

# Chapter Two

## *commentary*

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**1–2 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Yeshua Messiah and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.**

Together with the book of Revelation and Yeshua's Olivet Discourse (*Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21*), it is Paul's letters to the Thessalonians that provide the most detailed teaching in the Scriptures about the events preceding the second coming of Messiah. As we begin our study of chapter 2, it may be helpful to recap Paul's teaching so far on this subject.

Paul first mentions the coming of Yeshua in order to strengthen the faith of those believers who mourned the death of fellow believers, teaching them "not to grieve as others do who have no hope" (1Thess 4:13). His second point was that Messiah will return "like a thief in the night"; the second coming will be unexpected by the world but anticipated by his people (5:1–5). Third, Paul began his second letter by encouraging persecuted believers to trust that Messiah would "repay with affliction those who afflict you," and to grant relief to you "when He comes again in power (2Thess. 1:6–7). Messiah's return, Paul insisted, is the constant good news for his people and the inevitability of doom for the evil world.

After assuring the believers in Thessalonica that their genuine faith in Yeshua will stand them in good stead when He returns, Paul now goes on to "zero in" on the promise of Yeshua regarding His return and the glory that will take place at His coming.

In the previous chapter, Paul has encouraged the believing community of Thessalonica by stating that both their willingness and ability to remain firm in their faith, even in the midst of strong persecutions, is "a plain indication" of their genuine faith and love for the Lord. Paul emphasizes this same reality in his epistle to the Romans.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.  
And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations,

knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom 5:1–5)

This, of course, does not mean (as some have wrongly taught) that believers ought to welcome persecution and even pray that it might come upon them. What Paul is teaching us in these verses is that God will provide the necessary strength and perseverance to remain firm in our faith if such persecution were to come upon us. And it is evident that the community of believers in Thessalonica were experiencing such persecution for their faith, and thus Paul seeks to encourage them to know that God would enable them to endure.

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Yeshua Messiah,* – The request which Paul now gives to the believing community in Thessalonica, is that they would receive the truth regarding the promised return and reign of Messiah Yeshua, and not be shaken by false teachers who were trying to convince people that Yeshua's promise to return had already taken place. But Paul had made it clear in his first epistle to the Thessalonians that Yeshua would indeed return, just as He promised.

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. (1Thess 5:1–2)

Such teaching by the apostles is no doubt based upon the very words of Yeshua Himself:

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (Jn 14:1–3)

Surely genuine faith in Yeshua, Who, through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, proved Himself to be the promised Messiah, fully rests upon His promises, for all that He has promised He will surely accomplish. And He promised that all those given to Him by the Father would never perish but would be granted eternal life with Him in the world to come.

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. (Jn 6:37–39)

... *and our gathering together to Him* – In these verses, Paul is once again emphasizing the glory of Yeshua's return and His gathering together unto Himself all those He has redeemed in order that they would be with Him eternally. This is the same truth he emphasized in his first epistle sent to the believing community in Thessalonica.

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 Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1Thess 4:16–17)

While unbelievers may mock the whole idea of Yeshua's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and especially the belief in His return, the Scriptures are clear and affirmed in regard to this reality. For no other human literature even begins to come close to the miraculous preservation of the biblical text of the Tanach, with evidence as early as the 3rd century BCE (from the manuscripts found at Qumran). Likewise, the manuscript evidence for the Apostolic Scriptures, dating from as early as 130 CE<sup>1</sup> up through the 4th or 5th centuries CE, exceeds in number any other extant literature. When non-Greek manuscripts<sup>2</sup> are added to the extant Greek manuscripts<sup>3</sup> of the Apostolic Scriptures, the total is as many as 23,986.<sup>4</sup> All of this gives clear evidence to the fact that the Scriptures have been divinely maintained in a way that cannot be matched by any other extant corpus of human literature.

We may therefore be confident that God has maintained His inspired word which proclaims His eternal, divinely ordained purpose to redeem to Himself a host of mankind that no one can number, from every people group, who will be living evidence of His redeeming grace, love, and power. As Yeshua states:

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1 P52, the John Rylands Papyrus.

2 These total 18,130+.

3 These total 5,856.

4 See the work done by Sean McDowell, at: <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/what-is-the-most-recent-manuscript-count-for-the-new-testament>

This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. (Jn 6:39)

In v. 2 we are made aware of the fact that at the time Paul was writing his epistles, there apparently were those who were teaching that Yeshua's promised return had already taken place and that therefore, those who remained had been "left behind" and thus condemned. Therefore, in this verse Paul is assuring the believing community that such an errant message never was sent by him nor any of the apostles.

