

**YOUR GUIDE TO A STUDY ON THE  
CHRONOLOGY OF END TIME EVENTS**



What follows is an excerpt from a study book on 2 Thessalonians. This excerpt profiles key chronological marker for end time events.

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2

### (TEXT)

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

<sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup> And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not

receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup> And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

<sup>13</sup> But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, <sup>14</sup> to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup> Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

<sup>16</sup> Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, <sup>17</sup> comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

<sup>19</sup> For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? <sup>20</sup> For you are our glory and joy.

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2

### (PART 1)

Eschatology, the study of happenings in the last days, is an important field of study, but can be difficult for the following reasons:

- Prophecies are sometimes wrapped in language that has double meaning or is rich in imagery and symbolism.
- The books in the Bible are not presented in chronological order and the material in many books of the Bible (including the Gospels) is not presented in Chronological order.
- Prophecies can unfold in phases. For example, Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy<sup>1</sup> can be divided into two phases (69 weeks +1 week, with weeks representing years). Daniel's prophecy began approximately 450 years before the birth of Christ (with the declaration of a Persian king). By viewing Daniel's *weeks* as *years*, and adding  $69 \times 7$  (483) years to the precise starting point for the prophecy, Daniel's prophecy that "the Anointed One will be put to death..."<sup>2</sup> is fulfilled with the Lord's Triumphant Entry and Crucifixion. At that point, the prophecy is put on pause, and the 70<sup>th</sup> week (7 years) will unfold when the 7-year Tribulation begins (as profiled in the book of Revelation). Other well-known

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:24-27

<sup>2</sup> Danial 9:26

- prophecies that have breaks or pauses before their full fulfillment can be found in Matthew 6:9-13, Isaiah 9:1-7, and Isaiah 61:1-7.

As the interpretation of prophecy is sometimes challenging, Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to provide profound insight into future events in his writings to the Thessalonians. Paul not only provides a glimpse into future events but also provides particular markers that help students of the Word today understand the sequence of key eschatological events. Thus far, Paul has clarified:

- The Lord has not yet come<sup>3</sup> (the Rapture or the Second Coming).
- Believers are not exempt from persecution and must endure the hardships Jesus referred to as *birth pangs*.<sup>4</sup>
- There will be a prolonged period of turmoil in the *last days*. Daniel noted that these days of turmoil (tribulation) will last 2520<sup>5</sup> days, seven (biblical) years. These seven years are now known as the seven-year Tribulation period.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:1-3

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

<sup>5</sup> How do we know that 2,520 days is the length of the Tribulation? Daniel 9:24-27 speaks of 70 weeks with 1 week representing 7 years. The first 69 weeks of his prophecy concluded with the crucifixion of Christ. The last week is a reference to the 7 year Tribulation period. Further, he writes, "**In the midst (middle) of the week (7 year Tribulation priod)... the abomination...**" (9:27). Daniel then notes that the middle of the week is 3 1/2 years (another way to confirm the Tribulation period is 7 years. In Revelation, John will reference the last half of the Tribulation period as 42 months.

- Faithful followers of Christ will be *Raptured*,<sup>6</sup> thus escaping the time of wrath to come.<sup>7</sup> The Rapture is associated with the phrase, *the day or hour of the Lord's return*.<sup>8</sup>
- The last half of the seven-year Tribulation period is associated with the *Day of the Lord*—a time when the Lord pours out His wrath on the disobedient and willful who have hardened their hearts against Him.<sup>9</sup>
- At the end of the Tribulation period, Jesus will return in what is known as the *Second Coming* or the *Glorious Appearing*. At that time, Jesus will vanquish the enemies of God who have gathered to fight in the Battle of Armageddon. The Millennial Reign of Christ (on earth) will follow.<sup>10</sup>

**Reflection question:** *Note what it means to you that the outcome of the epic battle of good vs. evil has already been determined. No prophecy has failed—prophecies concerning the Lord's ultimate victory will unfold exactly as predicted.*

