

**THE RAPTURE PRECEDES "THE APOSTASY," THE REVELATION OF THE "MAN OF LAWLESSNESS,"
THE "DAY OF THE LORD," THE "GREAT TRIBULATION," AND THE SECOND COMING**

"Let no man deceive you by any means." (2 Thess. 2:3.)

By

Kenneth E. Roberson, Sr.

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To My Wife,

Felecia

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By Kenneth E. Roberson, Sr.*

I. INTRODUCTION.

The apostle Paul wrote the epistles of First and Second Thessalonians during his second missionary journey after he started a church in the ancient city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4) in modern-day Greece.¹ In those letters, Paul wrote to his beloved Thessalonian Christians, teaching on multiple topics, including on eschatological or end-time events. As will be seen, he had personally taught on some end-time events when he had been with the Thessalonian Christians.

A. Background.

As discussed later, at 1 Th. 3:13, Paul refers to an event commonly known as the “Second Coming,” during which Jesus physically returns to earth from heaven and brings all Christians with Him. At that verse, Paul speaks of the “coming of our Lord Jesus *with* all His saints.” (Italics added.) In 1 Th. 4:13-18, Paul teaches that one set of end-time events involves the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) when He will descend from heaven, and Christians will be “caught up” to meet Him in the air. This event of Christians being “caught up” is known as the “rapture.” Paul also refers in those verses to the Second Coming; 1 Th. 4:14 mentions it when it indicates that “God will bring *with* Him [Jesus] those who have fallen asleep.” (Italics added.)

In 1 Th. 5:1-11, Paul discusses whether Christians will be present on earth when the fearful “day of the Lord” comes. (As will be seen, the “day of the Lord” includes the “great tribulation” and later Second Coming.) In 2 Th. 2:1-17, Paul instructs the Thessalonian Christians on the topics of the rapture, “the apostasy,” the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and the “day of the Lord.” He again addresses in these verses the issue of whether Christians will be present on earth when the “day of the Lord” comes.

B. Paul’s Previous Oral Teaching To The Thessalonian Christians.

1 Th. 5:1-2 and 2 Th. 2:1-3, 5, and 15, show that *before* Paul wrote First Thessalonians, he had *orally* taught the Thessalonian Christians about the rapture generally, and about “the apostasy,” the

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¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptural references are to the 2020 New American Standard Bible (NASB), and italicized words in Scriptural quotations were italicized in the published English translation.

revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” the “day of the Lord,” and whether the rapture would precede the rest of those events.

Accordingly, at 1 Th. 5:1-2, Paul, discussing the “day of the Lord,” states: “1 Now as to the periods and times, brothers *and sisters*, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a thief in the night.” (Underlining added.) The Thessalonian Christians also therefore knew the related concepts (discussed later) that they were “sons of day” (1 Th. 5:5) and were not “of night” (verse five).

Similarly, at 2 Th. 2:1, “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” refers to the “coming of the Lord” at 1 Th. 4:15 and the rapture at 1 Th. 4:17, respectively. 2 Th. 2:2-3 additionally reference “the apostasy,” the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and the “day of the Lord.” After identifying these events, Paul asks the Thessalonian Christians at 2 Th. 2:5, “Do you not remember that *while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*” (Italics added.) He later commands at 2 Th. 2:15, “So then, brothers *and sisters*, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.” (Underlining added.)

C. The Problem Of Christians Who Died Before The Rapture.

After the above oral teaching, including teaching on the rapture generally, Paul wrote First Thessalonians and addressed at 1 Th. 4 a specific issue about which he had not previously informed the Thessalonian Christians: whether Christians who had died before the rapture, as distinct from Christians who were alive at the time of the rapture, would be included in the rapture and Second Coming. At 1 Th. 4:13-18, Paul said:

“13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers *and sisters*, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of *mankind* do, who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose *from the dead*, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. 15 For we say this to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 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 will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore, comfort one another with these words.”

(Underlining added.)

At 1 Th. 4:13, Paul emphasized that he did not want the Thessalonian Christians to grieve over Christians who had died (“those who are asleep”) like unbelievers grieved without hope. At verse 14, Paul refers to Christians who had died as “those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.” Paul then states, “God will bring *with* Him [Jesus] those who have fallen asleep.” (Italics added.)

1 Th. 4:15-16 explain that during the “coming of the Lord,” He will “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God.” Verse 17 refers to Christians then being “caught up.” “Caught up” is a translation of a form of the Greek word “harpazo” (ἁρπάζω).² Harpazo means “to snatch up, to seize, to carry off by force, to rapture.”³ Once the rapture occurs, Christians “will always be with the Lord.” (1 Th. 4:17.)⁴ Paul thus makes clear in 1 Th. 4:13-18, that all Christians, those who died before the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) and those alive when that coming occurs, will be “caught up” and that God will bring them all *with* Jesus during the Second Coming.

D. The Rapture Precedes The “Day Of The Lord.”

2 Tim. 3:16-17 (King James Version (KJV)) state:

“16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

First and Second Thessalonians are Scripture, and this essay presumes that when Paul wrote on the above end-time topics in 1 Th. 4 and 5, and 2 Th. 2, he meant to be understood not only by Thessalonian Christians but by Christians of every generation. Further, as discussed, when Paul had been with the Thessalonian Christians he had orally presented teaching on some end-time topics, thus eliminating the need for an exhaustive introductory presentation when writing about those in First and Second Thessalonians. Nonetheless, it is the position of this essay that a careful review through God’s grace of the pertinent Scriptures, including what Paul wrote on end-time topics in 1 Th. 4 and 5, and

² George V. Wigram and Ralph D. Winter, *The Word Study Concordance* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978), p. 82.

³ Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: 1980) (*Linguistic Key*), p. 599.

⁴ The rapture is not expressly referred to in the Book of Revelations. This includes the Rev. 4:1-2 account of a voice telling the apostle John, “Come up here,” and his subsequent observations of things in heaven. That account does not indicate, e.g., that the Lord descended from heaven or that John met the Lord in the air. Nonetheless, in the sequence of events recorded in Revelations, the rapture would occur after Rev. 3:22, the end of Jesus’s letters to the seven churches, but before Rev. 4:1. After Rev. 4:1, the first reference to “church” or “churches” is at Rev. 22:16 (“churches”), near the end of the book. After Rev. 4:1 but before Rev. 22:16 there are clear references to saints on earth (Rev. 13:7, 17:6; people who first become saved believers after the rapture) but not to Christians on earth. All Christians are saints but not all saints are Christians. There were Old Testament saints (Psa. 16:3-4; 34:9) but they were not Christians (e.g., members of the Body of Christ and His Church). Rev. 4:2-4 refer to 24 “elders” in heaven but that does not prove they are Christians; there were 24 Levitical priestly offices (1 Ch. 24:1-19; see Heb. 8:4-5: “4 . . . there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.”).

2 Th. 2, will demonstrate that Christ comes for His beloved Christians, and the rapture occurs, prior to “the apostasy,” the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and the “day of the Lord” (including the “great tribulation” and Second Coming).⁵

II. THE “COMING OF THE LORD” VERSUS “THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS WITH ALL HIS SAINTS.”

At 1 Th. 4:15, Paul uses the phrase “coming of the Lord.” He does not there say, “coming of the Lord *with all His saints.*” During the “coming of the Lord” referred to at 1 Th. 4:15, the Lord will “descend from heaven” (verse 16). Further, because Christians are raptured “to meet” (verse 17) the Lord in the air, they clearly are not physically “with” Him *at the time He begins* that descent.

On the other hand, 1 Th. 3:13 contains the phrase, “coming of our Lord Jesus *with all His saints.*” (Italics added.) As mentioned, this is the Second Coming, to which Paul alludes at 1 Th. 4:14 stating, “God will bring *with Him [Jesus]* those who have fallen asleep.” (Italics added.) The phrase “*coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints*” at 1 Th. 3:13 is unqualified. It indicates His saints are with Him during the entirety of this “coming,” including when He *begins* that “coming.” To this extent the “coming of the Lord” at 1 Th. 4:15 is different from the “coming of our Lord Jesus *with all His saints*” at 1 Th. 3:13.

Many verses describe the Second Coming. At Acts 1:10 and 11, two men in white clothing said to the apostles, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” Jesus spoke of this at Mt. 24:30:

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.”

⁵ If the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord,” it does not follow that anyone teaching differently is deceptive. All deceptive communication involves error but not all communicated error involves deception. Some may be unaware of error because they lack the time, ability, and/or interest to identify the error. Some may hold erroneous views simply because they are espoused by respected and well-meaning advocates (e.g., parents, churches) who may not have examined the particular issue carefully. Jesus was “full of *grace and truth.*” (Jn. 1:14, italics added.)

At Acts 17, Luke records that, when the apostle Paul himself brought the word of the gospel to the Bereans of Macedonia, “These were more *noble* than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word *with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures* daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11 (KJV), italics added.) These Bereans were unbelievers with respect to Christianity, yet Luke commended them as *noble* for using the Scriptures to test the teaching of an apostle sent from God. How much more does the Christian have the right to use the Scriptures, including the apostles’ teachings, to assess whether the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” and to let the Scriptural evidence lead where it will? “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Th. 5:21, KJV.)

Mt. 24:27 reveals, "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be." Jude 14 and 15 say of this time:

"14 Behold, the Lord has come with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Zech. 14:4-5 record:

"4 On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west *forming* a very large valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and the other half toward the south. 5 And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him!"

Paul wrote at 2 Th. 1:7-10:

"7 . . . the Lord Jesus will be revealed from *heaven* with His mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified *among His saints* on that day."

(Italics added.) At Rev. 19:11-16, the apostle John said:

"11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many crowns; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. 13 *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

If all Christians meet the Lord in the "air" at the rapture, "so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Th. 4:17), and He later comes from "heaven" with all Christians during the Second Coming, then, after the rapture, the Lord takes all Christians from the "air" to "heaven" pending the Second Coming.

Finally, it has been suggested that the fact that Christians are raptured "to meet" (1 Th. 4:17) the Lord means they leave the earth to meet the Lord like a welcoming party leaves a city to meet a

dignitary, *and returns to the city* with the dignitary. The implication is that “to meet” means to leave, *and return to*, a location. This supports an argument for a “posttribulation” rapture, i.e., that the rapture and Second Coming are not separate events but, instead, the rapture occurs during the Second Coming. Under this view, while Jesus is physically coming to earth, Christians are raptured from the earth to meet Him, and then return to earth, accompanied by Him.