...*that you not be quickly shaken from your composure* – In these opening verses of chapter 2, Paul once again assures the believing community in Thessalonica that all who truly belong to Yeshua by having been granted genuine, saving faith, will never be lost. For all who are truly born again by the work of the Ruach in granting saving faith, are eternally secure in the omnipotent hands of the Almighty. What is more, the reality of such eternal security is evidenced by their lives that are more and more characterized by obedience to the word of God and a growing ability to honor Him in all aspects of their lives.

...*quickly shaken* – The first emphasis that Paul gives is that as believers in Yeshua await His promised return, they should be aware of the fact that the enemy would always seek to unsettle them by questioning whether they had somehow missed the promise of His coming. This could be done especially in times of major distress, such as in a time of war, etc. Yeshua Himself warned about this:

When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.  
(Mk 13:7)

By using the word "shaken" (σαλευθῆναι < σαλεύω), Paul is referring to being "disturbed inwardly,"<sup>1</sup> that is, possibly questioning something believed to be true or if one has misunderstood what was formerly believed to be true. That Paul adds the adverb ταχέως (< ταχύς), which the NASB translates as "quickly," i.e., without restraint, could just as well be understood to mean "easily," meaning to fall prey to an idea or teaching without giving due investigation and thought as to whether what is offered as a "new meaning" is actually based upon verifiable data. Unfortunately, in our day, many "new" and "stimulating" interpretations of biblical texts have led people to accept errant teachings because they are presented as "new" or even "newly discovered."

In our text, Paul is warning his readers and us not be turned to

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<sup>1</sup> BDAG, "σαλεύω," p. 911.

the right or left of the truth but rather to study the Scriptural text in the wider context of the whole of Scripture, always holding fast to the truth that the word of God is never “self-contradictory.” The enemy is constantly at work to undermine the Scriptures, and therefore all who are truly desirous of walking in the footsteps of Yeshua must be fully committed to the study of the Scriptures with the full intention of implementing the divinely given truths they teach into one’s daily life.

The phrase *from your composure* is more woodenly translated “from your mind” (ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς), as in the ESV, “shaken in mind.” This simply means to consider what one had previously understood to be true, now suddenly, to discard it and accept a “newer, more novel” interpretation. But this is often the strategy of the enemy, i.e., to bring what appears to be a “better understanding of the text” in order to dismiss the obvious and true message of the inspired word of God. In this regard, one must always remember a primary axiom of understanding the meaning and application of the Scriptures, namely, that the inspired word of God is never self-contradictory. Thus, comparing scripture with scripture is always a rudimentary axiom to be applied as one seeks to know and apply the eternal truths of the scriptures.

... or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us,—

It appears, from Paul’s words in this clause, that he was not himself certain as to the source of the erroneous information which had caused some of the Thessalonian believers to think he was now teaching that Yeshua had already returned. Had the source been through some supposed “prophetic utterance” or through someone else saying Paul had taught this, or even via a forged letter supposedly sent by Paul? Obviously the source of this misinformation was not known, but Paul in his letter intends to make it perfectly clear that no such message was from him and therefore should not be received as true.

...to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Paul had already made clear in his previous letter to the Thessalonian community that the time of Yeshua’s promised return has not been revealed.

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. (1Thess 5:1-3)

Moreover, Yeshua Himself makes this clear in His words recorded in Matt 24:36–39.

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matt 24:36–39)<sup>1</sup>

Note as well Yeshua's concluding admonition in His teaching regarding His second coming:

Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. (Matt 24:42)

We see, then, that one of the lies of the enemy which he attempts to sow in the minds of people, is that the idea of a Savior (Who is Yeshua) returning to gather all those He has redeemed, is wrong and even impossible. But the inspired word of God, guarded and maintained by God Himself, cannot be set aside or disregarded. The word of God has been guarded and kept by God, and therefore forever remains the very foundation of truth for all those He has redeemed and is the very truth of God upon which our faith is founded.

And in that regard, we may again consider Paul's admonition in his letter to Titus, that all who are truly born again ought to be anticipating and looking for the return of Yeshua as the One and only true redeemer of all who have been given to Him.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11–14)

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1 For further thoughts on these quotes from the Gospel of Matthew, see my *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 5, pp. 1129–1136.