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

<sup>7</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:9

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 24:36

<sup>9</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 19-20

2 Thessalonians 2 is full of promises and prophecies. In this chapter, Paul presents additional information to aid in our understanding of the things to come. A review of the first eight verses, and the Rapture-related promises designed to encourage and embolden our faith, follow:

1. In verse 2, Paul wrote that “...the day of Christ is at hand” (2b). The phrase indicates three key truths:

- The Old Covenant of Law ended with the crucifixion and Pentecost—the Age of the Church, of which Christ is the head, is at hand. Christ is working through His Church to share truth and offer salvation to the world.
- The day of Christ is a term that indicates a period in which God is working—He is working now, worked in the past, and will be at work in the future. The future work of Christ includes the *day of the Lord's return* whereby he will come as a “thief in the night”<sup>11</sup> to rescue His faithful followers from the Tribulation and the rise of the Antichrist.
- The fact that Christ is working now, that His working will include rescuing His people in the Rapture, and that the Rapture will take place suddenly, “*as a thief in the night*,” prompts believers to live in a state of readiness—always watching, waiting, and ready for the Lord's return.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:2

<sup>12</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:10; James 5:7; Jude 21

- The surety of the Lord’s working and coming instills hope and faith.

**Reflection question:** *Note why the surety of the Lord’s working and promised return should inspire the Church to bold faith and fervent action.*

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2. In the first part of verse 3, Paul presents a chronological marker—he prophesies that a great apostasy will impact the Church in the last days, **before** the Rapture and Tribulation begin. Paul writes, “Let no man *deceive* you by any means...”<sup>13</sup> Here Paul introduces the apostasy that is further defined throughout the chapter. Paul’s teaching was the first to be presented in written form, but it was not new. Paul’s teaching builds on what Jesus taught during the Olivet

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:3a



Discourse<sup>14</sup> several decades prior. There Jesus promised that “many deceivers” would come<sup>15</sup> in the last days. Decades later, the Apostle John wrote of how the Church of Laodicea<sup>16</sup> represents the complacency and apostasy of the Church of the last days. The deception of the last days is also depicted by the first (white) of the four horsemen in Revelation 6. The apostasy or deception of the last days will manifest itself in the following primary ways:

- People will teach that the Bible is not true, or that the timeless commandments of Jesus and the New Testament writers no longer apply to the Church today.
- People will teach that Jesus is not divine nor the only way to salvation.<sup>17</sup>
- People will teach that the easy way is proof it is the Lord’s way. True service and sacrifice will not be viewed as noble or wise endeavors.
- People will teach that personal sacrifice and service are not required—a general acknowledgment that God exists and living a life that is *better than most* will ensure your eternal salvation.

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 24-25

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 24:4-5

<sup>16</sup> Revelation 3

<sup>17</sup> John 14:6

- People will teach that Jesus is not coming to rescue His people in the Rapture. Most church leaders will not emphasize the Rapture teaching and many will hold that the events described in the book of Revelation are to be understood figuratively, or that they symbolically refer to the suffering associated with the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

**Reflection question:** *Note several ways the deception or apostasy of the last days the author noted in this section are evident in the church of the west today.*

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3. In the second part of verse 3, Paul clarifies that the apostasy of the Church in the last days will take place before the rise of the Antichrist. Paul writes: “...for ***that day*** shall not come...except there

come a falling away first...”<sup>18</sup> The *that day*, is the day of the Lord’s return (the Rapture), which will precede the rise of the Antichrist. Remember that in part, Paul is writing this letter because false teachers, writing in his name, told young Thessalonian believers that the Rapture had already occurred.