However, first, as mentioned, 1 Th. 3:13, refers to the “*coming* of our Lord Jesus *with* all His saints.” The phrase is unqualified. Nothing in that phrase suggests His saints are not with Him during the entirety of this “coming,” or that they are not with Him when He *begins* this “coming.” Nothing in 1 Th. 3:13 suggests He initially comes by Himself and Christians later join Him.

Second, the phrase “to meet” at 1 Th. 4:17 is a translation of the Greek phrase “eis apantesin” (εἰς ἀπάντησιν), which means “eis (for) apantesin ([the] meeting).”⁶ Apantesin is a form of “apantesis” (ἀπάντησις).⁷

The meaning of Greek words can be categorized into semantic “domains” and “subdomains.”⁸ The meaning of apantesis is in the domain of “linear movement” and the subdomain of “Come Near, Approach.”⁹ Accordingly, this subdomain does not focus on *accompanying* or *returning*, much less accompanying and/or returning with someone. By way of contrast, there are other words the meanings of which fall into the subdomain of “Follow, Accompany” or the subdomain of “Return.”¹⁰ Apantesis is not one of them.

Third, apantesis means “to come near to and to meet, either in a friendly or hostile sense—‘to draw near, to meet, to meet up with.’”¹¹ This definition does not refer to accompanying or returning. Nor does it imply a “welcoming” party since one may come near in a “hostile sense.”

Fourth, other than at 1 Th. 4:17, a form of apantesis is used only three times in the New Testament: at Mt. 25:1 and 6, and Acts 28:15.¹² As shown below, none of those verses prove that “to meet” at 1 Th. 4:17 means to leave, *and return to*, a location.

⁶ George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear KJV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1897), p. 533.

⁷ Wigram and Winter, p. 59.

⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament[:] Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 181-182.

⁹ *Id.*, vol. 1, p. 181; § 15.78, p. 192.

¹⁰ *Id.*, vol. 1, p. 182.

¹¹ *Id.*, vol. 1, § 15.78, p. 192.

¹² Wigram and Winter, p. 59. Some Greek manuscripts indicate “hupantesin” (not “apantesin”) is used at Mt. 25:1. Berry, p. 71; Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed., United Bible Societies (1983), p. 96; Barbara and Timothy Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 87. This is unimportant because “hupantesin” and “apantesin” are interchangeable. Louw and Nida, § 15.78, p. 192.

Mt. 25:1 and 6 are part of the account of the parable of the ten virgins who went out “to meet” (Mt. 25:1) the bridegroom. (Mt. 25:1-12). Later, five wise virgins entered with the bridegroom into the wedding feast and the door was shut. (Mt. 25:10.)

Biblical scholars differ on whether the location from which the wise virgins originally left was the location to which they ultimately returned. *Ellicott’s Bible Commentary for English Readers* and *Benson’s Commentary of the Old and New Testaments* contend that the wise virgins left, and returned to, the bridegroom’s house. (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/25-1.htm>.)

However, Henry Alford’s *Greek Testament and Exegetical and Critical Commentary* maintains the wise virgins left *their own homes* and went to the *bridegroom’s* house. (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/alford/matthew/25.htm>.) Heinrich Meyer’s *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* cites two other Biblical commentators (“Bornemann . . . and Ewald”) who hold that view. (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/meyer/matthew/25.htm>.) Meyer believes the wise virgins left the *bride’s* house. He suggests they went to the *bridegroom’s* house but does not suggest they returned to the bride’s house. (*Ibid.*) Thus, neither Alford, Meyer, nor the two commentators cited by Meyer argues that the location from which the wise virgins originally left was the location to which they ultimately returned. Indeed, the fact that some commentators as above maintain that the locations were *different* is consistent with Christians being raptured from the *earth* and taken to *heaven*.

Acts 28:15 involves Christians who left Rome “to meet” Paul, and they met him while he was enroute to Rome. Moreover, the *context* indicates they were a welcoming party, which permits a reasonable conclusion that they returned to Rome, accompanying Paul. The point of the above discussion is not that “to meet” (eis apantesin) does not *permit* one “to meet” someone *and return* to one’s originating location. The point is that “to meet” *does not address* whether one is “to meet” *and then go anywhere*, or, therefore, “to meet” *and then return* to his or her originating location. Much less does “to meet” address whether one going somewhere after the meeting is accompanied by another. Whether one goes anywhere after the meeting and, if so, where and/or with whom, is determined by other words and/or contextual evidence. The fact, then, that Christians are raptured “to meet” the Lord does not mean that they then return to earth or return accompanied by Him.

III. THE RAPTURE PRECEDES THE “DAY OF THE LORD” BECAUSE CHRISTIANS BELONG TO THE “DAY,” NOT TO THE “NIGHT,” AND THE “DAY OF THE LORD” COMES IN THE “NIGHT.”

A. 1 Th. 5:11.

1 Th. 5:1-11 say:

“1 Now as to the periods and times, brothers *and sisters*, you have no need *of anything* to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a

thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction will come upon them like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers *and sisters*, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then, let's not sleep as others do, but let's be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of *the day*, let's be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with him. 11 Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing."

B. Old Testament Verses On The "Day Of The Lord."

"Day of the Lord" at 1 Th. 5:2 is figurative language; it does not refer to a literal 12- or 24-hour day. Instead, as will be seen, it refers to an end-time period of years. It is a great, dark, terrible, and fearful period of God's wrath and destruction that will impact not only people on earth but the very heavens and earth.

The following Old Testament verses from the KJV describe the "day of the Lord." Isa. 2:12 says, "For *the day of the Lord* of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and *he shall be brought low.*" (Italics added.) Isa. 13:6 states, "Howl ye; for *the day of the LORD* is at hand; it shall come as a *destruction from the Almighty.*" (Italics added.) Isa. 13:9 reads, "Behold, *the day of the LORD* cometh, cruel both with *wrath and fierce anger*, to lay the land desolate: and he shall *destroy the sinners* thereof out of it." (Italics added.) Jer. 46:10 records, "For this is *the day of the LORD GOD* of hosts, a day of *vengeance*, that he may *avenge him of his adversaries*: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the LORD GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates." (Italics added.) Eze. 30:3 declares, "For the day is near, even *the day of the Lord* is near, a *cloudy day*; it shall be the time of the heathen." (Italics added.) Joel 1:15 emphasizes, "Alas for the day! for *the day of the LORD* is at hand, and as a *destruction from the Almighty* shall it come." (Italics added.)

Joel 2:1-2 proclaim, "1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land *tremble*: for *the day of the LORD* cometh, for it is nigh at hand. 2 A day of *darkness and of gloominess*, a day of *clouds* and of *thick darkness.*" (Italics added.) Joel 2:11 prophesies, "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for *the day of the LORD* is great and *very terrible*; and who can abide it?" (Italics added.) Amos 5:18 warns, "Woe unto you that desire *the day of the LORD!* to what end is it for you? *the day of the LORD* is *darkness*, and not light." (Italics added.) Similarly, Amos 5:20 foretells, "Shall not *the day of the LORD* be *darkness*, and not light? even *very dark*, and no brightness in it?" (Italics added.) Obad. 1:15 declares, "For *the day of the LORD* is near *upon all the heathen*: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head." (Italics added.)

Zephaniah 1:7 commands, "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for *the day of the LORD* is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a *sacrifice*, he hath bid his guests" (Italics added); Zeph. 1:14 adds, "The great *day of the LORD* is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of *the day of the LORD*: the mighty man shall *cry there bitterly*. (Italics added.) Zech. 14:1 proclaims, "Behold, *the day of the LORD* cometh, and *thy spoil shall be divided* in the midst of thee." (Italics added.)

Paul was an apostle, a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Php. 3:5), and a "Pharisee, a son of Pharisees." (Acts 23:6.) He said that before he became a Christian, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions." (Gal. 1:14.) As a Christian, he wrote about half of the New Testament. He would have known the above Old Testament verses describing the "day of the Lord" and they would have informed his use of that phrase.

The New Testament describes the "day of the Lord" also. Apart from 1 Th. 5:2, Peter forewarned at 2 Pet. 3:10:

"10 But the *day of the Lord* will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be discovered [KJV: burned up]." 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness."

(Italics added.)¹³

C. Events Preceding, Commencing, And Ending The "Day Of The Lord."

1. *Preceding Events.*

Two events precede the "day of the Lord" (and as discussed later, the rapture precedes both events). First, Joel 2:31 (KJV) reads, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *Before the great and terrible day of the LORD come.*" (Italics added.) Rev. 6:12 references this; John said: "And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood."¹⁴ Second, Malachi 4:5

¹³ According to the NASB, Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians at 1 Cor. 5:5, "*I have decided* to turn such a person over to Satan for the destruction of his body, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord." (Underlining added.) Other translations use the phrase "day of the Lord *Jesus.*" We will address this verse later (see fn. 106).

¹⁴ As shown below, the rapture precedes the sun and moon event of Joel 2:31 and Rev. 6:12. First, as this essay later demonstrates, the rapture precedes the coming of the Antichrist.

Second, Rev. 6:2 refers to the Antichrist. Just as Christ is depicted sitting on a white horse during the Second Coming at Rev. 19:11-13, at Rev. 6:1-2 a living creature says "Come" and a male is sitting on a white horse; he is the Antichrist. Additionally, the male at Rev. 6:2 goes out "conquering and to conquer." That phrase is a translation of the Greek words "nikon kai ina nikese" (νικῶν καὶ ἴνα νικήσῃ), i.e., "nikon [overcoming] kai [and] ina

states, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet *before* the coming of the great and terrible *day of the LORD.*” (Italics added.)¹⁵

[that] nikese [he might overcome].” (Berry, p. 634.) Nikon and nikese are forms of “nikao” (νικάω). (Wigram and Winter, pp. 515, 516.) The Literal Standard Version and Young’s Literal Translation translate this phrase “overcoming, and that he may overcome.” Rev. 11:3-7 demonstrate that the beast will “overcome” (verse seven) God’s two witnesses. Rev. 13:4-7 show that the beast will “overcome” (verse seven) the saints. (These are people who first become saved believers after the rapture.) Rev. 11:3-7 and Rev. 13:4-7 are the only verses in the Book of Revelations referring to an evil being overcoming. The word “overcome” at Rev. 11:7 and Rev. 13:7 is a translation of a form of nikao. The fact that a form of nikao is used to describe the actions of the male at Rev. 6:2 and the beast at Rev. 11:7 and 13:7 is additional evidence that the male at Rev. 6:2 is the Antichrist.

