

# 2 Thessalonians 2:1 Commentary

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HE HAS NOT YET COME

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## COMPARISON OF

### 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

#### 1 THESSALONIANS

Addresses how the Thessalonians were evangelized as they received the Word of God

The imminency and importance of the Lord's return is emphasized

The saints are comforted and encouraged

Paul is concerned with the church and its hope of the rapture (meeting Christ in the air)

Contains the outstanding passage on the rapture of the saints in 4:13–18

#### 2 THESSALONIANS

Addresses how the Thessalonians are being edified, noting their progress in faith, love, and patience

Misunderstandings about the Lord's return are corrected

The saints are assured of God's judgment on His enemies

Paul is concerned with Satan, the man of sin (Antichrist) and their destruction at the revelation (return of Christ to the earth)

Contains the outstanding passage concerning the day of the Lord in 2:1–12

**2 Thessalonians 2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, (NAS 95)**

- **We:** Ro 12:1
- **With regard:** 1Th 4:14-16)(And by: Ge 49:10 Mt 24:31 25:32 Mk 13:27 Eph 1:10 1Th 3:13, 4:17 2Ti 4:1

**Greek:** Erotomen (1PPAI) de humas adelphoi huper tes parousias tou kuriou hemon Iesou Christou kai hemon episunggoges ep auton:

**KJV** Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

**ESV** Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,

**NET** Now regarding the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to be with him, we ask you, brothers and sisters,

**NIV** Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers,

**NJB** About the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, brothers, and our being gathered to him:

**NLT** Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him.

**YLT** And we ask you, brethren, in regard to the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our gathering together unto him,

## Outline of Second Thessalonians from Daniel Wallace:

### I. Salutation (2Th 1:1-2)

### II. Comfort in Affliction (2Th 1:3-12)

#### A. Perseverance in the Midst of Persecutions (2Th 1:3-10)

##### 1. The Perseverance of the Saints (2Th 1:3-4)

##### 2. The Vindication of God's Righteousness (2Th 1:5-10)

#### B. Preparation of the Saints for the Kingdom (2Th 1:11-12)

### III. Correction Concerning the Day of the Lord (2Th 2:1-12)

#### A. Summary: Doctrinal Correction (2Th 2:1-2)

#### B. Day of the Lord Yet Future (2Th 2:3-5)

#### C. The Unveiling of the Antichrist (2Th 2:6-12)

### IV. Reminder Concerning their Destiny (2Th 2:13-17)

#### A. Standing Firm in Light of this Destiny (2Th 2:13-15)

#### B. Benediction: Encouraged Hearts (2Th 2:16-17)

### V. Exhortations Concerning Practical Matters (2Th 3:1-15)

#### A. Request for Prayer (2Th 3:1-5)

#### B. Rebuke of the Idle (2Th 3:6-15)

### VI. Final Greetings (2Th 3:16-18)

## CHRIST'S COMING OUR GATHERING

**Charles Swindoll** summarizes Second Thessalonians: "Woven by the careful hands of a tentmaker, 2 Thessalonians adorns the New Testament like a literary tapestry. Looked at from the earthward side, we find the believers **suffering** in chapter 1, **shaken** from their composure in chapter 2, and **slackening** in their responsibilities in chapter 3. The underside of the tapestry seems to be a

hodgepodge of dark, tangled, and loose threads. But Paul displays the heavenward side of the tapestry in 2Thessalonians 1:5-12. As we look at it from that vantage point, we gain not only perspective but encouragement to persevere—to walk through the furnace of persecution, over the seas of prophetic error, and around the pitfalls in practical living. Paul's letter helps us make sense of our suffering, gain stability in doctrinal uncertainty, and become steadfast in principles of responsible living...Apparently, either through a revelation someone claimed to have had or a sermon preached or by a forged document that was reputedly Paul's, word had begun to spread in this church that the 'day of the Lord' had already come. This false message produced two extreme results. Some were 'shaken' and 'disturbed' (2Th 2:2); others began to shirk their responsibilities, waiting in their porch swings for the Lord's return as they whittled away their time (2Th 3:10-12) ...