Paul’s statement further clarifies the following:

- The Lord’s true Church (His true and faithful followers) will be Raptured before the rise of the Antichrist. *Paul elaborates in his writings that sadly, because many have slipped into apostasy and are not sincere in the faith, many who claim to be Christians will be left behind.*
- Some who are *left behind* will join the coming one-world religion which, according to Revelation 13, will require all to worship the Antichrist by the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation period. This is the apostate anti-church. However, Scripture also speaks of a revival springing forth during the Tribulation period. This revival will be supported by the Gospel Angel,<sup>19</sup> the sealing of 144,000 witnesses<sup>20</sup> for the Lord, the two Witnesses profiled in Revelation 11, and the post-rapture believers known as Tribulation saints.<sup>21</sup> The prophet Joel wrote that in those last days, “all who call upon the name of the Lord

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<sup>18</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:3b

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 14:6

<sup>20</sup> Revelation 7:3, 14:1

<sup>21</sup> Revelation 7:1-17

will be saved.”<sup>22</sup> Post-rapture world believers in Christ represent the next generation Church of Jesus Christ.

- *Follow the footnote below if you would like to download a free **Rapture Kit** resource—26+ Gigs of material that can serve as a non-internet-dependent library of critical information for those not taken in the Rapture. This can be a valuable resource at a time when there is limited access to Christian/discipleship resources or teachers. Consider downloading the files and passing them on to those whom you believe are in danger of being left behind.*<sup>23</sup>

**Reflection question:** *Note how Paul’s writings prompt people to be spiritually ready for the return of the Lord, and also, how believers today should have a concern for those who will come to faith after the Rapture.*

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<sup>22</sup> Joel 2:32

<sup>23</sup> <https://rapturekit.org/make/>

4. In the last part of verse 3, Paul notes that the “*man of sin*” or, *on of perdition*” will be revealed *after* the birth pains and apostasy of the Church noted in Matthew 24, and *after* the Rapture noted in 1 Thessalonians 4. The Antichrist could be alive today and hold a position of considerable power, but at this point, his true identity and ambitions are unknown to all who know him. The Antichrist will come on the scene quickly and solve many global problems with incredible charisma and wisdom. His diplomacy skills will be unequalled—he will lead in brokering a peace covenant/agreement between Israel and those who oppose her.<sup>24</sup> This monumental achievement will both initiate the seven-year Tribulation, and thrust into power the most evil man the world has ever known.

**Reflection question: Note which ONE of the following is true: 1) The Antichrist must be an American President 2) The seven-year Tribulation begins when the Rapture takes place 3) The Rapture takes place after the Battle of Armageddon 4) The seven-year Tribulation begins when the Antichrist brokers a Peace Covenant with Israel.**

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<sup>24</sup> Daniel 9:24-27

1. In verse 4, Paul notes that the *man of sin* (the Antichrist) will at some point claim to be God and attempt to exalt himself as God. Verse 4 reads:

*“[He] 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.”*

This is an echo of Isaiah 14 where Scripture notes that in the past, Satan was thrown out of heaven because in pride—he sought to *exalteth himself above God*.

*“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground...For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”<sup>25</sup>*

Daniel prophesied<sup>26</sup> that at the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation, the Antichrist will stand in the (yet to be rebuilt) new Temple, forbid the Jews from offering daily sacrifices (which will resume when the third Temple is built), and set up what Jesus

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<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 14:12-15

<sup>26</sup> Daniel 9:27

called *the abomination of desolation*,<sup>27</sup> Daniel wrote:

*“In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the **overspreading of abominations** he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”*<sup>28</sup>

Daniel’s reference to *overspreading of abominations* is clarified in Revelation 13, where we read that all will be made to worship the *abomination* and take a Mark on their hand or forehead (the *Mark of the Beast*) to show their allegiance to the Antichrist.<sup>29</sup> Those who do not *take the Mark* will not be able to buy or sell goods. In time, those who do not take the Mark will be named enemies of the state and killed.