Third, the living creature says “Come” and the Antichrist is sitting on the white horse at Rev. 6:2, i.e., before the sun and moon event of Rev. 6:12. In sum, if the rapture precedes the coming of the Antichrist, and his sitting on a horse at Rev. 6:2 precedes the sun and moon event of Rev. 6:12, then the rapture precedes the sun and moon event.

Peter referred to the sun and moon event during his speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:20). However, Peter was then talking to a Jewish audience (Acts 2:14, 22) of unbelievers before Paul became a Christian. Peter therefore did not know what Paul would teach concerning the “mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4) that Gentiles would be members of the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:6), i.e., the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Peter did not know the “word of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) given to Paul that Christians would be raptured. Peter therefore could not have known about the timing of the rapture in relation to the sun and moon event.

¹⁵ The rapture will precede this future event as well. First, Malachi was an Old Testament prophet speaking to the people of *Israel*. Malachi 1:1 states: “The pronouncement of the word of the LORD *to Israel* through Malachi.” (Italics added.) Malachi proclaimed, “*Judah* has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in *Israel* and in Jerusalem.” (Mal. 2:11, italics added.) Malachi 3:9 declares: “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the entire nation of you.” (Underlining added.) But concerning Christians, Scriptures state, “There is neither *Jew* nor Greek, . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28, italics added.) They also state, “Christ redeemed *us* from the curse of the Law, *having become a curse for us*—for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” (Gal. 3:13, italics added, some capitalization omitted.) Accordingly, “*you*” in Malachi 4:5 *refers to Israelites, the race of the Jews, not to Christians*, when Malachi 4:5 says, “Behold, I am going to send *you* Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.” (Italics added.) This verse will be fulfilled after the rapture, when God focuses His eschatological attention on the Jewish people.

Second, the next verse, Mal. 4:6, says concerning Elijah, “He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” However, during the church age, it is the role of *New Testament* apostles, prophets, evangelists, “pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11), and “teachers” (1 Cor. 12:28) “to turn the hearts of the fathers back to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” This is done in part by such apostolic teachings as: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4; also Col. 3:21) and “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1; also Col. 3:20).

Third, if Elijah’s role is “to turn the hearts of the fathers back to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers” during the *church age*, then over 2,000 years of fathers and children have missed Elijah’s ministry. Fourth, Mal. 4:3 and 6 make clear that the “Lord of armies” says He sends Elijah to turn hearts “so that I will not come and strike the land [KJV: “earth”] with complete destruction.” But this is inapplicable to the church age. During His first coming Jesus said, “I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world” (Jn. 12:47), and

2. Commencing Event.

Based on Joel 2:31 above, one might expect Revelations to refer to the beginning of the “day of the Lord” shortly after Rev. 6:12 above. That in fact happens, although Revelations uses different language and employs symbolism.

Rev. 6:15 through Rev. 7:3 are shortly after Rev. 6:12. Rev. 6:15 through Rev. 6:17 state:

“15 Then the kings of the earth and the eminent people, and the commanders and the wealthy and the strong, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the sight of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for *the great day of Their wrath has come*, and who is able to stand?”

(Italics added.) Rev. 7:1-3 then record:

7 1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind would blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree.
2 And I saw another angel ascending from *the rising of the sun*, holding the seal of the living God; and he called out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, or the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.’”

(Italics added.) Rev. 6:17 specifies “the great day of Their wrath.” As previously discussed, Isa. 13:9 says, “Behold, *the day of the LORD* cometh, cruel both with *wrath and fierce anger*.” (Italics added.) Rev. 6:17 reveals that the “day of the Lord” is a day of wrath of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

the Scriptures are clear that “God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him” (Jn. 3:17; see Mt. 21:5: the King comes “humble, and mounted on a donkey.”)

Finally, Malachi was addressing Israelites centuries before Paul. Malachi therefore did not know what Paul would teach concerning the “mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4) that Gentiles would be members of the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:6), i.e., the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Malachi did not know the “word of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) given to Paul that Christians would be raptured. Malachi therefore could not have known about the timing of the rapture in relation to the coming of Elijah. John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk. 1:17) and Jesus said, “*John* himself is Elijah who was to come” (Mt. 11:14). But Jesus also referred to Elijah’s coming as a future event, saying, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things.” (Mt. 17:11.) This future event is inapplicable to Christians.

Rev. 6:17 announces that “the great day of Their wrath *has come.*” This is the beginning of the “day of the Lord.” The “rising of the sun” at Rev. 7:2 supports this.¹⁶ The “rising of the sun” symbolizes *the beginning of a day.* It is the beginning of the “day of the Lord.”¹⁷

3. *Ending Event.*

The “day of the Lord” also ends. 2 Pet. 3:10-13 declare:

“10 But the *day of the Lord* will come like a thief, *in which the heavens will pass away* with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and *the earth* and its works will be discovered [KJV: “burned up”]. 11 Since *all these things are to be destroyed* in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

(Italics added.)

The epistle of Second Peter helps identify when the “day of the Lord” ends. 2 Pet. 3:10-11 proclaim that the heavens and earth will be destroyed “in” (verse 10) the “day of the Lord.” Peter reveals that after that destruction there will be “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet. 3:13). This implies that what was destroyed was the previous heavens and earth. Thus Rev. 21:1 speaks of “a new heaven and a new earth: *for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.*” (Italics added.) The “day of the Lord” thus includes the destruction of the first heavens and first earth.

Rev. 21:4 teaches that the period of the new heaven and new earth will be blessed; during it, God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” But during the “day of the Lord” there will be death, sorrow, crying, and pain. The fact that these things do not exist in the new heaven and new earth demonstrates that the “day of the Lord” does not extend into the period of the “new heavens and . . . new earth” of 2 Pet. 2:13, or the “new heaven and . . . new earth” of Rev. 21:1. Thus, the “day of the Lord” ends with the destruction of the first heavens and first earth.¹⁸

¹⁶ The NASB at Rev. 7:2 refers to “the rising of the sun.” The KJV simply says, “the east.” The underlying Greek words are “anatoes heliou” (ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου), i.e., “anatoes (rising) heliou (of [the] sun).” (Berry, p. 636.) The entry for anatole in *Linguistic Key* is: “rising, ‘the rising of the sun’ indicates the east.” (Rienecker and Rogers, p. 828.) The KJV’s translation, “the east,” does not expressly convey that the underlying Greek words signal the beginning of a day.

¹⁷ Rev. 7:3 shows that even the “day of the Lord,” a period of God’s wrath, begins with grace.

¹⁸ Some maintain that the “day of the Lord” is the same as “the day of God” referred to at 2 Pet. 3:12. However, there is persuasive evidence they are distinct and that the “day of God” is the eternal period beginning with the “new heavens and a new earth” of 2 Pet. 3:13. First, the “day of the Lord” and the “day of God” are distinct phrases. Second, 2 Pet. 3:10 teaches that the heavens pass away “in” the “day of the Lord.” However,

The “day of the Lord” is thus a lengthy period. As we will later discuss, the Antichrist will “confirm a covenant with the many” (Dan. 9:27) for seven years. The “day of the Lord” will begin after the commencement, but before the middle, of that seven-year period. Christ’s 1,000-year reign on earth (Rev. 20:4, 6) occurs after that seven-year period and during the period of the first heaven and first earth. The “day of the Lord” continues until the destruction of the first heaven and first earth. Accordingly, the “day of the Lord” is over 1,000 years.

D. The “Great Tribulation” And “Second Coming” Are Part Of The “Day Of The Lord.”

As discussed, Rev. 6:17, which says, “the great day of Their wrath has come” and Rev. 7:2’s reference to the “rising of the sun” mark the beginning of the “day of the Lord.” 2 Pet. 3:10-13 and Rev. 21:1 and 4 teach that the “day of the Lord” ends with the destruction of the first heavens and earth.

Two events pertinent to this essay occur between the beginning and ending of the “day of the Lord.” One, referred to at Rev. 19:11-16 (quoted previously), is the Second Coming, when, e.g., Jesus returns as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev. 19:16.)

2 Pet. 3:12 indicates the heavens are to be destroyed “because of” “the coming of the day of God,” suggesting the destruction *makes way* for that coming. That is, the destruction does not occur “in” the “day of God.” Third, 2 Pet. 3:11-12 show that Christians should be “looking for . . . the coming of the day of God.” But as discussed later, the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord”; therefore, it would be anomalous for Christians to look for *it*. Fourth, again, 2 Pet. 3:11-12 prove that Christians should be “looking for . . . the coming of the day of God.” And 2 Pet. 3:13 emphasizes that Christians are “looking for new heavens and a new earth.” The “looking for” both provides evidence that the “day of God” is the time of the “new heavens and a new earth.” Fifth, 2 Pet. 3:12 refers to the “day of God,” and verse 13 refers to “His” promise, i.e., *God’s* promise. Verse 13 in turn associates God’s promise with the “new heavens and a new earth.” The result is the “day of God” is indirectly associated with the “new heavens and a new earth.” If one substitutes the “day of the Lord” for the “day of God” in this fifth line of reasoning, the result is that the “day of the Lord” is associated with a “new heavens and a new earth.” However, this essay has already shown that the “day of the Lord” ends before the “new heavens and a new earth.”

1 Cor. 15:24-26 support the concept that the “day of God” is the eternal period beginning with “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1), i.e., “the new heavens and a new earth” of 2 Pet. 3:13. 1 Cor. 15:24-26 record: “24 then *comes* the end, when He [Christ] hands over the kingdom *to our God and Father*, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He [Christ] must reign until He [*God*] has put all His [Christ’s] enemies under His [Christ’s] feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.” (Underlining added; see Ps 110:1.) According to the above, Christ’s kingdom becomes *God’s* kingdom when death is abolished. Rev. 20:14 teaches that death will be “thrown into the lake of fire” and that that lake is “the second death.” Two verses later, at Rev. 21:1, John saw “a new heaven and a new earth.” In sum, when death is abolished, Christ’s kingdom becomes God’s kingdom. After death is thrown into the lake of fire, John saw “a new heaven and a new earth.” This associates *God’s* kingdom with “a new heaven and new earth.” This is evidence that “the day of *God*” is the eternal period beginning with “a new heaven and a new earth.”

Rev. 16:14 refers to “the war of the great day of God, *the Almighty*” (italics added; KJV and NIV: “day of *God Almighty*”; ESV: “day of *God the Almighty*”). This war occurs during the “day of the Lord” as it occurs after Rev. 7:2 but before Rev. 21:1. The phrase “day of God, the Almighty” is used only once in the New Testament, at Rev. 16:14. Isa. 13:6 and Joel 1:15 associate the “day of the Lord” with destruction from “the Almighty.” There is no persuasive evidence that the “day of God, the Almighty” of Rev. 16:14 is the “day of God” of 2 Pet. 3:12.

