

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

PREFACE

Correction: In our previous session I said that the “Day of the Lord” was essentially synonymous with the *parousia*—but that is not entirely correct. The *parousia* (“presence”) would include, but not be limited to, the Rapture, the first return of Christ. The “Day of the Lord” speaks primarily to the Lord’s return in vengeance and judgment—that is, His *second* coming at the end of the Tribulation. This distinction is important, especially as we consider this passage in the second letter.

MAN OF LAWLESSNESS

What we have before us, in verses 3-12, is a frightening prospect. It describes a period on earth of unimaginable anti-God fervor. Paul in this passage describes the Tribulation—specifically, the worst of it, the *Great* Tribulation, which is the last half of the seven-year Tribulation. This passage focuses on the rule of this 3½ year period by the individual referred to in Scripture as the “man of lawlessness (or sin),” “son of destruction (or perdition)” —that is, the “antichrist,” who Lange refers to as “incarnate Sin” (as opposed to Christ, incarnate righteousness).

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

In our last session I described the Thessalonians at the time this letter was being written as feeling as if they had missed the Rapture train. Paul’s purpose in this passage (vv3-12) is to describe what will follow the Rapture of the church—the taking up of all Christians, alive and dead, everywhere on earth, to heaven with the Lord—thus proving to them that since it has not yet occurred, they had *not* missed the train. To wit (working backward),

- if the Day of the Lord has not come, then the “man of lawlessness” has not yet been revealed;
- if the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed, then the *Great* Tribulation has not yet begun;
- if the Rapture has not yet occurred, then the Tribulation has not begun;
- if believers are still on earth, then the Rapture has not yet occurred; thus,
- *you have not missed the train!*

In this Part One ([a shortened session](#)), we’re going to back off and look at the forest, the lay of the land, before we examine in the subsequent sessions the individual trees: the details of the text.

[See handout.](#)

We will not be discussing all the fine details included in this chart, because they are not discussed in our text. But the chart, which is made available by the *Berean Bible Institute*, does an excellent job of illustrating the sequence and details of the End Times, from this present church period of grace through to the Millennium and the Eternal State. There may be a few of the finer details in the chart regarding the seals and trumpets and bowls during the Tribulation that could be argued, but overall this is a good road map for the End Times from the pretribulation / premillennial position. You will want to keep it handy as we proceed through this second chapter.

THE CHURCH AGE

Beginning on the left, the graded blue area represents the Church Age—which the chart refers to as the period of the *Dispensation of Grace*. That is, during this period from Christ on earth to the present day (and beyond, if the Lord tarries) the church has been established and operative, the gospel has been preached beyond the church, and the grace of God in Christ has been operational (“dispensed”). In the context of the End Times, God’s grace has been evident because He has withheld His judgment.

Turn to Exodus 34.

God’s grace and longsuffering regarding sin did not begin with Christ; though we may not refer to it as the “Church Age,” from the very beginning Yahweh showed grace and patience toward sinful man. After Moses requested that he be allowed to see Yahweh’s glory, the Lord told Moses that He would “make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you,” but Moses could not look upon His face. When the Lord passed before him He proclaimed who and what He was.

Read Exodus 34:5-7.

The apostle Peter spoke of this in his second epistle.

But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:7-9)

THE RAPTURE

On our chart, what to us is considered a momentous event is represented simply as a thin line at the right edge of the Church Age, ending in an upward pointing arrow. This is when what Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 occurs; this is when all believers, living and dead, will be supernaturally removed from the earth to heaven. The thin line faithfully illustrates, if not its importance to man, the supposed *brevity* of this event, which will occur in the “twinkling of an eye.”

THE SEVENTIETH WEEK: THE TRIBULATION

The terminology of some prophecy can be, admittedly, confusing. Not least is this reference to “weeks,” as in the prophet Daniel’s “seventy weeks” in Daniel 9.

(Note: In this session we are just taking a glance at the overall picture; we will return for the pertinent details. Remember, too, that ours is not a study of the entire End Times, but a study of what Paul mentions about it in the Thessalonian letters.)

Read Daniel 9:24-27

The word translated “weeks” in Daniel (the Hebrew *shabua*; literally, “sevened”) simply means a set or unit of seven. In our vernacular, a “week” is a set of seven *days*, and this word could refer to a set of days in the Bible. But it can also refer to *years*, as it does here. So Daniel speaks of seventy sets of seven years—i.e., 70 years x 7 = 490 years.

Verse 27 in Daniel 9, using “one week” for seven years, describes what our chart calls “Daniel’s Seventieth Week.” So, harmonizing v27 with our chart,

“And he [the “prince who is to come”] will make a firm covenant with the many for one week,

Israel will embrace this prince (i.e., not royalty, but a strong leader) as a political messiah, if not the literal Messiah (John 5:43). This is the start of the final, the seventieth week of this prophecy, represented in the chart by the far left, red line. From this point to the mid-point, three and one half years later, this prince—the “man of lawlessness,” the antichrist—will be gathering his forces, not yet in control, but making his plans.

but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering;

The “middle of the week” is the middle of seven years—after three and one half years—represented in the middle of the chart where the yellow diamond is located. This is when the dark prince goes public, declares himself as one to be worshiped.

and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

During the last half of the seventieth week, the antichrist will wreak havoc—but it will also be the time of his decline, and his doom is set. The green line on the chart marks the end of the seventieth week—the end of the Tribulation—and the triumphant return of Christ to judge the world.

THE MILLENNIUM AND ETERNAL STATE

The graded yellow to the right represents the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth—the Millennium—and the graded blue at the far right represents the eternal state of the “new heaven and new earth.”

In this abbreviated session we have just looked at the overall context for the Tribulation; we have considered the forest, instead of the individual trees. In our next session we will return to our Thessalonian passage to examine the details of what Paul writes about this “man of lawlessness.”

(7 YEARS) DANIEL'S SEVENTIETH WEEK

