

2 Thessalonians

AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul

THEME: "Paul Assures the Christians That the Rapture Will Take Place Before the Tribulation"

INTRODUCTION: Paul had been to Thessalonica and had started a wonderful church there. He had taught of the wonderful doctrine of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had told them that Jesus had gone away and was going to come again to receive them. The people became excited and enthused about this blessed truth, and they anticipated the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Something happened, however. One of their company died. Because of this, they wrote the Apostle Paul a letter and asked him what would happen to the one who had died. They had not thought of one of their members passing away before the Lord came back, for they looked for the Lord to come imminently. Paul wrote the letter of I Thessalonians to tell them what would happen to the dead in Christ at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is summarized in I Thessalonians 4:13-17. Paul had also told them that after the coming of Christ in the air for His own, a terrible time of persecution would come on the earth called the "Tribulation Period." This time of war, bloodshed, heartache, suffering, famine, etc. would last for seven years.

Soon the people at Thessalonica began to be persecuted. They became shaken and troubled, supposing perhaps that the persecutions that they were suffering were those of the great and terrible "day of the Lord" or the "Tribulation Period." They had been taught to expect deliverance from the Tribulation by the Rapture and "by our gathering together unto him," II Thessalonians 2: 1b. Now such an awful time was upon them that they thought the Tribulation Period had come! "How could the Tribulation Period come and the Christians still be here?" was their question. Hence, the book of II Thessalonians is written to tell them that the Tribulation Period has not started and that our Lord has not come for His own, but that He will come for His own before the Tribulation. This is outlined beautifully in II Thessalonians 2:2-12.

I. PAUL ADMONISHES THEM NOT TO BE TROUBLED OR SHAKEN BY PERSECUTION. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:2a. He told them that they were not in the Tribulation Period.

II. PAUL TELLS THEM THAT "THE DAY OF CHRIST IS AT HAND." See 2 Thessalonians 2:2b. He meant that the day of Christ is imminent. He could come at any moment. We do not know when He is coming. We are to look for Him all the time.

III. PAUL REMINDS THEM THAT THE RAPTURE MUST COME FIRST. This is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Notice the words, "for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." The words, "falling away," mean "snatching away" or "calling away." This has to do with the Rapture. The first event on God's timetable is the Rapture. It is a signless event. It is the time when the dead in Christ shall rise. The Lord Jesus shall descend from Heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and then the living in Christ shall rise with the dead to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. Paul reminds them that this event, the Rapture, will transpire before the Tribulation Period.

IV. PAUL TEACHES THEM THAT IMMEDIATELY UPON THE RAPTURE. THE ANTICHRIST. OR THE MAN OF SIN. WILL BE REVEALED. See II Thessalonians 2:3b. The man of sin will exalt himself above God and will be the object of worship. Read II Thessalonians 2:4. He will be in charge during the Tribulation Period. The outstanding personality on earth during the Tribulation Period is

this man of sin. He is called the "antichrist," a "beast," and the "son of perdition." Basically, he is the Devil