The second occurs during the “day of the Lord” but before the Second Coming. It is an event referred to as the “great tribulation.”

As discussed later, the Antichrist will confirm a "covenant with the many" for “one week.” That “one week” is a week of years, i.e., seven years. (Dan. 9:27). Dan. 9:27 also teaches that “in the middle of the week he [the Antichrist] will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* the one who makes desolate.” That is, halfway into the seven years, the Antichrist will break the covenant.

The *last* three and one half years is commonly referred to as the period of the “great tribulation.” Jesus spoke of it at Mt. 24:21, saying, “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again.” (Underlining added.)

This last three and one half years is referred to in the Book of Daniel. Dan. 7:25 teaches that the Antichrist “will speak against the Most High and *wear down the saints* of the Highest One, . . . and *they will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time.*” (Italics added.) This is three and one half times, or three and one half years. Dan. 12:1, discussing this period, said it would be “a *time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time*” (italics added), a statement similar to Jesus’s statement at Mt. 24:21. And Dan. 12:6-7 record:

“6 And *someone* said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, ‘How long *will it be* until the end of *these* wonders?’ 7 And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that *it would be for a time, times, and half a time*; and as soon as they finish *smashing the power of the holy people*, all these events will be completed.”

(Underlining added.)

The last three and one half years is also referred to in Revelations. Rev. 11:2 states that the nations “will trample the holy city for forty-two months.” This is the three and one half years. Rev. 11:3 relates that John was told: “I will grant *authority* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days” and verse seven reports, “When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.” 1,260 days is 42 months (30 days each) or three and one half years.

Similarly, Rev. 12:1 describes a woman symbolizing Israel (see Gen. 37:5, 9-10). Rev. 12:5 and 6 (KJV) read:

“5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there *a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*”

(Italics added.)

Rev. 12:14 declares:

“But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a *time, times, and half a time*, away from the presence of the serpent.”

(Italics added.) This repeats the time reference of Dan. 12:7 and constitutes three and one half years.

The above periods are the last three and one half years of the seven-year covenant period. Those last three and one half years are the period of “great tribulation” referred to by Jesus at Mt. 24:21. The key point is: all of the verses in Revelations dealing with the last three and one half years—Rev. 11:2 and 3, and Rev. 12:6 and 14—are between (1) Rev. 6:12 and 7:2 which mark the beginning of the “day of the Lord” and (2) Rev. 21:1, which refers to the end of the “day of the Lord.” In other words, *the “great tribulation” is part of the “day of the Lord.”* It follows that *if the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord,” the rapture precedes the “great tribulation.”*

E. The “Day,” “Night,” And “Day Of The Lord.”

The “day of the Lord” at 1 Th. 5:2 is, as mentioned, figurative language representing a real, end-time period of years. The phrase “like a thief in the night” in that verse is also figurative; it is a simile. Literally, a “night” is a 12-hour *period* of darkness. However, at verse two this represents a longer *period* of spiritual and moral darkness. At 1 Th. 5:3, Paul confirms the meaning behind the figurative thief. A thief causes sudden property loss; according to verse three, the “day of the Lord” causes “sudden destruction.” Additionally, literal night facilitates the coming of a thief; a period of spiritual darkness facilitates the coming of the “day of the Lord.”

Paul emphasizes at 1 Th. 5:4 that Christians are “not in darkness.” This is figurative language (but not a simile); Paul is not here referring to literal darkness. The “darkness” here is a real, spiritual and moral darkness. This figurative use of “darkness” corroborates that “night” in verse two represents a *period* of spiritual and moral darkness.

By teaching at 1 Th. 5:4 that Christians “are not in darkness,” Paul’s focus is not on Christians’ conduct but on their location. Of course, Christians are to refrain from sin and from committing “deeds of darkness” (Rom. 13:12, Eph. 5:11). But *if* one is a Christian, one is never “in” darkness, i.e., in the realm of darkness. Thus Jesus said at Jn. 12:46 that “no one who believes in Me will remain *in* darkness.” (Italics added.) Paul declared at Col. 1:13 that God “rescued us from the *domain* of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” (Italics added.) Peter taught Christians at 1 Pet. 2:9 that God “called you *out of* darkness into His marvelous light.” (Italics added.)

Paul stresses in 1 Th. 5:4 that Christians “are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you.” His point is that, *in reality, the “day of the Lord” overtakes people “in” the realm of spiritual and moral darkness, but Christians are not “in” that realm; therefore, the “day of the Lord” cannot overtake them.* Then, referring again to the “thief” simile, Paul makes the separate point that the “day of the Lord” cannot overtake Christians “like a thief.” (1 Th. 5:4.)

In 1 Th. 5:5, Paul continues with figurative language. Christians are “sons of light and sons of day,” and “are not of night nor of darkness.” The language contrasts, on the one hand, “light” and “day” with, on the other hand, “darkness” and “night.” Unlike “light” and “darkness,” however, “day” and “night” *are periods of time.* Paul thus clearly refers to two adjoining, mutually exclusive periods: “day” and “night.”

1 Th. 5:2 and 5 therefore identify three distinct periods: (1) “day” associated with spiritual light, (2) “night” associated with spiritual darkness, and (3) the fearful “day of the Lord.” Paul thus utilizes the word “day” in two different contexts: (1) the “day” adjoining “night,” and (2) the “day of the Lord.”

F. Christians Belong To The “Day,” Not The “Night,” And The “Day Of The Lord” Comes In The “Night.”

Paul informs the Thessalonian Christians at 1 Th. 5:5 that they are “sons of day.” That phrase is a translation of the Greek words “huioi hemeras”¹⁹ (huioi [υἱοὶ: sons] hemeras [ἡμέρας: of day].) Both Greek words are nouns.²⁰ Hemeras is in the “genitive” case,²¹ which is “the case of definition or description.”²² In the phrase “huioi hemeras,” huioi is the “head noun” and hemeras is the “genitive noun” or “genitive substantive.”²³

Daniel Wallace, in his respected work on Greek grammar in the New Testament, discusses the “descriptive genitive” or “genitive of description.”²⁴ He observes that with the descriptive genitive, “The genitive substantive describes the head noun in a loose manner.”²⁵ He advises: “For the word *of* [e.g., “of” in the phrase “of light”] insert the paraphrase *characterized by* or *described by*. If this fits, and if *none* of the other uses of the genitive fits, then the genitive is probably a genitive of description.”²⁶ Thus, he treats the Greek word translated “of light” in the phrase “sons of light” at 1 Th. 5:5 as a

¹⁹ Berry, p. 534.

²⁰ Friberg and Friberg, p. 626.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1955), p. 72.

²³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 79, 81.

²⁴ *Id.*, pp. 79-81.

²⁵ *Id.*, p. 79.

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 80, footnote omitted.

descriptive genitive.²⁷ In other words, *hemeras*, “of light,” means characterized, or described, by light; therefore, “sons of light” are sons characterized, or described, by light.

Similarly, *hemeras* in “*huioi hemeras*” (sons of day) at 1 Th. 5:5 may be treated as a descriptive genitive. The result is: “sons of day” means sons *characterized, or described, by “day.”*

Wallace also discusses the “possessive genitive” or “genitive of possession.”²⁸ This exists when “*the substantive in the genitive possesses the thing to which it stands related. That is, in some sense the head noun is owned by the genitive noun.*”²⁹ Wallace comments: “Instead of the word *of* replace it with *belonging to* or *possessed by*. If this paraphrase fits, then the genitive is probably a genitive of possession.”³⁰

“Sons of day” involves a head noun, *huioi* (sons), with the genitive *hemeras*. Wallace indicates Maximilian Zerwick’s *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*³¹ summarizes the uses of “sons” with a genitive.³² At the cited location, Zerwick states that the “sons of day” at 1 Th. 5:5 are “those who *belong to . . . the risen sun, and show this by the whole tenor of their lives.*”³³ Of course, the sun is risen in the “day.” Zerwick thus treats “sons of day” at 1 Th. 5:5 as what Wallace would refer to as a “possessive genitive.” According to Wallace, this would mean the sons *belong to or are possessed by “day.”*

Paul also announces at 1 Th. 5:5 that, “we are not of the night.” The phrase “of the night” is a translation of the Greek phrase “*ouk esmen nuktos*” (οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς), meaning “*ouk (not) esmen (we are) nuktos (of night).*” *Nuktos* (νυκτὸς) is in the genitive case. The gravamen of the discussion about the descriptive genitive and possessive genitive applies to the genitive *nuktos* (which is without a head noun). Thus, the phrase “we are not of the night” may be translated “we do not belong to the night.”

Numerous English translations of the Greek³⁴ at 1 Th. 5:5 convey that Christians “belong” to the “day” and not to the “night.” As to belonging to the “day,” the Good News Translation says, “*All of you are people who belong to the light, who belong to the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness*” (italics added); God’s Word Translation: “*You belong to the day and the light not to the night and the dark*” (italic added); Names of God Bible: “*You belong to the day and the light not to the night*”

²⁷ *Id.*, p. 81.

²⁸ *Id.*, pp. 81-83.

²⁹ *Id.*, p. 81, italics added.

³⁰ *Id.*, p. 81.

³¹ Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963).

³² Wallace, p. 79, fn. 24.

³³ Zerwick, § 43, p. 16, italics added.

³⁴ Multiple English translations of the Bible including those referred to in this essay may be found at <https://biblehub.com/genesis/1-1.htm> and <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/1%20Thessalonians%205:5>.

and the dark (italics added) (also, the Worldwide English version, the Easy to Read Version, and the International Children's Bible).

Regarding not belonging to the "night," the NIV states: "You are all children of the light and children of the day. *We do not belong to the night* or to the darkness" (italics added); the New Living Translation: "For you are all children of the light and of the day; *we don't belong to darkness and night*" (italics added); the Amplified Bible: "for you are all sons of light and sons of day. *We do not belong to the night* nor to darkness" (also, the Berean Study Bible, the Christian Standard Bible, and International Standard Version (ISV); see also the translations in the immediately preceding paragraph).

1 Th. 5:8 describes the Thessalonian Christians as "of the day." That phrase is a translation of the Greek word *hemeras*³⁵ which, again, is in the genitive case.³⁶ The gravamen of the discussion about the descriptive genitive and possessive genitive applies here (without a head noun). The following English translations translate this as "belong to the day": the NIV, English Standard Version (ESV), Amplified Bible, Christian Standard Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible, Contemporary English Version, Good News Translation, God's Word Translation, ISV, New Heart English Bible, and World English Bible.