**Chapter 1: Affirmation:** persevering through affliction develops maturity

**Chapter 2: Explanation:** trusting amidst confusion produces stability

**Chapter 3: Exhortation:** waiting with discipline cultivates responsibility."

Recall that in 2Th 1:6-10 **Paul** had just described the judgment of wicked unbelievers and ended with a prayer for the afflicted believers in Thessalonica:

To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2Th 1:11-12)

Now in 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul expounds truth which seeks to correct an error that had come into the church at Thessalonica regarding the timing of the Day of the Lord. This is a good principle to keep in mind when we encounter believers who have been led astray from the truth. There is only one remedy and that is to lead them back to the Word of Truth. Unfortunately Second Thessalonians 2 is one of those sections of Scripture where there is considerable disagreement as to the correct interpretation, even among conservative evangelical writers. The present commentary will allude to some of the issues but for more detail there are several papers listed in the resources above which one can consult for more detail. Despite the fact that there are some difficult interpretative issues, there is sufficient truth to correct false doctrine and renew our mind and that is the goal of this commentary.

**Robert Thomas** phrases it this way " In the interest of truth about this vital hope, we must set down accurately certain features of "the day of the Lord" as a corrective to what some were falsely claiming." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary- 1976 edition](#))

**John Walvoord** writes that "The second chapter of 2 Thessalonians is one of the great prophetic chapters of the Scripture. No other chapter in the entire Bible covers precisely the same points of revelation that are given here."

**Hiebert** adds that...

This paragraph constitutes the very heart of the epistle. It is crucial because of its momentous eschatological import. No other portion of the prophetic Scriptures covers precisely the same points of revelation here given. This weighty and difficult passage has been the occasion for much critical discussion and has been rejected as non-Pauline by not a few radical critics who have believed that Paul could not have written such a fantastic prophecy. Even those scholars who accept it as Pauline find it difficult because of its "fantastic apocalyptic signs." Thus Neil writes, "This section, dealing with the indications which may be expected to herald the end of the world, provides us with the weirdest piece of writing in all the epistles and one that has never yet been satisfactorily explained." Morris points out that our difficulty of interpretation arises from "the fact that it is a supplement to his oral preaching... He could take it as known, and simply add what was necessary to clear up the misunderstanding that had arisen." Paul here deals with an eschatological error that was harassing the young Thessalonian church. The excitement produced by this doctrinal error stimulated the practical problem that Paul found necessary to deal with in the third chapter. The paragraph may be divided into three parts. Paul sets forth the corrective for their erroneous view that the Day of the Lord was already present (2Th 2:1-5), indicates the fact of a present restraint upon the mystery of lawlessness (2Th 2:6-7), and pictures the brief career of the lawless one (2Th 2:8-12). ([1 & 2 Thessalonians- D. Edmond Hiebert](#) - anything by Hiebert is highly recommended)

**John MacArthur** observes that...

The apostle wrote this section to deal with the Thessalonians' loss of hope and joy through confusion about the end times. He had already given them explicit instruction about both the Rapture (1Th. 4:13–18) and the Day of the Lord (1Th 5:1–11). Yet only a few months later, they had become confused, again fearing that they had missed the Rapture and were in the Day of the Lord. They knew that the Day of the Lord is God's final judgment on the sinful world... Apparently, even with the apostle's correctives in the first letter, the intensity of the persecution they were undergoing made them unable to shake the possibility that it had arrived. They were also directly assaulted by the deception of some false teachers. Playing off their confusion, they deceived the believers into thinking that Paul actually taught that the Day of the Lord had come and sought to prove it by producing a forged letter

purporting to be from him in support of their teaching. Paul had explained in his first epistle why they could not be in the Day of the Lord (the Day of the Lord is for unbelievers; cf. 1Th 5:4-9). Here, recognizing that due to the efforts of false teachers the truth does not yet prevail, he adds strong evidence to prove that they are not in the Day of the Lord: Antichrist had not appeared, and his coming will occur just before that Day comes. ([1 & 2 Thessalonians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#)) (See also Dr MacArthur's sermon [The Coming Man of Sin - Part 2](#) - he gives an excellent summary of the Antichrist and of the Day of the Lord and explains why the saints of God are not going to be in that horrible Day!)

