

II THESSALONIANS 2:3-4
DO NOT BE DECEIVED!
PART 1

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Thessalonians chapter 2 as we continue with Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica. And, as we have seen in writing this letter, Paul is trying to correct some errors that had come into the church.

You see, we are told in II Thessalonians 2:1-2 how these false teachings, these false doctrines had come into the church. Paul wrote, **“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 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.”**

In other words, many believers in Thessalonica were troubled because they thought they missed the coming of Christ, the Rapture and they were in the Tribulation Period. Persecution, difficult times and specifically, Paul lists some things that brought this confusion.

First of all, Paul tells us that they were shaken as false prophecies were given that they were in the day of the Lord, **“by spirit.”**

Not only that, but we also see false teaching that was spoken, telling them that they were in the Day of the Lord, **“by word”**, and it shook them.

Also, they were shaken as this forged letter, supposedly from Paul, was being circulated stating they were in the Day of the Lord, **“by letter.”**

And we covered this last time, but what I want you to see here is that deception is a tool of the Devil and he will use all kinds of things to sway us away from the truth, to discourage us.

Also, and this is key, what is the context of this chapter? It is kind of two-fold you might say. First of all, they thought they missed the Rapture. Secondly, because they thought they missed the Rapture they believed they were in the Tribulation Period.

Keep that in mind as we look at our text this morning. Paul is trying to clear up some confusion regarding the Rapture and the Day of the Lord and really, what is going to transpire before the Day of the Lord begins.

Now before we get to our text this morning, I want to share with you how people can get confused and miss the point of what Paul is saying here. This is from a commentary, and I really enjoy what this writer says, he does a good job. And yet, when we read what he has to say with this passage here in II Thessalonians chapter 2, I think he misses the point and we will look at this in detail to see what Paul is saying here.

But I want to share with you some of what he wrote because he misses the point about Israel and the Jews and thus, his end-times picture is also distorted. This is some of what he had to say,

I grew up in a church that would be described as dispensational in its view about the second coming of Jesus. *The Scofield Study Bible* and charts by Clarence Larkin that provided detailed explanations of the end times influenced our view of the second coming. Hal Lindsey's book *The Late Great Planet Earth* was a popular book that was passed around the congregation. In this environment there was a lot of speculation about the precise time when Jesus would come back.

Some of that speculation came to a climax in the 1990s during the first Gulf War. I remember talking to my mother about the possibility that Jesus could return any day because prophecy was being fulfilled in the Middle East. When the *Left Behind* books came out, some pastors suggested that these books were helpful guides for Christians regarding the end times, in spite of the fact that they were written from a fictional perspective.

I lived and breathed this version of dispensationalism as I was growing up. Teaching on the end times was always focused on what would happen with the nation of Israel. Some believed that the formation of national Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of prophecy and that the generation that saw the formation of that nation-state would also see the second coming of Jesus (based on Matthew 24:32-34 and the lesson of the fig tree). That interpretation created a lot of excitement about the reality of seeing Christ come within a generation from 1948. So the next event would be the secret rapture. At that moment Jesus would rapture out his people and leave behind all those who have not trusted in him. Of course, that is the basis of the terminology *left behind*. . . .

Paul comforts these Christians by explaining that they have not been left behind because two events must happen before Jesus returns. We see these two events described in verse 3: “the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” . . .

This apostasy is a rebellion, but it is a particular rebellion against the faith. The second event is the revelation of the man of lawlessness, also described as the son of destruction. The verses go on to describe this man of lawlessness, but that is not our concern at this point.

The main point so far is this: Paul tells us that two things have to take place before Jesus comes back to gather his church. First, an apostasy must take place, a rebellion against the faith. Second, a revelation of the man of lawlessness must occur. In other words, Paul is saying to the Christians who are worried that they have missed this day, “Don’t worry, brothers and sisters. You have not missed the coming of Jesus Christ because the apostasy has not happened and the man of lawlessness has not been revealed.” . . .

. . . Before I changed my view on this passage, I once thought Paul was saying something else. I once thought that the coming of Jesus to gather us together to him would happen first, and it was called the rapture. Then after Jesus took his people out, the man of lawlessness would be revealed. . . .