In sum, Paul teaches at 1 Th. 5:5 that the Thessalonian Christians are "sons of day"; that means they *belong to the "day."* He makes clear they "are not of the night," i.e., they *do not "belong to" the "night."* Verse eight reiterates that the Thessalonian Christians *belong to the "day."*

Paul's point is that the Thessalonian Christians will not experience the "day of the Lord" because the "day" (associated with spiritual light) and "night" (associated with spiritual darkness) of 1 Th. 5:5 and 8 are mutually exclusive periods; the Thessalonian Christians belong to the *period* of the "day"; and the fearful "day of the Lord" *comes only in the period of the "night."*

2 Tim. 3:16-17 (KJV) state:

"16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Paul's doctrinal teaching that because the Thessalonian Christians were "sons of day," they belonged to the "day" and thus would not be present during the "day of the Lord" because the "day of the Lord" occurs in the "night" is inspired Scriptural teaching applicable to every generation of Christians. Nothing in Scripture limits that teaching to apply only to the Thessalonian Christians. Thus, all Christians of every generation are "sons of day" and are "not of the night." *All Christians belong to the period of the "day"; they do not belong to the period of the "night."*

³⁵ Berry, p. 534.

³⁶ Friberg and Friberg, p. 626.

It follows that the “day” corresponds to the church age. In other words, *as long as Christians are on earth, it is the “day.”* Since the rapture ends the church age, the rapture ends the “day.” *This is the first reason that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.”* *Once the “day” ends, the “night” begins, and only then can the “day of the Lord” occur.* And since the “great tribulation” period and later Second Coming are part of the “day of the Lord,” the rapture precedes the “great tribulation” and Second Coming.

In 1 Th. 5:1-8, Paul utilizes the first person and second person to refer to Christians but the third person to refer to those impacted by the “day of the Lord.” This evidences that those so impacted are unbelievers. These facts corroborate that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” Those verses state:

“Now as to the periods and times, brothers *and sisters*, you have no need of *anything* to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction will come upon them like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers *and sisters*, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then, let’s not sleep as others do, but let’s be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of *the* day, let’s be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

(Underlining added.)

1 Th. 5:9 provides additional corroboration that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” As mentioned, the “day of the Lord” is a period of God’s *wrath*. But Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians at 1 Th. 5:9: “God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation.” (See also 1 Th. 1:10, referring to “Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come” and Rom. 5:9, “we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”) Finally, 1 Th. 5:11 provides corroboration; after Paul’s eschatological presentation, he directs: “Therefore, encourage (KJV: comfort) one another.” It would comfort the Thessalonian Christians to know that they would not experience the “day of the Lord.”

In this life we will never fully know the limitless extent to which God loves Christians. But we get a foretaste in His refusal to allow Christians to experience the “day of the Lord.”

IV. THE RAPTURE PRECEDES THE “DAY OF THE LORD” BECAUSE AS LONG AS CHRISTIANS ARE HERE, SATAN RESTRAINS, THROUGH “THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS,” THE REVELATION OF THE “MAN OF LAWLESSNESS,” AND THAT REVELATION PRECEDES THE “DAY OF THE LORD.”

A. 2 Th. 2:1-17.

2 Thess. 2:1-17 state:

1 Now we ask you, brothers *and sisters*, regarding the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 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. 3 No one is to deceive you in any way! For *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains *him* now, so that he will be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is removed. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will eliminate 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 false signs and wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers *and sisters* beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers *and sisters*, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

B. Preliminary Observations.

The “coming” at 2 Th. 2:1 is the “coming of the Lord” at 1 Th. 4:15 when He “descend[s] from heaven” (1 Th. 4:16). “Our gathering together to Him” at 2 Th. 2:1 is the rapture of 1 Th. 4:17. At 2 Th. 2:2, Paul mentions three forms of purported authoritative spiritual communication. Moreover, verse

two contains the phrase “day of the Lord” (NASB); however, the KJV uses the phrase “day of *Christ*.”³⁷ Manuscript evidence discovered after the 1611 publication of the KJV supports “day of the Lord” as the correct phrase.³⁸

Paul was warning the Thessalonian Christians to disregard any communication indicating that the “day of the Lord” had come. At 2 Th. 1:4, Paul referred to their “persecutions and afflictions”; at verse five, he acknowledged the Thessalonian Christians’ “suffering.” This suggests they were enduring such persecutions, afflictions, and suffering that they thought (erroneously) that they were experiencing the “day of the Lord” and God’s wrath. Furthermore, Paul wrote that he earlier had orally taught them that “the apostasy” and the revelation of the “man of lawlessness” would *precede* the “day of the Lord.” (2 Th. 2:1-3, 5.) This suggests the Thessalonian Christians thought they were experiencing those events as well.

C. “The Apostasy.”

1. *Its Meaning.*

The word “apostasy” at 2 Th. 2:3 is a translation of the Greek word “apostasia” (ἀποστασία).³⁹ It means “*rebellion, abandonment in relig[ious] sense, apostasy.*”⁴⁰

A form of apostasia is used in the New Testament only once other than at 2 Th. 2:3, i.e., at Acts 21:21.⁴¹ Acts 21:21 records that the apostle James (the half-brother of Jesus) told Paul that it had been reported (falsely) that Paul had been “teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to *abandon Moses*, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.” (Italics

³⁷ “Day of the Lord” in 2 Th. 2:2 (NASB) is a translation of the Greek phrase “hemera tou kuriou” (hemera [ἡμέρα: day] tou [τοῦ: of the] kuriou [κυρίου: Lord]). (Aland, et al., p. 715; Berry, p. 536.) “Day of Christ” (KJV) substitutes “cristou” (χριστοῦ) for kuriou and omits the article “the.” (Aland, et al., p. 715; Berry, p. 536.)

³⁸ Additional New Testament Greek manuscripts discovered after the 1611 publication of the KJV have led to the more recent Nestle-Aland Greek text of the New Testament. Numerous English translations of the New Testament are based on the Nestle-Aland text, including the NASB, NIV, New Living Translation, ESV, Amplified Bible, English Revised Version (ERV), and Good News Translation. See https://wiki.logos.com/Bible_Translation_Spectrum. The Nestle-Aland text employs hemera tou kuriou (“day of the Lord”) as the correct phrase. Footnote 37 in this essay cites to the Greek text reflected in Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (fn. 12 [same]); that text is the same as the Nestle-Aland text (26th ed.). (Aland, et al., pp. viii-ix.) Finally, wherever this essay quotes or cites to the Greek text of Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed., the current 28th ed. of the Nestle-Aland text is the same. <https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/novum-testamentum-graece-na-28/read-the-bible-text/>.

³⁹ Berry, p. 536.

⁴⁰ Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich; revised & augmtd. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) (BAGD), p. 98.

⁴¹ Wigram and Winter, p. 76.

added.) The Greek underlying “to abandon Moses” is “apostasian . . . apo Mōuseōs,”⁴² i.e., “apostasy [apostasian: ἀποστασίαν] . . . from [apo: ἀπό] Moses [Mōuseōs: Μωϋσέως].” Apostasian is a form of apostasia.”⁴³

The “apostasy from Moses” at Acts 21:21 involved *not* doing certain things, i.e., *not* circumcising children and *not* walking according to the customs.

2 Th. 2:10 and 2:12 provide evidence that there are three elements of “the apostasy” of 2 Th. 2:3. These apostates (1) “did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Th. 2:10), (2) “did not believe the truth” (2 Th. 2:12), but (3) “took pleasure in wickedness” (2 Th. 2:12).⁴⁴ The first two (like the apostasy of Acts 21:21) involve *not* doing certain things. Additionally, as discussed later, those who commit “the apostasy” will be unique. They will be the final worldwide group of people who fail to accept the love of the truth after having been given an opportunity to accept it, and this will lead to their believing the lies of the Antichrist.

The three elements of “the apostasy” are not located together in 2 Th. 2, but Paul wrote that chapter to Thessalonian Christians who, based on his previous oral teaching, were already familiar with his doctrine on “the apostasy.” If the above three elements do not describe “the apostasy” of 2 Th. 2:3, then (1) “the apostasy” is nowhere clearly explained in 2 Th. 2, (2) the three elements are not “*the* apostasy” even though they fit the definition of *an* apostasy from the truth of the Christian gospel, and (3) 2 Th. 2 nowhere distinguishes between, on the one hand, the three elements and, on the other, “*the* apostasy.”

⁴² Berry, p. 379. English uses its letter “o” to transliterate both the Greek letter “o” (omicron) and the Greek letter “ω” (omega). In this essay, the English letter “o” transliterates omicron and “ō” transliterates omega.

⁴³ Wigram and Winter, p. 76.

⁴⁴ It has been suggested that apostasia at 2 Th. 2:3 means “departure,” with the result that apostasia refers to the rapture. One problem is that apostasia does not bear the meaning “rapture” anywhere else in the New Testament. As discussed, Acts 21:21 is the only other New Testament verse in which apostasia is found, and there it means “abandon,” not “rapture.” Second, 1 Th. 4:17 refers to Christians being “caught up” (the rapture); Acts 8:39 to the fact that the Spirit of the Lord “snatched Philip away”; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4 to a man (Paul) being “caught up”; and Rev. 12:5 to a symbolic child being “caught up.” In each verse, “caught up” or “snatched . . . away” is a translation of a form of harpazo. (Wigram and Winter, p. 82.) These verses are the only New Testament verses referring to a person(s) being supernaturally “caught up” or snatched away. (Wigram and Winter, p. 82.) In each instance the person(s) is not the *actor* but the *object* of action. In 1 Th. 4:17; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4; and Rev. 12:5 in particular, the form of harpazo translated “caught up” is in the passive voice (Friberg and Friberg, pp. 626, 570, 571, 765, respectively), meaning the person(s) mentioned in each verse is the *object* of the action of being “caught up.” To make apostasia mean “departure” at 2 Th. 2:3 suggests Christians are the *actors* departing instead of the *objects* of the action of being “caught up” or “snatched . . . away.” Third, at 1 Th. 4:16-17: (1) the Lord descends from heaven and (2) Christians are raptured from the earth to meet Him. If the rapture is a “departure” of Christians from the earth, arguably the Lord’s descent is His “departure” from heaven. It is unclear why the Christians’ departure, and not the Lord’s departure, is deemed “the” apostasia. This essay maintains that (1) apostasia of 2 Th. 2:3 does not refer to the rapture, and (2) the rapture precedes “the apostasy.”