**Reflection question:** *Those who are alive at this point in history will be coerced to receive the Mark of the Beast, but those who do will not enter the Kingdom of God (Revelation 14:9-12). Note why it is important to be spiritually prepared for the Rapture, and what kind of mindset one must have in the last days to withstand the pressure receive the Mark of the Antichrist.*

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 24:15

<sup>28</sup> Daniel 9:27b

<sup>29</sup> For additional information on the Antichrist, visit [tinyurl.com/ycjth4c](http://tinyurl.com/ycjth4c)

6. In verses 6-8, Paul presents one of the most profound eschatological passages in the New Testament. Here Paul refutes those who were teaching that the Rapture had already occurred and validates what is now known as the Pre-Trib Rapture view. In these three verses, Paul notes the sequence of the Rapture and Tribulation events by revealing what must happen *before* the Tribulation begins and the Antichrist rises to power. Paul writes:

*“And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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..”<sup>30</sup>*

These verses reveal the following:

- Satan seeks to *steal, kill, and destroy*<sup>31</sup> but Someone is currently keeping him from doing all he desires to do. Verse 6 notes that something is *holding him back (NIV), withholdeth [him] (KJV), and restrains him (NASB)*. Believers know that the Holy Spirit is the *Restrainer*. In this dispensation (the *Church Age* or the *Age of the Gentiles*), the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of faithful followers of Christ.<sup>32</sup> It is the work of Christ, fulfilled through His people

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<sup>30</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8

<sup>31</sup> John 10:10

<sup>32</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16



(the Church), who are indwelt with the power of the Spirit that *restrains* the unbridled fury of our viscous adversary. Surely James' words are true: "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous...availeth much.*"<sup>33</sup>

- The second part of verse 6 notes that Satan is at work now, but his agent, the Antichrist, has not yet been able to move into power. This will happen *at the proper time (NIV)*, according to the sovereign plan of God.<sup>34</sup>
- Verse 7 affirms that the Antichrist will begin his rise to power when the *Restrainer* (the Holy Spirit) is *taken out of the way*. Just as Jesus' life was not taken at Calvary—He willingly laid it down, in the future, the Holy Spirit will not be forced off the planet, but will choose to leave in accordance with the preordained plan of God.
- As the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of believers, removing the Spirit from the earth indicates that believers will be removed from the earth. This truth correlates with the Rapture teaching. Scripture teaches that *in the twinkling of an eye*<sup>35</sup> (suddenly) the Lord will appear in the clouds and *translate*<sup>36</sup> or *catch up*<sup>37</sup> his faithful followers from this world

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<sup>33</sup> James 5:16b

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 14:24

<sup>35</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52

<sup>36</sup> An old English term

<sup>37</sup> From 1 Thessalonians 4:17

to be with Him in His. 1 Thessalonians 4:17b reads: “...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

- Verse 8 confirms that *after* the Holy Spirit is removed via the Rapture of God’s people, “**then** shall that Wicked be revealed...” Believers, therefore, do not need to fear the coming oppressive hand of the Antichrist.
- The last part of verse 8 notes what will happen at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period and the climactic Battle of Armageddon. Just as the remnant of God and Jerusalem appear to be overwhelmed, Jesus will return from heaven, riding a white horse, leading raptured and martyred believers with him,<sup>38</sup> and will vanquish the enemies of God.

Paul writes:

*“...The Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming”<sup>39</sup>*

Decades later, the Apostle John wrote:

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on*

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<sup>38</sup> Revelation 19

<sup>39</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:8b

*his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”<sup>40</sup>*

John perfectly complements Paul’s depiction of the conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon, writing: *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”<sup>41</sup>*

Almost 2000 years ago, Paul provided clarity to issues that many struggle with today. Some say we are in the Tribulation now. Some do not anticipate a Rapture. Some believe there will be a Rapture several years after the Antichrist is revealed. Some believe the Antichrist or *man of sin* is a symbol of evil—not an actual person, or perhaps emblematic of the ten Roman Caesars who sorely persecuted the Christian Church. Some believe the eschatological prophecies of Jesus, Luke Mark, and Paul were

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<sup>40</sup> Revelation 19:11-14

<sup>41</sup> Revelation 19:15

fulfilled by the events associated with the destruction of the Second Temple and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Some believe John's prophecies in Revelation are actually a look backward in time—a review of the fall of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews, and the Roman oppression of the Church in the first century.

