

## A False Report

2 Thessalonians 1:1 – 3

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~ Our Spiritual Safari rolls on with the apostle Paul in this report after completing our examination of his first letter to the church in Thessalonica; which gave rise to more questions. Now, Paul is attempting to answer those additional questions. There was circulating in the Thessalonian church a letter - or report - purported to have come from Paul, which was designed to disturb the new Christians – and it did. This false report claimed that Christ had already come and gathered out the church to Himself and that the world was currently living in the judgments of the “*Day of the Lord.*” Their present persecutions seemed to confirm this false report; and it was easy for them to start believing that all Christians had missed the rapture; and that they were now living in the Great Tribulation period. So, naturally, they were very disturbed.

Paul attempts to allay their fears by assuring them that “*our gathering together unto Him*” is yet future; and that “*the Day of the Lord*” has certain forerunners which must appear first — but hadn’t. The total apostasy of the church and the “*man of sin*” must come first; the removal of the remnant of believers at “*our gathering together unto Him*” makes full apostasy in the professing church one hundred percent necessary before the Day of the Lord would begin. Remember, Jesus asked the apostles, “*I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*” Well, the answer to that question is a resounding “*no!*” – Luke chapter eighteen verse eight.

Every era of persecution or trouble in modern history comes with a false impression that the church is going through the time of judgment, which the Lord Jesus Himself identified as the “*Great Tribulation*” — Matthew chapter twenty-four verse twenty-one. Now, if you had lived during World War Two in England, during the Blitzkrieg, for example, you would have thought you had entered the Great Tribulation period. Likewise, if you had lived in Germany when the American’s bombed cities to rubble, you would have believed *that* was the Great Tribulation period.

Well, the Great Tribulation period was clearly defined by Christ. There is no reason to become panicky or pigeon-holed into an unbiblical position. Christ said there is coming a small interval of time that will be blocked off by *“... such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* That means there is no comparison with anything that has taken place before; and nothing like it will occur afterward. Has there ever been such a period of unparalleled trouble and chaos such as we have today? Well, I think the answer is obvious; because there have been many times in history that were *MUCH* worse than we see today. Either way, a proper, correct and complete understanding of this epistle makes it irrefutably clear that the church does not go through the Great Tribulation period.

The first epistle to the Thessalonians deals with the rapture, as we have just studied completely; Christ coming for believers is imminent – but not necessarily soon. The rapture does not emphasize Christ’s coming to earth – no, it emphasizes the *GOING* of the church to be with Christ and become His bride, ruling and reigning with Him forevermore. Paul, Peter, James and John all teach this truth about being *“caught up”* in the air with Christ Jesus — harpazo — raptured. The rapture of the church is not a subject in the Old Testament; it’s not taught there. The hope in the Old Testament saint is an earthly hope for the nation Israel. Some theologians have overly-complicated this to the point of meaninglessness; so much so that I have to question their motives in even teaching the Bible at all, but I digress.

This second epistle instructs the church on the return of Christ as He returns to the earth in judgment to establish His earthly Kingdom. One of His objectives is dealing with the *“man of sin,”* whom He *“shall destroy with the brightness of His coming”* — second Thessalonians chapter two verse eight. These two aspects of the second advent are clearly delineated. The interval between the two phases is the Great Tribulation period, which can be further identified with the seventieth week of Daniel as stated in chapter nine, and is a period of seven years. So, this second epistle deals with the persecution of believers now, and the judgment of believers hereafter.

This encompasses the program for the world in the same connection; and includes the practicality of the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His earthly Kingdom. *“Practicality”* means believers should be established in the Word of God, established in their walk with Christ, and established in their work for the Lord. There is no Scriptural truth as important to understanding eschatology correctly as this. Nothing will affect your life quite like a right-thinking understanding of this. It is, by far, the most neglected and most needed truth in modern Bible teaching. You cannot believe prophecy without your life being affected by it. I simply cannot tell you how important it is to fully comprehend this; particularly as our Spiritual Safari moves along again soon in the Old Testament when we return to study Ezekiel....

***1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:***

***2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

***3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;***

~ So, our Spiritual Safari concludes this first leg of the second epistle to the church in Thessalonica with Paul’s usual, friendly greeting to a church that is theologically and spiritually sound. Grace — the free gift of God given to sinners who recognize their need for a Savior — must come *FIRST* before we will ever know peace. Peace is not some psychological gyration we can manufacture. Peace isn’t dispensed as a prescription drug. If you don’t have peace in Christ – then you don’t have it. Paul’s co-workers, Silus and Timothy, had suffered together tremendously with Paul. However, even in the midst of the severe persecution that they were enduring, they had peace, and were still growing and abounding in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were increasing in their faith, hope and love.

Verse one undeniably reveals that the apostle Paul taught the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; because Christ Jesus and God the Father are put on the

same plane of supremacy. The church was *AT* Thessalonica; but they were *IN* Christ Jesus. Positionally, that's where the church is today — or it isn't the true and living church — period. The name of your local church isn't important; what *IS* important is that the members of the congregation are *IN* the Lord Jesus Christ; indwelled by the Holy Spirit according to the Word of God. When that happens, then the local church becomes all-important to the community ~

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