Eventually, however, the reading of the text began to fall apart. I started struggling with it because that view did not help these Christians; it did not provide any comfort for them. Why? Because they were supposed to be gone when the two signs take place if you believe the rapture takes place before the apostasy and the man of lawlessness. What kind of comfort would it provide these Christians for these two signs to be after the point when Jesus takes out his church?

- James H. Grant Jr., 1 & 2 Thessalonians, the Hope of Salvation, pp. 171-172, 173-174

First of all, Israel is a huge sign as God has gathered His people, the Jews and brought them back into the land. You see, the Tribulation Period is not only God pouring out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world, but we also see God dealing with the Jews once again and in the end, they come to saving faith, their sins are forgiven as they repent and receive their Messiah, Jesus into their lives.

Secondly, the comfort here is that we will not be going through the Tribulation! Paul spoke of that in I Thessalonians chapter 5. He spoke to these believers that they are of the day and this time, the Day of the Lord, should not overtake them because they will not be here when it begins! Why would God pour out His wrath upon His Bride, the Church? That will not happen!

In fact, Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:9-11, **“For God did not appoint us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”**

Now some may feel that this wrath is speaking of persecution, but that makes no sense. You mean to tell me that throughout the church history and on into the days we are living in, Christians have not been persecuted or the wrath of this world has not been poured out upon them? Of course they have been persecuted and they continue to endure persecution, so it is not talking about the wrath from this world.

Then what is Paul speaking of? He is speaking of the wrath of God; the Day of the Lord and we are not appointed to this day. Which means we will be out of here before the Day of the Lord begins.

One other point, and I will expound on this more as we look at our text, and that is this apostasy, I don't think that is the correct view and I will show you why and how it got into our text.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 2 beginning in verse 3 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic, ***“Do Not Be Deceived!”***

II THESSALONIANS 2

VERSES 3-4

Notice how Paul starts out here. **“Let no one deceive you by any means.”** “You mean to tell me that there are people out there who will try to deceive me in regard to my beliefs?” Are you kidding me? Are you living in a hole?

Of course there are people out there who will try to draw you away from the truths of God found in the Word of God. Many times they will try to draw you to themselves and if that is the case, you are moving away from God!

What was this deception that the church in Thessalonica was believing? It was about the Day of the Lord and that this Day has already begun, this missed the Rapture! And Paul wants them to understand that the truth will set them free from these lies.

Now you may be thinking, “What truth?” The truths of God found in the Word of God! That is our source of truth. Not what man has to say but what God has to say. Otherwise, if you buy into these deceptions, you will be tossed to and fro as the winds of false doctrine blow through the church.

And I don’t care what church you belong to, there will always be false winds of doctrine that will blow upon a church, brought in by different people, but, unless your sail is raised, you will not be blown by them! Keep that in mind. Too many people today have their sails up and they are buying into all kinds of false doctrine!

The first point that Paul makes in regard to not being blown away by this false doctrine, the Day of the Lord and believing that it has come, and they missed out on the Rapture of the Church, is Paul said, **“that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first.”**

What is Paul speaking of when he says that there will be **“a falling away”** or APOSTASIA, (ap-os-tas-ee'-ah) has to come first?

The idea of this word is that of “rebellion; abandonment.” Now what are they rebelling against? What are the abandoning? Leon Morris tells us that it is a, “Rebellion against God’s rule.” And he goes on to say that “It is not so much forsaking one’s first love and drifting into apathy that is meant, as it does setting oneself in opposition to God.”

So this falling away must come first and then the church will be caught up to be with the Lord. One of the problems is that ever since the church has started there has been apostasy! But here Paul calls it **“the falling away”** or **“the apostasy.”** So it does sound like something specific here.

And as some read this, as many read this, they think the idea here is that it is a defection from the faith and this defection from the faith is on such a large scale that the church has never seen this before! Is that what the Bible says? Yes, there are verses we can go to and see that in the last days there will be this departure from the faith, a falling away.

In I Timothy 4:1-3 we are told, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”**

I believe we are in those days that Paul was speaking of and we see these doctrines of demons coming into the church and for many, they are embracing them instead of exposing them as false doctrine!