#### See Related Resource: Imminency, Imminent - Christ's Second Coming

**Full disclosure:** The reader should be aware that I believe in a pre-tribulation and not a post-tribulation rapture. Also in the interest of full disclosure there are two popular websites ([Ligonier](#); [Challies](#)) that list their "Top Five" commentaries on various books, but the reader needs to be aware that these sites have a definite bias, not only against pre-tribulationism but also against futurism in general (as I discovered when I wrote an detailed commentary on Mt 24:15-note).

**Ray Stedman** - We come to a passage now where we must confront the question of whether the church will go through the great tribulation. Does the Lord come for his church before the great time of trouble that is coming; does he come in the middle of it; or does the church in fact go through the tribulation and Jesus comes at the end. That is a much debated and controversial question. The Scriptures are at times hard to understand concerning these issues; that is why there are differences of opinion among believers regarding them. All evangelicals agree, however, that only these three possibilities exist: a pre, mid, or post tribulational coming. This question should not be confused with a similar sounding issue concerning the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ. There are also premillennial, postmillennial and amillennial viewpoints, which deal with the question of whether there will be a millennium or not. But we are not dealing with the question of the millennium this morning but with the question which has been a battleground through the centuries: **Will the church still be here on earth during the great time of trouble? I have been studying this passage for almost fifty years. I have read all the arguments pro and con, and while I will not try to share all of that information with you I will try to point out, as we go through Verses 1-12 of Chapter 2, why I believe the Scriptures teach that the church will not go through the great tribulation, and why I reject the arguments of the post-tribulationists.** ([The Man who Claims to be God - 2Th 2:1-12](#))

As an aside I want to mention one observation I have not heard writers use to defend a pre-tribulation rapture. Recall that in Revelation 2-3 Jesus repeatedly closes His message to the individual churches with the words "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22). Then in the middle of the description of the Antichrist's reign of terror John writes "If anyone has an ear, let him hear." (Rev 13:9-note) Notice that he does not refer to the **church**. One would think that if the **church** were still present in Revelation 6-19 (the time of the tribulation) John would have addressed this passage specifically to the church. It is also worth noting that John uses the word **ekklesia** 19x in 18v in Revelation 2-3 and not once in Revelation 6-19 until Rev 22:16 which is clearly in the context of heaven! While arguments from silence are far from definitive, they are at least worth pondering!

**Now (de)** - This conjunction functions to shift from discussion of a description of the Day of the Lord to a new subject discussing confusion regarding the timing of the Day of the Lord. In chapter 1 Christ coming would bring judgment to unbelievers and in chapter 2 His coming would bring judgment to the Antichrist.

**MacArthur** notes that "Paul's motive was not sensational but pastoral. His goal was not to gratify curiosity about the end times but to comfort confused Christians. Therefore, he limited his instruction to what was necessary to correct the error that robbed them of their joy, hope, and peace. And he did so tenderly, kindly, and patiently... Paul gently corrected those struggling under this error." ([Ibid](#))

**We** (Paul, Silvanus, Timothy - 2Th 1:1) **Request** ([2065](#))(**erotao**) means to ask for, usually with the implication of an underlying question. "It is used to denote our asking or requesting a person to do something, to ask specifically." (Phillips) The present tense pictures this as a process or as a continual request.

Paul used **erotao** twice in his first letter:

Finally then, **brethren (adelphos)**, **we request** and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. (1Th 4:1-note).

But **we request** of you, **brethren (adelphos)**, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction(1Th 5:12-note).