2. The Apostates Are Unbelievers And Have Never Been Christians.

As discussed below, those who commit “the apostasy” of 2 Th. 2:3 are unbelievers and have never been Christians. First, 2 Th. 2:10 teaches that the coming of the “man of lawlessness” will be “with all the deception of wickedness for those who *perish*, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.” (Italics added; the “man of lawlessness” is the “lawless one” (verse eight), i.e., the Antichrist; the Old Testament refers to him (Dan. 7:8, 20-21, 24-25; 8:9-12, 23-25; 9:26-27; 11:36-39).)

But Christians do not perish. Jn. 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him *will not perish*, but have eternal life.” (Italics added.) Jn. 10:27-28 record that Jesus said, “27 My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give them eternal life, and *they will never perish*.” (Italics added.) Paul declared at 1 Cor. 1:18, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to *those who are perishing*, but to *us* who are *being saved* it is the power of God.” (Italics added.) “Perish” in Jn. 3:16 and 10:28, and “perishing” in 1 Cor. 1:18, are each a form of the same Greek word “apollumi” (ἀπόλλυμι).⁴⁵

Second, 2 Th. 2:9-10 reveal that the coming of the “man of lawlessness” will be “9 . . . with all power and false signs and wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not *accept* the love of the truth so as to be saved.” (Italics added.) The phrase “they did not accept” is a translation of the Greek words “ouk edeksanto,”⁴⁶ i.e., “not [ouk: οὐκ] they accepted [edeksanto: ἐδέξαντο].” Edeksanto is a form of the Greek word “dechomai” (δέχομαι),⁴⁷ which here means “to receive, to receive gladly, to welcome.”⁴⁸ Accordingly, the NIV translates “ouk edeksanto” as “they refused”; the KJV, “they received not”; the Amplified Bible, “they did not welcome.”

But Christians have received, accepted, and welcomed the love of the truth. This is clearly implied at 1 Th. 1:6, where Paul described the Thessalonian Christians as “*having received* the word during great affliction *with the joy of the Holy Spirit*.” (Italics added.) The phrase “having received” is a translation of a form of dechomai, the same word a form of which is used at 2 Th. 2:10 above. Similarly, Paul told the Thessalonian Christians at 1 Th. 2:13 that “when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of *mere* men, but as what it really is, the word of God.” (Underlining added.) The word “accepted” is, again, a translation of a form of dechomai.⁴⁹

Those who “did not *accept* the love of the truth” (2 Th. 2:10, italics added) are *not* Christians who *accepted* the love of the truth and later *withdrew* that acceptance and became unbelievers. Those

⁴⁵ Wigram and Winter, p. 74.

⁴⁶ Berry, p. 537.

⁴⁷ Wigram and Winter, p. 137.

⁴⁸ Rienecker and Rogers, p. 610.

⁴⁹ Wigram and Winter, p. 137.

who “did not *accept* the love of the truth” *never accepted that love in the first place*; they were never Christians.

Third, Paul teaches that those who perish “did not accept the love of the truth so as to be *saved*.” (2 Th. 2:10, italics added.) But Christians are saved. They are those who “accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.” Paul made clear at 1 Th. 5:9 that God has destined Christians “for obtaining *salvation*.” (Italics added.) He wrote at 2 Th. 2:13 that God has chosen Christians “for salvation.” Paul explains at 1 Cor. 1:18 concerning the word of the cross that “to *us* who are being *saved* [i.e., Christians] it is the power of God.” (Italics added.) Paul informs the Ephesian Christians at Eph. 2:5 that “by grace you have been *saved*” (italics added) and at Eph. 2:8, “by grace you have been *saved* through faith” (italics added).

Fourth, again, 2 Th. 2:10 says those who perish “did not accept the love of the truth so as to *be saved*.” (Italics added.) This implies they *had not yet been saved*. It does not imply that they once *had been* saved but later were not saved. They were never Christians.

Fifth, Paul maintains that those to be judged “did not believe the truth.” (2 Th. 2:12.) But Christians believe the truth. Paul affirms at 2 Th. 2:13 that God chose Christians for salvation “through . . . *faith in the truth*.” (Italics added; KJV: “belief of the truth.”)

Paul does not say at 2 Th. 2:12 that those to be judged “*once believed the truth but later* did not believe the truth.” He does not say they “*once refrained from wickedness but later* took pleasure in wickedness.” The apostates of 2 Th. 2:3 are unbelievers and were never Christians.

It may very well be that some of those who commit “the apostasy” will have *claimed* before the rapture that they were Christians even though their belief (if they had one) in Christ before the rapture was exclusively mental and not from the heart. In fact, however, these were not Christians before the rapture; Paul proclaimed at Rom. 10:9 and 10: “9 . . . if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart *a person* believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Underlining added.)

D. The “Man Of Lawlessness.”

Paul references the revelation of the “man of lawlessness” at 2 Th. 2:3. “Lawlessness” is a translation of the Greek word “*anomias*” (ἀνομία).⁵⁰ It means “to behave with complete disregard for the laws or regulations of a society – ‘to live lawlessly, lawlessness, lawless living.’”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Berry, p. 537. Some Greek manuscripts substitute the word “*amartias*” (amartiaς: sin) for *anomias*. Berry, p. 537; Aland, et al., p. 715. This results in the translation “man of sin” (e.g., KJV).

⁵¹ Louw and Nida, vol. 1, § 88.139, p. 758.

At 2 Th. 2:4 and verses 8-10, Paul gives additional facts about the Antichrist's path to destruction. Paul identifies three phases in that path, but not in chronological order; he writes to Thessalonian Christians who are already familiar with his teaching on those issues. In chronological order, the first phase is the "coming" (2 Th. 2:9) and concurrent "revelation" (2 Th. 2:6 and 8) of the Antichrist. Verses nine and ten declare concerning that phase that the Antichrist's "coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness." The Antichrist's *coming* with these will constitute an unmistakable *revelation* of him.

2 Th. 2:4 identifies the second phase. That verse records that the Antichrist "opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." This echoes the description of the Antichrist in Daniel 11:36, which states, "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt himself and boast against every god and will speak dreadful things against the God of gods." (See similar descriptions of the Antichrist as the boasting "little horn" (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20-21, 24-25) and self-exalting "small horn" (Dan. 8:9-12, 23-25).)

A brief summary of the pertinent portion of Daniel 9:24-27 is particularly relevant to 2 Th. 2:4. Dan. 9:20, 24-27 reveal that the angel Gabriel told Daniel that 70 weeks of years, i.e., 490 years, "have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the wrongdoing, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place." According to Gabriel, at the end of 69 of those weeks of years (483 years) after the issuance of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the Messiah would come. (This happened with Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Psa. 118:22-26; Lk. 19:28-42).)

The remaining "one week" (Dan. 9:27) is a week of years, i.e., seven years. This seven-year period has yet to come. (As discussed below, this seven-year period begins sometime after the rapture.) Dan. 9:27 teaches concerning the Antichrist and this week that "*he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come the one who makes desolate.*" (Italics added.) That is, the Antichrist will confirm a covenant with many for seven years. However, in the middle of the week, i.e., three and one half years after he has confirmed the covenant, he will break it and stop the Jewish sacrifice and grain offering rituals.

The events of 2 Th. 2:4 will happen in the middle of the "one week." (They are contemporaneous with the setting up of the "abomination of desolation" referred to at Dan. 12:11 and Mt. 24:15.)

In the third phase of the Antichrist's path to destruction, the Lord returns during His Second Coming and, simply put, makes short work of the Antichrist. 2 Th. 2:8 thus refers to the Antichrist as one "whom the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming."

E. “The Mystery Of Lawlessness . . . At Work” Is “What Restrains.”

2 Th. 2:6 states, “And you know what restrains *him* now, so that he will be revealed in his time.” (Underlining added.) “What restrains” is a translation of the Greek words “to katechon” (τὸ κατέχων),⁵² i.e., “to [that which] katechon [restrains].”⁵³

“Katechon” is a Greek participle.⁵⁴ A Greek participle is a verbal adjective.⁵⁵ Katechon is a form of katechō (κατέχω),⁵⁶ which means “to prevent someone from doing something by restraining or hindering—to prevent, to hinder, to restrain, to keep from.”⁵⁷ Katechon is neuter in gender,⁵⁸ with the result that it is translated “*what* restrains.” It is also singular in number.⁵⁹ Additionally, katechon is a present tense word in Greek. Wallace notes this tense “is sometimes called *progressive*: It ‘basically represents an activity *as in process (or in progress)*.’”⁶⁰ Dana and Mantey state, “The fundamental significance of the present tense is the idea of progress.”⁶¹

Finally, katechon has an article: “τὸ.” Like katechon, “τὸ” is neuter and singular.⁶² The “article is able to turn just about any part of speech into a noun and, therefore, a concept.”⁶³ Wallace gives as an example: “‘poor’ expresses a quality, but the addition of an article turns it into an entity, ‘the poor.’”⁶⁴ Dana and Mantey say the function of an article “is to point out an object or to draw attention to it.”⁶⁵

2 Th. 2:7 reads in part, “*For* the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” (Italics added.) “For” indicates that this verse explains verse six. Unger’s Bible Dictionary comments, “The N. T. use of the term ‘mystery’ has reference to some operation or plan of God hitherto unrevealed. It does not carry the idea of a secret to be withheld, but to be published (1 Cor. 4:1).”⁶⁶

⁵² Berry, p. 537.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.

⁵⁵ Wallace, p. 613.

⁵⁶ Wigram and Winter, p. 417.

⁵⁷ Louw and Nida, vol 1, § 13.150, p. 165.

⁵⁸ Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Wallace, p. 514, footnote omitted.

⁶¹ Dana and Mantey, p. 181. The above discusses the basic or fundamental significance of the Greek present tense; interpretation of that tense involves consideration of multiple factors including recognized categories of the Greek present tense. (Wallace, pp. 516-539; Dana & Mantey, pp. 182-186.)

⁶² Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.

⁶³ Wallace, p. 209.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Dana and Mantey, p. 137.

⁶⁶ Unger’s Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979 (29th prtg.), “Mystery,” p. 769.

The phrase “the mystery” in 2 Th. 2:7 is a translation of the Greek words “to . . . musterion” (“τὸ . . . μυστήριον”).⁶⁷ Like katechon in verse six, musterion is neuter in gender and singular in number.⁶⁸ Like katechon, musterion is preceded by an article, “to” (“τὸ”), indicating “to . . . musterion” is a concept.