Also, in II Timothy 3:1-5 Paul tells us, **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”**

Paul is speaking of the last days and how we will be living in times where there is so much trouble that there seems to be no way out. And when you look at what is manifested in the lives of people in these days, there is a lack of love for others. Why is that? Because they will be so in love with themselves that they don't have time or concern for others!

And in II Timothy 4:3-4 Paul speaks of a time when people will not want to hear the truths of God found in the Word of God, and he tells us, **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”**

I believe we are in those days! People don't want to hear God's Word, but they will embrace all kinds of books and teachings that come from man and are really nothing more than doctrines of demons!

Let me share this with you and it will give you an idea where many denominations are headed, and it is not a good thing. These results appeared several years ago in the Orange County Register.

It was the result of a survey that Jeffery Haden, who was a sociologist, and asked 7441 protestant ministers several questions about the Christian faith. And listen to how they responded, it is shocking!

1. “Do you accept Jesus’ physical resurrection as a fact?”

Methodists - 51% said ‘no’

Episcopalians - 35% said ‘no’

American Baptists - 33% said ‘no’

Presbyterians - 30% said ‘no’

American Lutherans - 13% said ‘no’

Think about that for a minute. If they don’t believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then they are not saved. Paul put it like this in I Corinthians 1:1-5, **“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: *that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*”**

It is part of the Gospel message and yet, we see a large portion of people, within these denominations, reject the Gospel!

2. “Do you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ?”

Methodists - 60% said ‘no’

Presbyterians - 49% said ‘no’

Episcopalians - 44% said ‘no’

American Baptists - 34% said ‘no’

American Lutherans - 19% said ‘no’

Again, this is shocking because to deny the virgin birth of Jesus not only goes against what the Scriptures teach, but it means Jesus was born with the seed of man and thus, was born with a sin nature. And, if that is true, and it isn't, that means Jesus could not die for our sins, He too needed a Savior! But the Bible not only tells us that Jesus was born of a virgin but that He was sinless and could be the sacrificial lamb who has come to take away the sins of the world.

Do you see how important these are and yet, how many are rejecting these truths of God found in the Word of God!

Why are they being blown by these winds of false doctrine that are blowing through the church? I think the next question that was asked shows why.

3. “Do you believe the Bible is the inerrant, inspired Word of God?”

Episcopalians - 95% said ‘no’

Methodists - 87% said ‘no’

Presbyterians - 82% said ‘no’

American Lutherans - 77% said ‘no’

American Baptists - 67% said ‘no’

As shocking as that is to me, and I hope to you, I think you can understand how false doctrine has come into the church and we see this falling away at proportions that the church has never seen before!

In regard to the Word of God, the Bible, Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:17,

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

Also, one in Psalm 119:160, **“The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”**

Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:13-14, **“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

And lastly, and there are many more, in Psalm 25:5 we are told, **“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.”**

So, if you want to know the truth, look to Jesus and His Word and you will find it. Does the world have truth? Sure, but there are a lot of lies out there and thus, how do you know what is truth and what is a lie? The Word of God because the entirety of the Word of God is **TRUTH!**

And yet, the church does not believe in the Word of God! What do they believe in? The words of men! How foolish that is!

Listen to what one writer had to say regarding where the church is going and then I will tell you who wrote this. He wrote,

In the institutional church, composed of professing Christians who are in many cases not Christian, look for many things to happen:

With increasing frequency the leadership of the denominations will be captured by those who completely reject the historic truths of the Bible and deny doctrines which according to Christ Himself are crucial to believe in order to be a Christian. In some of the largest Protestant denominations this has already taken place. The few remaining institutions which are not yet dominated by the disbelievers will go downhill in the same manner.

There will be unprecedented mergers of denominations into “religious conglomerates.” This will occur for two reasons: first, most denominations were formed because of deep convictions about certain spiritual truths. As more of these truths are discarded as irrelevant because of unbelief in Biblical authority, there will be no reason to be divided. Unity is certainly important to have, but never, according to the teachings of Christ, at the expense of the crucial truths of Christianity.

Secondly, as ministers depart from the truths of the Bible they lose the authority and power that it has to meet real human needs, and as many ministers are not truly born spiritually themselves and are consequently without the illumination of God's Spirit, they no longer will be able to hold their present congregations, much less attract others. So they resort to "social action gimmicks," Super-organization, and elaborate programs as a substitute.