**Brethren** ([80](#))(**adelphos** from **a** = denoting unity + **delphús** = womb) means those born from same womb, and in context speaks of the believers at Thessalonica who were now his spiritual brethren. Paul's use of "brethren" is frequent in his writings to the churches and speaks of his affectionate, personal concern for them. While the topic to be discussed is doctrinally deep, Paul does not begin

with a didactic approach. This is a good pattern for all pastors.

**Adelphos** is a key word for Paul in the Thessalonian epistles for it is used 28x in 26v or **20%** of the verses in the 2 epistles. Percentage wise this use is much greater than any other book (The letters to the Corinthians use adelphos in **7%** of verses) - 1Th 1:4; 2:1, 9, 14, 17; 3:2, 7; 4:1, 6, 10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27; 2Th 1:3; 2:1, 13, 15; 3:1, 6, 13, 15

**Hiebert** writes that Paul who "has a right to **charge**, rather **implores** as a brother." Perhaps the verb "beseech," though somewhat archaic, would better convey Paul's attitude of warm personal affection in turning to the erroneous view of the readers."

The idea of "**implore**" is to beg someone earnestly or desperately to do something whereas "charge" conveys more of a demand.

**With regard to** (concerning - ESV) ([5228](#))(**huper**) means in the interest of . **Vine** says the idea of huper in this context is "with a view to correcting your thoughts about" Christ's coming and the saints gathering together to Him. Liddell-Scott-Jones list one of the meanings of huper as "in defense of" which fits nicely with the idea here = "in defense of the truth about His coming and our gathering."

## **THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH**

**The coming** (with the definite article "the" - the specific coming) - The coming of Jesus is Paul's main subject in this section.

**Hiebert** adds that "The appeal is being made "in the interest of the truth concerning the Lord's coming. The writers are anxious that it should cease being a source of alarm and confusion to their converts due to an erroneous conclusion. The appeal is intended to be corrective, to remove their misunderstanding concerning "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." ([Ibid](#))

Note that the definite article ("**the**") incorporates the **coming** and the **gathering together**, thus linking these two as one event not two separate events.

**Hiebert** says "The government of the two nouns under one article makes it clear that one event, viewed under two complimentary aspects, is thought of." ([Ibid](#))

Based on this fact **David Guzik** writes that "This is completely consistent with other passages of Scripture that indicate that there must be two aspects of Jesus' second coming, and the aspects must be separated by some appreciable period of time. (1) **Different world conditions** are described (Mt 24:37-42, 24:21, Rev 6:15-16). (2) **Different manners** of Jesus' return are described (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 19:11, 14-15, 21). (3) **Different scenarios** regarding the predictability of the date of Jesus' return are established (Mt 24:36, Da 12:11).

**Coming** ([3952](#))(**parousia**) is a combination of two Greek words **para** = with, alongside + **ousia** = being (**ousia** is the participial form of the verb **eimi** = to be) which together literally mean to be alongside and conveys the ideas of being beside or being in one's presence. **Parousia** was frequently used in the ancient world to describe visits of royalty. Notice the concentration of uses in Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39) with no other uses in the Gospels.

**John Phillips** on **parousia** - The root meaning of the word is "to be near." It refers to the Lord's physical presence. The word is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament, but its basic meaning is simply "presence." When it is translated "coming," it denotes the actual presence of the person who comes.

**John MacArthur** - **Parousia** refers to more than just coming; it includes the idea of "presence." Perhaps the best English translation would be "arrival." The church's great hope is the arrival of Jesus Christ when He comes to bless His people with His presence. That glorious truth appears in more than 500 verses throughout the Bible. (MacArthur J. James. Moody)

**Hiebert** adds that "Some would limit the **parousia** to a single event viewed as coming after the end-time Tribulation (**Ed: John Piper is one of the best known advocates of post-tribulationism - see refutation of Piper's logic**). But under such a view "it is hardly possible to explain the variety of relationships belonging to parousia in these Epistles." If the hope of the rapture as set forth in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 could not be expected until after the end-time Tribulation, then believers are denied the hope of an imminent rapture. Then it would have been more natural for Paul to tell them to look for the coming of the Antichrist. "If this is a possibility for the church," Thomas asks, "why did Paul at no point teach this kind of anticipation?"