The phrase “is . . . at work” in 2 Th. 2:7 is a translation of the Greek word “energeitai” (ἐνεργεῖται: “is working”).⁶⁹ As mentioned, katechon is a participle (a *verbal* adjective); energeitai is a *verb*.⁷⁰ Katechon and energeitai indicate action. Katechon is in the Greek present tense; so is energeitai.⁷¹ Katechon is singular in number; this is true of energeitai as well.⁷²

The above mentioned grammatical parallels between “to katechon” (“what restrains”) in 2 Th. 2:6 and “to . . . musterion” “energeitai” (“the mystery of lawlessness . . . is . . . at work”) in verse seven provide persuasive evidence that “what restrains” at verse six is “the mystery of lawlessness” “at work” at verse seven. In other words, “the mystery of lawlessness” works by restraining or hindering the revelation of the “man of lawlessness.”

If “what restrains” is not “the mystery of lawlessness” “at work,” then one must reject the above grammatical and contextual evidence to the contrary; beyond that, one must conclude that “what restrains” is connected to another concept nowhere expressly identified in 2 Th. 2:6 or 7.⁷³ Furthermore, verse seven, which begins with the word “For,” explains verse six. If “the mystery of lawlessness” “at work” at verse seven is not “what restrains” at verse six, it is unclear how “the mystery of lawlessness” “at work” in 2 Th. 2:7 is part of an explanation of verse six.

“The mystery of lawlessness” was “already at work” (2 Th. 2:7) *in Paul’s day*. Additionally, that mystery *presently* “restrains” “so that he [“the man of lawlessness”] *will* be revealed in his time.” (2 Th. 2:6, italics added.) It follows that *as long as Christians are here on earth*, “the mystery of lawlessness” *is working*. Therefore, the church cannot be here when the “man of lawlessness” is revealed, because as long as the church is here, “the mystery of lawlessness” hinders his *revelation*. *This means the rapture precedes the revelation of the “man of lawlessness.”*

Finally, the “mystery of lawlessness” hinders the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and that revelation occurs after the rapture. It follows that the “mystery of lawlessness” is hindering that revelation when the rapture occurs and continues to hinder that revelation after the rapture. Indeed,

⁶⁷ Berry, p. 537.

⁶⁸ Friberg and Friberg, p. 631.

⁶⁹ Berry, p. 537.

⁷⁰ Friberg and Friberg, p. 631.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ For example, a common teaching is that “what restrains” is, e.g., the Holy Spirit and/or the church. Unlike “the mystery of lawlessness,” neither the “Holy Spirit” nor the “church” is expressly identified in 2 Th. 2:6-7.

because “the apostasy comes *first*, and the man of lawlessness is revealed” (2 Th. 2:3), the “mystery of lawlessness” is hindering the revelation of the “man of lawlessness” at the time of “the apostasy.” The “mystery of lawlessness” no longer hinders when the “man of lawlessness” is revealed.⁷⁴

F. Satan Is “He Who Now Restrains . . . Until He Is Removed.”

1. Preliminary Observations.

2 Th. 2:6-8 read, “6 And you know what restrains *him* now, so that he will be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is removed. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed.” (Underlining added.)

At 2 Th. 2:7 in the NASB above, “He” is found twice with a capital “H,” implying that “He” refers to God or a member of the Trinity such as the Holy Spirit. However, this is an NASB interpretation. Nothing in the appearance of the Greek text of 2 Th. 2:7 supports capitalizing “H” while leaving “e” in lower case.⁷⁵ Thus, the ESV states, “Only *he* who now restrains it will do so until *he* is out of the way.” (Italics added.) The KJV reads, “he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” (Underlining added.) (“Letteth” is Elizabethan English for “hinder”; e.g., in tennis a “let ball” is hindered by the net.) In fact, as discussed below, the Greek there can properly be translated “one” instead of “he.” Accordingly, the NIV says, “*the one* who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.” (Italics added.) This essay therefore modifies the NASB to read:

“6 And you know what restrains him now, so that he will be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only *he* who now restrains will do so until *he* is removed. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed.”

2 Th. 2:7 refers to “he who . . . restrains.” (NASB modified.) The underlying Greek phrase is simply “ho katechōn” (ὁ κατέχων). Katechon in verse six and katechōn in verse seven are forms of the Greek verb katechō (κατέχω).⁷⁶ As mentioned, katechō means “to prevent someone from doing something by restraining, or hindering—‘to prevent, to hinder, to restrain, to keep from.’”⁷⁷ “To katechon” in verse six means “what restrains”; “ho katechōn” in verse seven means “he who . . . restrains”⁷⁸ or “one who is restraining.”⁷⁹ Katechōn is masculine in gender.⁸⁰ Accordingly, the NIV, KJV,

⁷⁴ Since “the mystery of lawlessness” “is . . . at work” during the church age and “the apostasy,” this evidences that that mystery is associated with (1) the failure of unbelievers to accept the Christian gospel during the church age and (2) “the apostasy.”

⁷⁵ Aland, et al., p. 716; Berry, p. 537.

⁷⁶ Wigram and Winter, p. 417.

⁷⁷ Louw and Nida, vol. 1, § 13.150, p. 165.

⁷⁸ Berry, p. 537.

⁷⁹ Wallace, p. 621.

⁸⁰ Friberg and Friberg, p. 631.

and ESV translate it with the masculine pronoun, “he.” Katechōn is also singular in number.⁸¹ Katechōn has an article: “ὁ.”⁸² This makes katechōn (like “the mystery”) a concept.

2. Evidence That Satan Is The Restraining Person.

The following facts point to Satan, referred to at 2 Th. 2:9, as being the hindering or restraining person of 2 Th. 2:7.

a. Grammatical parallels.

First, the word “Satan” at 2 Th. 2:9 is a translation of the Greek words “tou Satana” (του [of the] Σατανα [Satan]).⁸³ (The phrase “of the” before “Satan” is normally omitted from English translations of 2 Th. 2:9.) Like both words in “ho katechōn” of verse seven, both words in “tou Satana” are masculine in gender and singular in number.⁸⁴ Both phrases have an article, indicating they are concepts. *Importantly, a review of all masculine, singular terms in 2 Th. 2 before and after “ho katechōn” of verse seven demonstrates that, except for “tou Satana” (Satan), none can persuasively be ho katechōn (“he who . . . restrains” or “one who is restraining”).*⁸⁵

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Berry, p. 537.

⁸⁴ Friberg and Friberg, p. 631.

⁸⁵ For example, the nearest masculine singular term *before* “ho katechōn” is “tō . . . kairō” (το: τῷ [the] . . . kairō: καιρῷ [time]) at 2 Th. 2:6. (Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.) At 2 Th. 2:6, this term is translated “time” (without the article “the”) in the NASB and KJV. However, first, “ho katechōn,” as mentioned, is properly translated “one who is restraining” or, as in the modified NASB, “he who . . . restrains.” But “time” is a period, not a person. Second, in context, “time” in verse six relates to when the Antichrist is “revealed,” not when his revelation is restrained. Third, if “time” were restraining, the revelation of the Antichrist could not occur until time ended.

The next nearest masculine singular term before “ho katechōn” is the Greek participle “ōn” (ὢν) at 2 Th. 2:5 (Friberg and Friberg, p. 630), translated “was” by the NASB, and “being” by the Literal Standard Version (“yet *being* with you”) and Young’s Literal Translation (“*being* yet with you”). However, it makes no sense to say that “was” or “being” restrains. Nor as a matter of context is it clear how the fact that Paul “was” with the Thessalonian Christians, or “being” with them—2,000 years ago—*presently* “restrains.”

The next nearest masculine singular term before “ho katechōn” is theos (Θεός: God) at 2 Th. 2:4. (Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.) However, first, at 2 Th. 2:4, God is not acting (restraining or otherwise); the Antichrist is the actor by displaying himself as being God. Second, as discussed, the Antichrist so acts *during* the middle of Daniel’s “one week.” However, “ho katechōn” is a restraining occurring *prior* to the “one week,” i.e., “he who . . . restrains” restrains the revelation and *coming* of the Antichrist who makes the “one week” covenant. Third, if God were “he who . . . restrains,” it would mean that God Himself could be, according to 2 Th. 2:7, “removed,” “taken out of the way” (KJV, NIV), or “out of the way” (ESV).

The nearest masculine singular term *after* “ho katechōn” at 2 Th. 2:7 is “ho anomos” (ὁ ἄνομος: the lawless [one]) at 2 Th. 2:8. (Friberg and Friberg, p. 631.) This is the Antichrist. However, if the Antichrist were “he who . . . restrains” and the restraining has been happening since Paul’s day, it would mean that the Antichrist, a

b. Context.

Second, identifying Satan as “he who . . . restrains” is supported by the context. If Satan is “he who . . . restrains” according to 2 Th. 2:7, he is also later “removed,” “taken out of the way” (KJV, NIV), or “out of the way (ESV)” according to 2 Th. 2:7. If Satan is the person “removed,” context reflects a relationship of *immediacy* between (1) the timing of Satan’s removal and (2) Satan’s active role in the coming of the Antichrist. This is so because once Satan no longer hinders the coming of the Antichrist because Satan has been *removed*, Satan immediately shifts his strategy. He *empowers* the coming of the Antichrist; his “*coming* is in accord with *the activity of Satan*, with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness.” (2 Th. 2:9-10.) (This is comparable to a later event: after a battle, Satan will be *removed* from heaven (Rev. 12:7-9); this will enable the “beast” to come out of the sea (Rev. 13:1); and Satan will then *empower* the beast (Rev. 13:2).)

c. Biblical examples of hindering resistance by evil angels.

(1) *Old Testament examples.*

Third, as discussed below, Satan and/or evil angels historically have hindered the fulfillment of God’s end-time plan that His kingdom be established. God allows evil angels to rule temporarily in supernatural realms over earthly kingdoms. These angels resist godly forces such as good angels. By this *resistance*, evil angels *hinder* the fulfillment of some part of God’s end-time plan that will be fulfilled once the resistance is overcome.

One way evil angels hinder the fulfillment of God’s plan is through a *succession* of evil angels, each of whom God allows to rule temporarily in supernatural realms over earthly kingdoms, and each of whom later unsuccessfully resists *removal by godly forces* (Christ and/or good angels). By this

human being, has been restraining or hindering for the last 2,000 years. It would also mean that he will continue to restrain “until he is *removed*” (verse seven) and then he “will be *revealed*” (verse eight).

The next nearest masculine singular term after “ho katechōn” is “ho kurios” (ὁ κύριος: the Lord) at 2 Th. 2:8. (Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.) However, if the Lord were “he who . . . restrains,” it would mean that the Lord Himself could be, according to 2 Th. 2:7, “removed,” “taken out of the way” (KJV, NIV), or “out of the way” (ESV). Additionally, in context and as a matter of timing, “the Lord” at 2 Th. 2:8 is *slaying* the Antichrist, while “he who . . . restrains” is restraining the *coming* of the Antichrist years before.