As Paul predicted concerning these ministers in the last days: "holding to a form of godliness [literally religion], although they have denied its power. . . ." And again he says, ". . . they are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:5, 7 NASB)

- Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, pp. 370-371

And now for the rest of the story you might say. You see, this was not written today or 10 years ago or even 20 years ago. This was written in a book called The Late Great Planet Earth by Hal Lindsey in 1970. This was written some 47 years ago and what he has written has come to pass!

So, do I believe that in the last days there will be a departure from the faith that has been entrusted to us? Absolutely, that is why Jude wrote, **"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."**

In Jude's day, this departure from the faith was happening and now, here at the end of 2017, we see an explosion with this departure from the faith. We see it with the emergent church, the seeker friendly church, the purpose driven church, denominations. We see the Protestant church and the Roman Catholic church coming together and in the end, they will be part of the end time one world religion that the Bible speaks of.

And Jude admonishes us to earnestly contend for this faith that has been given to us. Fight for what you believe in because the faith that has been delivered to us is a faith, "**which was once for all delivered to the saints.**"

This faith is unchanging, it has been delivered to the saints in the past and it is entrusted to us today! I hope that is clear and it is a shame that doctrine is not important to many Christians today. But I will say this, people who live in countries where it is illegal or dangerous to be a Christian, when they get a copy, or a fragment of God's Word, they treasure it as gold! May we do the same and not only treasure it, but read it and apply it to our lives!

Now, in saying that, I don't think that is Paul's point here in II Thessalonians 2:3, this departure from the faith or this falling away from the faith! Yes, we see it in other parts of the Scripture but that is not the point that Paul is making here.

What is the focus of this chapter? It is the Day of the Lord and how the church was confused by false doctrine coming into the church and telling them that they missed the Day of Christ, the Rapture!

How is that going to comfort them, knowing that a falling away is going to come first since apostasy has been around since the inception of the church, like I have said! In fact, Paul did not tell them to be looking for this falling away but to look for Christ, for His return.

In I Thessalonians 1:10 Paul said that these believers were **“to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”**

And in every chapter of I Thessalonians Paul speaks of them looking for the Lord’s return, for the Rapture of the church! And in I Thessalonians chapter 4 Paul speaks of this event called the Rapture in detail.

And now, since they are worried that they missed the Rapture, Paul wants to give them additional evidence to show them, to assure them that Jesus has not come yet for His Bride, the church!

And like I have said, here in II Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul is speaking of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the first two verses and I believe that same idea is seen here in verse 3 of II Thessalonians chapter 2. Remember; context, context, context!

I truly believe that what Paul is speaking of here when he speaks of this falling away or apostasy is the Rapture of the church. I know that is shocking to many, maybe all of you because your text may say apostasy and the idea is a falling away.

Why do so many people believe that this is speaking of this falling away from the faith? It is because how the King James Bible translated this word. Let me show you what I mean.

Thomas Ice tells us,

The first seven English translations of *apostasia* all rendered the noun as either “departure” or “departing.” They are as follows: Wycliffe Bible (1384); Tyndale Bible (1526); Coverdale Bible (1535); Cranmer Bible (1539); Breeches Bible (1576); Beza Bible (1583); Geneva Bible (1608). This supports the notion that the word truly means “departure.” In fact, Jerome’s Latin translation known as the Vulgate from around the time of A.D. 400 renders *apostasia* with the “word *discessio*, meaning ‘departure.’” Why was the King James Version the first to depart from the established translation of “departure”?

Most scholars say that no one knows the reason for the translation shift. However, a plausible theory has been put forth by Martin Butalla in his Master of Theology thesis produced at Dallas Theology Seminary in 1998. It appears that the Catholic translation into English from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate known as the Rheims Bible (1576) was the first to break the translation trend.

“*Apostasia* was revised from ‘the departure’ to ‘the Protestant Revolt,’” explains Butalla. “Revolution is the terminology still in use today when Catholicism teaches the history of the Protestant Reformation. Under this guise, *apostasia* would refer to a departure of Protestants from the Catholic Church.”