**Parousia** - 24x in 24v in the NT -Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1Cor 15:23; 16:17; 2Cor 7:6, 7; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12; 1Th 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2Th 2:1, 8, 9; Jas 5:7, 8; 2Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1John 2:28

There are no uses of **parousia** in the Non-apocryphal Septuagint. However a similar idea present in three Hebrew texts: (1) Genesis 49:10 "until Shiloh **comes** (Lxx = erchomai)"; (2) Daniel 7:13 "One like a Son of Man was **coming** (Lxx = erchomai)" ; (3) Zechariah 9:9 = "Behold, your king is **coming** (Lxx = erchomai) to you."

**Parousia** is used also to describe the **coming** of the Lawless One (2 Th 2:9), the Day of God (2Pe 3:12), and Paul or his companions (1Cor 16:17; 2Cor 7:6, 7; 10:10; Php 1:26; 2:12)

In his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul used **parousia** four times all referring to Jesus...

1Thess 2:19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His **coming**?

1Thess 3:13 so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the **coming** of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

1Thess 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the **coming** of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Thess 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although the word **parousia** is not used in the first chapter of First Thessalonians, the idea of His coming is clearly alluded to in 1Th 1:10 where Paul describes the new Gentile converts in Thessalonica as eagerly waiting (for the return) of God's "Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who delivers us from the wrath to come."

Paul uses **parousia** two more times in 2Thessalonians 2 once to describe the coming of the Christ and the second to describe the coming of the Antichrist:

And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders (2Th 2:8-9)

**Bob Utley** - Three words are used in the NT to describe the Second Coming: (1) Parousia (cf. vv. 1, 8; 1Th 2:19), (2) epiphaneia (cf. 2Th 2:8), a visible radiant coming and (3) apocalypsis (cf. 2Th 1:6-7), meaning "an unveiling" for the purpose of revealing. The last word is also employed at the manifestation of the Anti-Christ in 2Th 2:3, 6, 8. "Second Coming" is not a biblical term. It was first used by Justin Martyr.

**Lord (2962) ( kurios )** is the One (Jesus) to Whom we belong and are subject to His power of deciding what is best for our lives. Jesus is Lord because He is in charge by virtue of the fact that He possesses or owns us having paid the redemption price to set us free (Ro 3:24, 1Cor 1:30, Col 1:14). Thus believers are no longer their own and must continually remind themselves that they have been bought with the price of Jesus blood (Eph 1:7, 1Cor 6:19, 20).

**Jesus (2424) (Iesous)** means "Yahweh saves" and is sometimes translated "Joshua" (Acts 7:45, Heb 4:8), but in almost all the uses in the NT refers to Jesus our Savior. The name Jesus speaks of His humanity and it conveys the meaning that Jesus' purpose for becoming a Man was to enable Him to save people from the penalty for their sins, the power of sin and from eternal separation from God.

**Christ (5547) (Christos** from **chrío** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) means One Who has been anointed, which in turn symbolizes His appointment for a task. (See also Messiah - Anointed One)

In his first letter Paul had given clear teaching on this "gathering together" which is often designated as the Rapture, a word which often results in considerable debate among evangelicals. Notice that Paul does not specifically designate the timing of the Rapture as pre-, mid- or post-tribulation. Paul's purpose for giving this teaching was not to promote arguments but to encourage the saints. Thus Paul writes...

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that **we** (Note Paul includes himself, Silvanus and Timothy [2Th 1:1], which clearly indicates they were living with the sense that the Rapture might occur at any time in his lifetime) who are alive, and remain until the coming (**parousia**) of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (**harpazo** = describes a snatching up which is quick, forceful and sudden) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore **comfort** (present imperative = charge to do this continually - who have you encouraged recently with the truth of the Rapture) one another with these words. (1Th 4:13-18)

**Our** - Just as in 1Th 4:13-18 (where he used "we" - see above), Paul's use of the possessive pronoun "our" indicates his (and from 2Th 1:1 "our" also includes Silvanus and Timothy, as well as all believers) anticipation of personal participation in this glorious event.

