (2:1-2). However, the letter was a **counterfeit**. Paul never sent the letter. Someone was deliberately trying to deceive the Thessalonian church. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (NLT) *"2 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."*

Why did this misinformation cause the Thessalonians to be fearful?

1. The implication was that the Thessalonians had **missed the rapture** and were left behind.
2. Also, their present persecution was thought to be the suffering of the Tribulation period.

The church at Thessalonica was experiencing persecution for their identification with Jesus Christ (cf. 1:4-7). Some of the believers mistakenly thought that they were already in the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation period and the Millennium). They mistakenly thought they had missed the rapture and were left behind to face the horror of the Tribulation period.

Paul sent the letter of 2 Thessalonians to expose the deception and correct the misinformation about the end times. Paul writes to explain God's program for the end times and to encourage the Thessalonian Christians to stand firm for the Lord in their present time of suffering. Also, Paul wrote to instruct the believers to live right and to be responsible for their obligations.

Central Lesson:

We don't need to fear the future because God is in CONTROL and has a PLAN for our lives.

Author: The book identifies the Apostle **PAUL** as the author (1:1; 3:17) accompanied by Silas and Timothy. In 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Paul said that he had written the greeting of this letter *"in my own handwriting"* and added, *"I do this in all my letters to prove they are from me."*

Paul normally dictated his letters as a scribe wrote them down. But, in light of the counterfeit letters identified as from Paul (2 Thess. 2:2), he made it a practice to sign his letters in his own handwriting as a way of **helping his readers know that it was genuinely from him** (also compare Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; Philemon 1:19).

Date: 2 Thessalonians was written about A.D. **52** from Corinth. Paul probably wrote this letter shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians while he was still in Corinth with Silas and Timothy (cf. Acts 18:5).

Title: The title of the book is named after the recipients—Christians living in the city of **THESSALONICA** which is located in northeastern Greece. The church was made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers who turned to God from idolatry (1 Thess. 1:9; 2:14-16).

Key Verse: 2 Thessalonians 2:15. (NLT). *"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."*

Key Chapter: Chapter **2**.

This chapter corrects a serious error that had crept into the Thessalonian church. They thought they had missed the rapture and their suffering was a result of being in the Tribulation period (2:1-2). Paul told them that the Tribulation had not started. Before the Tribulation would begin, there would be several events that must take place first (2:3-12). These events are:

1. The *"great rebellion against God"* must occur (2:3). Bible Teacher, Warren Wiersbe, comments: "Here it refers to a falling away from the truth of the Word of God. While there were certainly false teachers in Paul's day, the church at large was united on the truths of the Word of God. If you met another Christian, you knew he believed in the Word of God, the deity of Christ, and salvation by faith in Christ. This is certainly not true today! We live in a day of 'Christian unbelief'; people say they are Christians, yet deny the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and so on. This apostasy, or falling away from the truth, is promised in 1 Tim. 4 and 2 Tim. 3. We are living in apostate days right now, which indicates that the coming of the Lord is near." *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines*, pp. 610-611.

2. The *"the man of lawlessness is revealed"* also known as the Antichrist, must be revealed (2:3-4).

3. The **RESTRAINER** (believed to be the Holy Spirit) *"steps out of the way"* so that the Antichrist *"can be revealed"* (2:5-10).

"6 And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed only when his time comes. 7 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."

Many Bible teachers believe that the rapture will occur when the restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is removed from the world. The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of every Christ-follower and can never be taken away from the believer (cf. John 14:16-17). If the Spirit leaves this world, so must all believers leave with Him.

Key Words: **COMING** or **COME** in the NLT (1:7, 10; 2:1, 3, 6, 8, 9; 3:5). The book describes the coming of Jesus and the coming of the Antichrist.

Outline:

- I. Information about the **FUTURE** (1:1-2:12)

- II. Instruction about the **PRESENT** (2:13-3:18)

Central Lesson: We don't need to fear the future, because God is in control and He has a plan for our lives.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.