The Catholic translators appear eager to engage in polemics [arguments] against the Reformation by even allowing it to impact Bible translation. By 1611, when the original version of the King James Bible came out, the translators changed the English translation tradition from “departure” to “falling away,” which implied “apostasy.”

Such a change was a theological response to the Catholic notion that the Reformation was a revolt against the true church; instead, Protestants saw Catholic beliefs as “the falling away” or “the great apostasy. This would mean that the shift in translation was not based upon research of the meaning of the original language but as a theological polemic against the false teachings of Romanism.

It is well established that E. Schuyler English is thought to be the first pretribulationist to propose that “the departure” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 was a physical departure and thus a reference to the pre-trib rapture. However, history records that at least a couple of men thought of this idea before English’s series of article in 1950. J. S. Mabie is said to have presented the view that “the departure” refers to the rapture as early as 1859 during a prophecy conference in Los Angeles. He later wrote his view in an article published in November 1895 in a periodical called *Morning Star*. Another pre-English proponent of “the departure” as the rapture was John R. Rice in a book in 1945.

- Thomas Ice, The “Departure” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3

Now, in saying that, does it fit the text and the context of this chapter? I believe it does, much better than a departure from the faith. Look at what Paul is saying here, “**Let no one deceive you by any means for that Day [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away [the Rapture] comes first.**”

As you read that you can clearly see that this fits in with what the Scriptures teach. That the church was not appointed to the wrath of God because Jesus already bore the wrath that was due us. So why would God pour out His wrath upon us again, when it was already paid for! He wouldn’t and He doesn’t!

And I love what Jesus tells us in Revelation 3:10, **“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

First of all, Jesus tells the faithful believers that He is going to keep them out of this **“hour of trial.”** What trial is He speaking of? One of judgment that is coming upon a Christ rejecting world!

Who is this trial for? Jesus tells us that it is **“upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

Now some of you may read that and be concerned. “Hey Pastor Joe, we are on this earth, we are living, so is this for us?” Absolutely not! How do I know?

Because the Bible tells us that our citizenship is in heaven and we are aliens and strangers just passing through. (Philippians 3:20; I Peter 2:11-12) Yes, we are in this world but not of this world as believers!

So, there is a judgment that is coming upon the earth dwellers, unbelievers and we call it the Tribulation Period. It is a timeframe of seven years where God will pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world.

Stanley Ellisen gives us this insight to what this is not about and what it truly is about, what Paul is speaking of. He wrote,

At the risk of being out of step with most commentaries on the subject, may we suggest the greater acceptability of an alternate view: the evidence for a great singular defection from the faith, occurring just prior to the rapture or to the day of the Lord, is really based on questionable ground. In the first reference generally appealed to (1 Tim. 4), Paul does speak of an apostasy from the faith, but not as a unique end-time event.

Rather, he described it as a trend or movement that was already present. This he characterized as erroneous doctrine, hypocritical living, and improper legalism. In using the term here, he qualified it with the phrase ‘from the faith.’ By itself it meant simply ‘departure.’

In the second reference to defection, 2 Timothy 3:1ff., Paul does not use the term apostasy, but merely speaks of evil men in general in the latter times. His point here is that evil men will become more and more depraved as the age wears on (2 Timothy 3:13). Thus this passage has no real relation to apostasy from the faith and certainly does not warn of some specific final defection that will precede the rapture or introduce the day of the Lord.

- Stanley Ellison, A Biography of a Great Planet, p. 121

The reason I believe that this is a specific event is how Paul states this. He said, “**the falling away**” and I think that is important. It is a specific falling away. A departure from the faith is not something that you can pinpoint to a certain time, but it is a progression moving away from the truths of God found in the Word of God!

Paul Lee Tan notes, “The definite article ‘the’ denotes that this will be a definite event, . . . Paul refers here to a definite event which he calls ‘the departure,’ and which will occur just before the start of the tribulation. This is the rapture of the church.”

Thomas Ice has these comments about this specific departure or falling away. He wrote, It is important to note that Paul uses a definite article with the noun apostasia. What does this mean? [Daniel] Davey notes the following:

Since the Greek language does not need an article to make the noun definite, it becomes clear that with the usage of the article reference is being made to something in particular. In II Thessalonians 2:3 the word apostasia is prefaced by the definite article which means that Paul is pointing to a particular type of departure clearly known to the Thessalonian church.