## **THE GATHERING TOGETHER: THE RAPTURE**

**Gathering together** (1997) (**episunagoge** from **epi** = upon + **sunago** = to bring together, come together) means to cause to come together to, toward, or at a particular location. The prefix **epi** implies motion toward, which is significant when referring to our gathering together to Jesus! Paul is summarizing the **Rapture** discussed in 1Th 4:17-note!

The only other NT use of **episunagoge** is in Heb 10:25 describing "assembling together" in a local body of believers. Compare gathering together of believers in Acts 20:7. **Hiebert** notes that "These (local) assemblies are a precious foretaste and anticipation of that future assembling of the saints **"to Him"** when our Lord will be present, not as now by His Spirit only, but in the visible glory of His person." ([Ibid](#))

**Vine** comments that in 2Th 2:1 **episunagoge** "refers to the **rapture** of the saints into the air to meet and to be forever with the Lord, see 1 Thessalonians 4:17."

**Our Lord Jesus Christ** - The Lord of the saints at Thessalonica and the Lord of Paul, Silvanus, Timothy. (1Th 1:1). Our speaks of "personal possession." Note that "our" also describes the gathering together - believers possess this as their "personal hope."

**Lord Jesus Christ** is used 63x in the NT with 9 uses in this relatively short epistle. Notice that the majority of uses of this full title are by the apostle Paul. (Acts 11:17; 15:26; 20:21; 28:31; Ro 1:7; 5:1, 11; 13:14; 15:6, 30; 16:24; 1 Co. 1:2f, 7f, 10; 6:11; 8:6; 15:57; 2 Co. 1:2f; 8:9; 13:14; Gal. 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph. 1:2f, 17; 5:20; 6:23f; Phil. 1:2; 3:20; 4:23; Col. 1:3; 1Th. 1:1, 3; 5:9, 23, 28; 2Th. 1:1, 2, 12; 2:1, 14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18; 1Ti 6:3, 14; Philemon 1:3, 25; Jas. 1:1; 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2Pet 1:8, 14, 16; Jude 1:4, 17, 21)

**Henry Morris** - The apostle is referring here to his previous letter to the Thessalonians in which he had explained "our gathering together unto him" and its significance (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

**John Phillips** - One major reason for our "gathering together" down here with those who love the Lord and are of like precious faith is that it is a foretaste of our gathering in the air. We are gathered together **unto** Him now (Mt. 18:20); we shall be gathered together **with** Him then. His presence in our midst is **invisible** now; it will be **visible** then. (Exploring 2 Thessalonians)

**W A Criswell** - The Thessalonians had been taught by someone other than Paul that the persecution they were experiencing was a part of the Tribulation judgment and that there was no rapture for which they should hope. Paul denies this. A letter to the Thessalonians from someone claiming to be Paul had been the occasion for some to decide that "the day of Christ" had already arrived. This would have been a denial of the prophetic outline Paul presented in the first epistle. Paul cautions that the Thessalonians are not to be troubled by this inaccurate notion. The words "had come" (*enesteken*, Gk.) could be rendered "is present," "is now present," or "stands near."