Though some notable people with PhDs behind their name hold these views, I dare say they are incorrect—not because I think so—but because Paul's writing makes clear what will happen—and his writing is so beautifully complimented by, and expanded on, in the book of Revelation—written decades after Paul's death.

From Paul's writings, we see the following:

- There will be a falling away from truth (the apostasy). This correlates with what Jesus said in Matthew 24:5 and what John wrote in Revelation 6:1-2.
- This apostasy will be accompanied by oppression and the persecution of believers.
- There will be a Rapture
- The Antichrist will step onto the world stage, offer solutions to complex problems, and lead in brokering a peace covenant with Israel and the warring nations of the

world. He will be lauded as a hero and thrust into power. The announcement of the peace covenant with Israel initiates the seven-year Tribulation period.

- The third Temple will be built—Jews will resume the Old Testament-era practice of offering animal sacrifices.
- At the midpoint of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will enter the new Temple and declare himself to be God. With the help of a *false prophet*,<sup>42</sup> he will compel people to worship him—a *Mark* on the hand or forehead will signify allegiance to the Antichrist. Those who refuse the *Mark* will not be able to buy or sell, will be branded an enemy of the State, and eventually, be put to death.
- The last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation is referred to as *The Great Tribulation* or *The Day of God's Wrath* or *The Day of Jacob's Trouble*. It will be a dark time when the fury of the Antichrist is unleashed and the wrath of God is poured out on the earth.
- The seven-year Tribulation will end with the Battle of Armageddon.<sup>43</sup> When all seems lost for those who stand against the Antichrist, Jesus will return (the Second

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<sup>42</sup> Revelation 13

<sup>43</sup> Revelation 19

Coming), conquer the enemy, then establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth.<sup>44</sup>

Though pieces of the prophetic puzzle come from many books in the Bible, it is Paul who presents key markers which make clear the sequence of key end-time events.

Eschatology was a primary teaching point for Paul. Though he was with the Thessalonians for less than one month and had so much to teach, he made it a point to teach on this important subject. Note Paul's words to the Thessalonians in verse 5: *"Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"*

The material in this section was deep—use the box on the next page to write down a few key takeaways that stand out in your mind—things you desire to remember, would like to study further, and incorporate into your witness for the Lord.

**Take away points from the last section—things that stand out in your mind, topics you desire to study further, or Scripture precepts you desire to share as part of your witness for the Lord.**

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<sup>44</sup> Revelation 19-20

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2

### (PART 2)

Paul closes chapter 2 with a presentation of three warnings and a review of four *don't forgets*.

Chapter two will conclude Paul's eschatological teaching focus in his writing to the Thessalonians. As parting thoughts on this important subject, Paul warns:

#### WARNINGS

- **The Antichrist will come with “all power and signs and lying wonders.”**<sup>45</sup> Jesus said: “*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*”<sup>46</sup> Believers should not underestimate Satan—he is a master deceiver.<sup>47</sup> The best defense is prayer and an understanding of the Word of God. Knowing the truth will help you recognize Satan's lies. Knowing God's promises will help you persevere when Satan whispers that all is lost. Knowing God's directives will help you not be swayed by Satan's

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<sup>45</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:9

<sup>46</sup> Matthew 24:24

<sup>47</sup> John 8:43-45; Matthew 24:24

temptations. The formula for standing strong in the Lord is Prayer  
+ Praise + Study + Scripture.