Dr. Lewis provides a likely answer when he notes that the definite article serves to make a word distinct and draw attention to it. In this instance he believes that its purpose is “to denote a previous reference.” “The departure Paul previously referred to was ‘our being gathered to him’ (v. 1) and our being ‘caught up’ with the Lord and the raptured dead in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:17),” notes Dr. Lewis.[8] The “departure” was something that Paul and his readers clearly had a mutual understanding about. Paul says in verse 5, “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

The use of the definite article would also support the notion that Paul spoke of a clear, discernable event. A physical departure, like the rapture would fit just such a notion. However, the New Testament teaches that apostasy had already arrived in the first century (cf. Acts 20:27-32; 1 Tim. 4:1- 5; 2 Tim. 3:1- 9; 2 Pet. 2:1- 3; Jude 3- 4, 17- 21) and thus, such a process would not denote a clear event as demanded by the language of this passage. Understanding departure as the rapture would satisfy the nuance of this text. E. Schuyler English explains as follows:

Again, how would the Thessalonians, or Christians in any century since, be qualified to recognize the apostasy when it should come, assuming, simply for the sake of this inquiry, that the Church might be on earth when it does come? There has been apostasy from God, rebellion against Him, since time began.

Whatever Paul is referring to in his reference to “the departure,” was something that both the Thessalonian believers and he had discussed in-depth previously. When we examine Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, he never mentions the doctrine of apostasy, however, virtually every chapter in that epistle speaks of the rapture (cf. 1:9- 10; 2:19; probably 3:13; 4:13- 17; 5:1- 11). In these passages, Paul has used a variety of Greek terms to describe the rapture. It should not be surprising that he uses another term to reference the rapture in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

- Thomas Ice, The Rapture in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (<http://www.raptureready.com>)

Also, remember when I said; context, context, context! Look at what Paul has to say in here in II Thessalonians 2:6-8, “**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. 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.**”

First of all, who is this restrainer? This restrainer is the Holy Spirit and specifically the Holy Spirit working in the lives of believers. You see, we are to be salt and light in this world and even with that, we see how evil is growing!

But one day, prior to the start of the Tribulation Period, this restrainer will be removed, taken out of the way! But how can that be when the Holy Spirit is with us and He will never leave us?

Because the Holy Spirit is removed when the church is removed, we call that the Rapture of the church. It does not mean the Holy Spirit is not working during the Tribulation Period, but it will be different than with us.

And can you imagine what will happen when the salt and the light are removed from this earth! I don't even want to think about it!

And then, in II Thessalonians 2:8 Paul tells us that it is after this, after the removal of the church, that the Antichrist will be revealed!

That is what Allan MacRae, who is the president of Faith Theological Seminary wrote in a letter to Schuyler English regarding this matter. He wrote,

I wonder if you have noticed the striking parallel between this verse and verses 7- 8, a little further down. According to your suggestion verse 3 mentions the departure of the church as coming first, and then tells of the revealing of the man of sin. In verses 7 and 8 we find the identical sequence.

Verse 7 tells of the removal of the Church; verse 8 says: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed."

Thus close examination of the passage shows an inner unity and coherence, if we take the word apostasia in its general sense of "departure," while a superficial examination would easily lead to an erroneous interpretation as "falling away" because of the proximity of the mention of the man of sin.

- Allan A. MacRae,
Letter to E. Schuyler English,
published in "Let the Prophets Speak," Our Hope,
(Vol. LVI, num. 12; June 1950), p. 725

Now, in saying that, in saying that Paul is speaking of the Holy Spirit being removed because the church is removed, the Rapture, it fits in with what I have said regarding verse 3 speaking of the Rapture as well. Context, context, context!

And if you really think about it, this should just make sense. You see, if we were going to be here when the Antichrist is revealed, Paul would have told us to be looking for this man of sin because it is after he is revealed that we will be taken out of the way, Raptured!

But we never see that in the Scriptures. We are told to be looking for Jesus Christ and that is so important. Don't lose sight of Him. I know that when people read the book of Revelation it is easy to get caught up with all that is going on and try to figure out what is happening. And what can happen is you lose sight of Jesus.