**To Him** (unto Him - KJV) - More literally the preposition **epi** is "upon" Him. "The preposition rendered **"to"** (**epi**) marks "the point to which the gathering together was directed." Christ Himself is the convening center for His saints both now and in that coming day." ([Hiebert](#))

**Vine** rightly says that "Christ is the divinely-appointed center of gathering whether for local companies of believers during this age, Matthew 18:20, or for all that are His of every age at His Parousia, 1Th 4:17, cp. Jn 14:3, or for Israel, Ge 49:10, cp. Ps 50:5, or for the nations, Isa 11:10." (Collected writings of W. E. Vine)

**John MacArthur** observes that Paul "zeroed in on that event (the Rapture) because, as noted earlier, the confused Thessalonians, expecting relief (1:7), instead were suffering severe persecution. That caused them to believe they had missed the Rapture and were in the Day of the Lord. ([1 & 2 Thessalonians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Once the church is out of the world, Satan and his forces will unfold their program. The Day of the Lord is the period that follows the Rapture of the church. It will be a time of Tribulation for the people on earth: Satan and his hosts will be working on earth, and God will send righteous judgments from heaven. Revelation 6–19 describes this period for us. (The Bible exposition commentary)

**William MacDonald** - We understand Paul to be saying, "I appeal to you on the basis of the Rapture that you should not fear that you are in the Day of the Lord. The Rapture must take place first. You will be taken home to heaven at that time and will thus escape the horrors of the Day of the Lord." (Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments)

**John Phillips** - Had the Thessalonians been post-tribulationists, they should have been very happy about it because it would have

been a sure sign that the Rapture was about to take place. Instead, they were upset. Paul's first epistle had set before them a pretribulation Rapture; now other teachers were telling them that the Tribulation had already come. (2 Thessalonians Commentary)

**Robert Thomas** discusses why Paul discusses the rapture and the Day of the Lord writing

He must explain what he means by "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him" or else the solution to the problem cannot be grasped. Episuagoge ("being gathered") defines what part of the parousia ("coming") Paul has in mind. This is the great event he has described more fully in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17-i.e., the gathering of those in Christ to meet him in the air enroute to the Father in heaven. This begins the day of the Lord. What relationship this happening bears to the tribulation phase of the day of the Lord so frequently mentioned in these Epistles is important. Some limit the parousia to a single event and insist that it comes after the tribulation (Morris, pp. 151, 152; Gundry, pp. 113, 114). It is hardly possible, though, to explain the variety of relationships belonging to parousia in these Epistles if it is understood only as a single event. Even the meaning of the word suggests a longer duration.

Another problem is encountered if the parousia that initiates the day of the Lord is considered only the single event of Christ's return to earth following the tribulation. If Paul had given oral or written instruction to this effect, the false claim that the day of the Lord was already present could hardly have alarmed these Christians. According to this scheme, the day of the Lord could not begin without Christ's personal reappearance. His continued absence was obvious to all.

Yet the claim was made and accepted to the extent that the church was troubled. This implies Paul had not taught that a one-phase parousia after the period of wrath will begin the day of the Lord. He had told them that the coming of the Lord to gather his saints into heaven would initiate both the tribulation and the day of the Lord. They were promised immediate "rest" (2Th 1:7) and glorification with Christ (2Th 1:10), not increased persecution.

The false instruction had, however, denied them an imminent "rest." They would first have to undergo the severe persecution of the tribulation and possibly even suffer martyrdom before Christ's coming, according to these misrepresentations. They were even told that their current suffering indicated the arrival of the expected tribulation. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 8-12 speaks of this future period in terms quite similar to those of Revelation 13 and 17. The man of lawlessness has a number of affinities with the beasts of Revelation, enough to show that the two books describe the same period (R. H. Charles, *Eschatology* [New York: Schocken Books, 1963], p. 441n). Though 2 Thessalonians does not specifically mention the beast's war with the saints and their martyrdom, Revelation 13:7, 10 declares it explicitly. If this is a possibility for the church, why did Paul at no point teach this kind of anticipation? The answer must lie in the removal of Christians (including the Thessalonian believers) from earth before this persecution. It is another group of God's people, following the church's translation, who must face the terror of this archenemy.

Despite their "persecutions and trials" (2Th 1:4) these Thessalonian Christians were not living in the day of the Lord as they had been erroneously told. A right understanding of "being gathered to him" reveals that they could not be so enmeshed, because for them Christ's parousia will antedate the awful period to come. In fact, their "being gathered to him" will be the event that signals the day's beginning. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary- 1976 edition](#))