**Reflection question: Note two best practices for growing in 1) prayer 2) personal praise and worship 3) the study of God's Word 4) memorizing and sharing Scripture.**

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- There will come a “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”<sup>48</sup> The *delusion* does not begin with the Tribulation—it is at work now (see Matthew 23:24), will intensify during the season of *birth pangs*<sup>49</sup> (the days leading up to the Rapture), and will peak during *The Great Tribulation* (the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation). The apostasy we see today is directly linked to the *delusion* Paul prophesied would come. The apostasy in the Church today is,

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<sup>48</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:11b

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8



therefore, not the result of discoveries in science or changes in society—they are the result of a spiritual attack. Believers must recognize that compromising on points of doctrine is not progress or enlightenment, it is yielding hard-fought-for ground to a formidable enemy. Paul warns believers to “*stand fast*”<sup>50</sup> and “*hold fast [to] that which is true.*”<sup>51</sup> What follows is a list of **some** of the issues plaguing today’s Church—issues that evidence the *delusion* Paul said would come:

- Not teaching/preaching the whole Gospel (failing to emphasize accountability, stewardship, sacrifice, purity, obedience, hell, etc.).
- Not emphasizing that Jesus is coming in the Rapture and those not spiritually prepared will be left behind.
- Teaching that the Bible is not to be understood literally.
- Teaching that much in the Bible is to be understood figuratively.
- Teaching that science is superior to the truth of Scripture.
- Teaching that there are many ways to heaven.
- Teaching there is no absolute truth.
- Teaching that God promises comfort and prosperity.
- Teaching that homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and transgender issues are acceptable to God. (*Note: this*

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<sup>50</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 16:13

<sup>51</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:21b

*author believes that if there is true repentance, all sins can be forgiven).*

**Reflection question: *What other issues do you see evidence compromise or apostasy in today's culture or Church?***

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- Paul concludes this section with a warning to **believe**. People are given free will, but are urged to believe the scriptures, the testimony of believers, the message of the prophets, and the words of Jesus—Paul urges people to believe what they know in their hearts to be true.

The Psalmist noted that “*The **heavens declare the glory of God.***”

<sup>52</sup> His splendor and power are displayed all about us for those who have eyes to see. The Apostle John wrote that the “*light*” that came into the world “*enlightens every person.*”<sup>53</sup> All have

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<sup>52</sup> Psalm 19:1-2

<sup>53</sup> John 1:9 (NASB)

an inner light, a soul which serves as a kind of conscience that reveals right from wrong and yearns to connect with God.

Paul wrote to Titus: *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”*<sup>54</sup> God not only made humanity, He reaches out to humanity, reveals Himself to humanity, and *bringeth salvation* to humanity. God wants to be known by, and walk in relationship with, His creation.

And to the Romans, Paul wrote, *“The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”*<sup>55</sup> Because of all that God has done for us—and all He has revealed to us, humanity is now *without excuse*. We are drawn to believe—made with a “God-shaped void” in our hearts and only find meaning, purpose and hope when we walk in step with the Creator. Paul warns that *“Those who do not believe will be damned: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth...”*<sup>56</sup> This is not pettiness or meanness—it is a gracious prompt to choose well and embrace God’s free gift of salvation.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Titus 2:11

<sup>55</sup> Romans 1:20

<sup>56</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:12

<sup>57</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10; John 3:16, 1:12

**Reflection question:** *How can we share with a skeptic that Paul's warning in verse 12 is not a threat but a warning, given in love?*

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Paul closes chapter 2 with four summary points. These points embody the spirit of the promises and admonitions in Paul's writings:

- In verse 13, Paul writes: *"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."* In this verse, Paul affirms the following important truths:
  - **God chose you.** God did not choose who He wants you to be, He chose you as you are. This does not mean that He does not want you to mature in the faith—but it does mean that you do not have to first mature in the faith before God will love you. The God who has infinite choices decided to choose to love you. Ephesians 1 reiterates this beautiful truth:

*“He [God] hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*<sup>58</sup>

- **God chose you to salvation.** Paul reminds the reader that all that God has done for humanity—*helped, led, loved, blessed, forgave, came for, lived for, and died for*—was for a purpose. By grace God is prone to bless us, heal us, and free us from various strongholds. However, God’s greatest desire is to save us. God extends the offer of eternal salvation as a free gift of grace;<sup>59</sup> however, because of free will, *we* must choose to love and live for God. This is God’s great desire, but He will not force our choice.