The book of Revelation is about Jesus, He is the focus. Yes, other things are going on, but it truly is the revelation of Jesus Christ in all of His glory!

I know we spent a lot of time on this first point that Paul made to bring comfort to these Thessalonian believers. He did not want them to be troubled. He did not want them to be shaken by anything that they heard or saw.

The Day of the Lord had not come yet, they did not miss the Rapture because, before the start of the Day of the Lord the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, we call it the Rapture!

And it is after this event, the Rapture, that the man of sin is revealed. It is interesting those who are trying to figure out who the Antichrist is, but he will not be revealed until after we are gone. We should be looking for Jesus instead of this man of sin, like I have said.

In saying all that, there is no way we are going to finish up these verses this morning and so next time, in part 2 of our study, "***Do Not Be Deceived!***" we will be looking at the Antichrist, this man of sin.

Yes, we are seeing a departure from the faith and we do need to be alert, we need to be on guard. There is a danger as you move away from God's Word and people are doing that at alarming rates today.

Listen to this warning that Dr. Harry Ironside gave and keep in mind that he went to be with the Lord back in 1948, almost 70 years ago! He wrote in an article called: "Exposing error: Is it worthwhile?" the following,

Objection is often raised even by some sound in the faith regarding the exposure of error as being entirely negative and of no real edification. Of late, the hue and cry has been against any and all negative teaching. But the brethren who assume this attitude forget that a large part of the New Testament, both of the teaching of our blessed Lord Himself and the writings of the apostles, is made up of this very character of ministry, namely, showing the Satanic origin and, therefore, the unsettling results of the propagation of erroneous systems which Peter, in his second epistle, so definitely refers to as "damnable heresies."

Our Lord prophesied, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." Within our own day, how many false prophets have risen; and oh, how many are the deceived! Paul predicted, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch." My own observation is that these "grievous wolves," alone and in packs, are not sparing even the most favored flocks. Under shepherds in these "perilous times" will do well to note the apostle's warning: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." It is as important in these days as in Paul's, in fact, it is increasingly important-to expose the many types of false teaching that, on every hand, abound more and more.

We are called upon to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” while we hold the truth in love. The faith means the whole body of revealed truth, and to contend for all of God’s truth necessitates some negative teaching. The choice is not left with us. Jude said he preferred a different, a pleasanter theme – “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3, 4). Paul likewise admonishes us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

This does not imply harsh treatment of those entrapped by error-quite the opposite. If it be objected that exposure to error necessitates unkind reflection upon others who do not see as we do, our answer is: it has always been the duty of every loyal servant of Christ to warn against any teaching that would make Him less precious or cast reflection upon His finished redemptive work and the all-sufficiency of His present service as our great High Priest and Advocate.

Every system of teaching can be judged by what it sets forth as to these fundamental truths of the faith. “What think ye of Christ?” is still the true test of every creed. The Christ of the Bible is certainly not the Christ of any false “-ism.” Each of the cults has its hideous caricature of our lovely Lord.

Let us who have been redeemed at the cost of His precious blood be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” As the battle against the forces of evil waxes ever more hot, we have need for God-given valor.

There is constant temptation to compromise. “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” It is always right to stand firmly for what God has revealed concerning His blessed Son’s person and work. The “father of lies” deals in half-truths and specializes in most subtle fallacies concerning the Lord Jesus, our sole and sufficient Savior.

Error is like leaven of which we read, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or any truth-and-error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.

Exposing error is most unpopular work. But from every true standpoint it is worthwhile work. To our Savior, it means that He receives from us, His blood-bought ones, the loyalty that is His due. To ourselves, if we consider “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,” it ensures future reward, a thousand-fold. And to souls “caught in the snare of the fowler”- how many of them God only knows-it may mean light and life, abundant and everlasting.

[Dr. Harry Ironside (1876-1951), a godly Fundamentalist author and teacher for many years, served as pastor of Chicago’s Moody Memorial Church from 1930-1948]

- http://www.believershome.com/html/deception_in_the_church.html

May we continue to contend for the faith that has been entrusted to us and not be swayed by the false doctrine that is flooding into the church. The Day of the Lord has not come, and it will not come until we are home with the Lord and then the man of sin will be revealed!