Many cry out to God and promise to believe or obey ***if...if*** God heals, or meets a need, or provides some material blessing. Perspective is important here. God is good and grants the desires of our hearts. However, the gift that God deeply desires to give will not last eight decades or so—God’s gift of salvation will last forever. God’s desire is for you

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<sup>58</sup> Ephesians 1:4-6

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10

to be in right relationship with Him, forever.

- **Believers in Christ are anointed<sup>60</sup> and sealed<sup>61</sup>** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Reflection question: 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (profiled above) is rich in meaning. Note three truths that are particularly meaningful to you.**

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- In verse 14, Paul writes: *“He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

<sup>62</sup> In this verse, Paul affirms the following:

- The Gospel is to be *shared*. The good news is not only given to us so that we can benefit—it is given to us with the expectation that it will be shared so others can benefit. Here

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<sup>60</sup> 1 John 2:18-29

<sup>61</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30

<sup>62</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (NIV)

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that just as they benefited from *his* ministry, *they* are to pass the truth on (*pray it forward*) to others. His exhortation applies to believers today.

- As we serve and share, we glorify the Lord. Those who live to glorify Christ can be assured that they will be glorified by Christ.<sup>63</sup>

**Reflection question:** *All believers are called to help accomplish the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Note four things you can do to actively and strategically share the Gospel in the next three months.*

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- In verse 15, Paul writes: “*Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught.*” Scripture speaks of *running with*

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<sup>63</sup> Romans 8:30; Matthew 13:43

*endurance*<sup>64</sup> and to “...*not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*”<sup>65</sup> True believers persevere. Note: About 425 people are profiled in Scripture (with information beyond just their name). Of these, most begin well (such as Judas), but less than 20% end well. Everyone looks good in the first 100 yards of a marathon—but it is not how you begin the race, it is how you end that is important. Here Paul reminds readers to take the long view, to *stand fast* even in (better, especially in) the face of opposition.

**Reflection question: *What three pieces of advice would you give a newer believer regarding how to position to persevere and stand fast in the faith?***

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<sup>64</sup> Hebrews 12:1

<sup>65</sup> Galatians 6:9



- In verses 16-17, Paul closes the chapter with a prayer and words of promise: “*Now our Lord Jesus Christ...hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.*” In this verse, Paul reminds the reader that:
  - **Jesus loves us.** There is nothing more Jesus could do or say to prove His love for His people.
  - **Jesus offers everlasting consolation.** The word for *consolation* in the original Greek text is *paraklesin*, which means *comfort*. The word is drawn from the term *paraclete*, which references the Holy Spirit,<sup>66</sup> who is our Comforter.<sup>67</sup> Here Paul reminds the reader that our comfort and peace come not from the things of this world, but from God.
  - **In Christ there is good hope.** Jesus is called *our hope* in Romans 15:13. The word *hope* in English is a fairly weak term. To say, “*Well, I hope so...*” is generally an indication there is a 50—50 chance of something happening. The word *hope* in the Greek text is a strong word—akin to confidence and trust. Just as we can put our *trust* and *confidence* in God, we can put our *hope* in Christ. And just

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<sup>66</sup> John 14:16

<sup>67</sup> John 14:26

as the promises of God never fail,<sup>68</sup> we can know that the Words of Christ will not fail or fade. This internal hope is not tied to the things of this world and, therefore, can not be taken away by man; nor should our hope be lost when the securities and comforts of this world are lost. Focusing on this internal hope in Christ helped Paul to write: *“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”*<sup>69</sup>

**Reflection question:** *Expand on one of the three points noted above. How does In Christ there is hope or He has offered everlasting consolation or Jesus loves you impact your spiritual walk?*

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<sup>68</sup> Joshua 21:45

<sup>69</sup> Philippians 4:12 (NIV)

**SECOND** THESSALONIANS