The next nearest masculine singular term after “ho katechōn” is “ou” (οὗ: “whose”) at 2 Th. 2:9. (Friberg and Friberg, p. 630.) “Whose” is part of the phrase “whose coming” and refers to the coming of the Antichrist. This essay addressed above the problems with the Antichrist being “he who . . . restrains.”

Additionally, identification of “time,” “being,” “God,” “the lawless one,” “the Lord,” or “whose” as the restrainer does not address the below discussed role of evil angels as restrainers. Finally, katechōn at 2 Th. 2:7 is preceded by the article “ho.” “Being,” “God,” and “whose” discussed above have no article. One cannot assert that “he who . . . restrains” at 2 Th. 2:7 refers to a particular term simply because it is in the masculine singular. A review of all masculine singular terms in 2 Th. 2 before and after “ho katechōn” provides persuasive evidence that that phrase refers to the action of Satan.

resistance, each predecessor evil angel hinders the coming of his successor, because the latter cannot come until the predecessor is removed. Therefore, this hindering is not godly forces hindering the coming of the successor evil angel. Nor is it a predecessor evil angel fighting his successor to hinder the latter from coming. However, once the predecessor is removed by godly forces, the successor will come to power. The coming of the successor evil angel leads to a transition from the earthly kingdom over which the predecessor evil angel ruled to the earthly kingdom over which the successor will rule.

A brief summary of certain pertinent end-time events shows this. Daniel 2 reflects that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Dan. 1:1) dreamed about a statue. It had five sections, i.e., its: (1) head, (2) chest and arms, (3) belly and thighs, (4) legs, and (5) feet. (Dan. 2:32-33.) The five sections represented five successive kingdoms. Daniel expressly referred to Nebuchadnezzar as the head, and expressly referred to his kingdom. (Dan. 2:37-38.) Daniel also said that “after you [Nebuchadnezzar] another kingdom will arise inferior to you” (Dan. 2:39), “then another third kingdom” (Dan. 2:39), “a fourth kingdom” (Dan. 2:40), and finally “a divided kingdom” (Dan. 2:41). During the end-time these kingdoms would also concurrently exist. (Dan. 2:35, 44-45.) A stone struck the feet (not the legs), resulting in the destruction of the statue. (Dan. 2:34-35.) The stone became a mountain that filled the earth. (Dan. 2:35.) The stone represented a kingdom that God would establish, that would crush and end “all these kingdoms,” and that would endure forever (Dan. 2:44).

The second and third kingdoms represented by the statue are identified by a succession of kingdoms recorded in Daniel. Daniel 5 shows that the second kingdom (“another kingdom . . . inferior to you”; Dan. 2:39) was the Medo-Persian kingdom. In particular, during the reign of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s son (Dan. 5:1-2), the Babylonian kingdom fell to the Medo-Persian kingdom. (Dan. 5:28, 31 (“Darius the Mede”); 6:28 (“Cyrus the Persian”).)

The “third kingdom” (Dan. 2:39) was the kingdom of Greece, as Dan. 8 demonstrates. Dan. 8 records that Daniel had a dream about a goat striking and defeating a ram that had two horns. (Dan. 8:5-7.) The ram represented “the kings of Media and Persia” (Dan. 8:20). The goat represented “the kingdom of Greece.” (Dan. 8:21.)

Daniel 10 records a battle between godly forces and evil angels. Dan. 10 teaches that during the days of “Cyrus king of Persia” (Dan. 10:1), Daniel saw in a “vision” a “man” (Dan. 10:5, 7) who was a powerful, supernatural agent of God. (Dan. 10:5-9.)⁸⁶ God had sent the man to Daniel but it had taken the man 21 days to get to Daniel (Dan. 10:11, 13). The man was delayed because, according to the man,

⁸⁶ Dan. 10:5-9 read: “5 . . . behold, there was a man dressed in linen, whose waist had a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. 6 His body also was like topaz, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. 7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great fear fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. 8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my complexion turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. 9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.”

“the prince of the kingdom of Persia was standing in my way for twenty-one days.” (Dan. 10:13.) God had sent the man to Daniel to deliver to him a prophecy about the future of Daniel’s people (Dan. 10:14), the Jews. Given the powerful, supernatural nature of the “man,” if the “prince of Persia” (Dan. 10:20) withstood him for 21 days, the “prince of Persia” himself was obviously not a man but a supernatural being.

In fact, the “prince of Persia” was an evil angel who was a prince in the supernatural realms that governed the earthly kingdom of Persia. For example, the Scripture refers to “Michael the archangel” (Jude 9). This is the Michael referred to at Dan. 10:13, where the “man” tells Daniel that “Michael, one of the chief *princes*, came to help me.” (Italics added.) The man, speaking to Daniel, also referred to Michael as “your prince” (Dan. 10:21) and “the great *prince* who stands *guard* over the sons of your people” (Dan. 12:1, first italics added). So too, the “prince of Persia” is an angel, but an evil one. For example, *The Interpreter’s Bible*⁸⁷ (which treats the “man” as a godly angel) observes, “the angel explains that for twenty-one days he had been hindered from coming by the opposition of *the angel patron of Persia*.”⁸⁸

This leads to the key point: the powerful man tells Daniel at Dan. 10:20, “Do you understand why I came to you? *But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia*; so I am leaving, and behold, *the prince of Greece is about to come*.” (Italics added.) The man thus indicated to Daniel that the man had to fight against a predecessor evil angel, the “prince of Persia,” then the “prince of Greece,” the successor evil angel, would come. (See, e.g., *The Interpreter’s Bible*: “The angel of Persia is thus ‘going off’ that the angel of Greece may ‘come on’.”)⁸⁹ The man told this to Daniel in “the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (Dan. 10:1), about 536 B.C.⁹⁰ The earthly Medo-Persian kingdom later fell to the earthly kingdom of Greece in about 330 B.C.⁹¹

In sum, the “prince of Persia,” a predecessor evil angel, hindered the coming of his successor evil angel, the “prince of Greece.” The hindering was the resistance of the “prince of Persia” to the efforts of godly forces (the powerful man) to remove him. This resistance hindered because the “prince of Greece” could not come until godly forces removed the “prince of Persia” but, once he was removed by a battle, the “prince of Greece” would come. His coming had to occur before a particular eschatological event in God’s plan could happen on earth: the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Greece. The transition in supernatural realms from the “prince of Persia” to the “prince of Greece,” corresponded to the later transition from the earthly Medo-Persian kingdom to the earthly kingdom of Greece.

Additionally, as mentioned, prior to the transition from the earthly Medo-Persian kingdom to the earthly kingdom of Greece, there was a transition from the earthly Babylonian kingdom to the

⁸⁷ *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 6 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956).

⁸⁸ *Id.*, p. 506 (italics added).

⁸⁹ *Id.*, p. 510.

⁹⁰ Unger’s, “Cyrus,” p. 233; Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

⁹¹ *Id.*, “Media,” pp. 707-708. The Medo-Persian kingdom fell to Alexander the Great. (*Ibid.*)

earthly Medo-Persian kingdom. And there is evidence of a battle between godly forces and evil angels that led to the establishment of the earthly Medo-Persian kingdom. In Dan. 10:21 through 11:1, the “man” refers to Michael when the man says to Daniel, “In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be of assistance and a protection for him [Michael].” (Italics added.) One well-known commentary (which treats the man as the Divine “angel of the Lord”) says concerning Dan. 11:1:

“The thought of the verse is accordingly the following: ‘In the first year of Darius the Mede, *Michael* effected this, that Babylon, which was hostile to the people of God, was overthrown by the power of Medo-Persia, in doing which *the Angel of the Lord* rendered to *him* powerful help.’”⁹²

(2) *New Testament example.*

The Old Testament is not the only place where evidence such as that discussed above may be found in the Bible. Rev. 12:7-12 provide:

“7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they did not prevail, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, the one who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.’⁹³ 12 For this reason, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great wrath, knowing that he has *only a short time.*”

(Underlining added.)

The Antichrist will confirm the seven-year covenant. The last three and one half years of that period is repeatedly referred to in Scripture. (Dan. 7:25, 12:7; Rev. 12:14 (three and one half “times” or years); Rev. 11:2 (42 months (30 days each)); Rev. 11:3, 12:6 (1,260 days).) It will be a period of “great tribulation” (Mt. 24:21) unparalleled in human history. After the commencement of the seven-year period but shortly before its last three and one half years, Satan will be thrown down to the earth. Rev. 12:7-9 recount that Satan has been thrown down.

⁹² Daniel 11 Keil and Delitzsch OT Commentary (biblehub.com), italics added.

⁹³ This refers to people who first become saved believers after the rapture. As discussed, Christians have already been raptured.

Next comes Rev. 13. At Rev. 13:1, John states, “And *the dragon* stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea.” Just as the dragon, a kind of beast, symbolizes an evil angel (Satan; Rev. 12:9), the beast of Rev. 13:1 symbolizes another evil angel. *Importantly, it is only after Satan, an evil angel, is thrown down to the earth, having unsuccessfully resisted the godly forces of Michael and his angels, that a successor evil angel, the beast, comes up out of the sea.* Satan’s resistance *hindered* the beast coming up out of the sea, but the beast came up once Satan was thrown down. This beast is Satan’s successor; Rev. 13:2 states that “the dragon gave him [the beast] his power and his throne and great authority.” The beast will rule in supernatural realms over Antichrist’s earthly kingdom during the last three and one half years of the seven-year period of the covenant.

Furthermore, the fact that Satan was thrown down from heaven at Rev. 12 will lead to a later transition from the earthly kingdom of the Antichrist to the earthly millennial kingdom of Christ. At Rev. 19, the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies assemble to make war against Christ. (Rev. 19:19.) The beast is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), ending the Antichrist’s earthly empire. After an angel throws Satan into an abyss, Christ’s earthly millennial kingdom begins. (Rev. 20:1-4, 6.)

d. Conclusion.

The above discussion provides evidence that “he who . . . restrains” at 2 Th. 2:7 is Satan, and that that verse reflects another instance in which an evil angel (Satan) resists godly forces and thereby hinders the fulfillment of an earthly event (the revelation of the “man of lawlessness”) that will occur when the resistance is overcome (although 2 Th. 2:7 does not discuss a *succession* of evil angels). The above, considered with 2 Th. 2:6, also provides evidence that *Satan hinders by means of “the mystery of lawlessness”* and as long as that “mystery” hinders, Satan hinders through it.

3. Evidence That Satan Is “Removed.”

Several facts then point to Satan being he who is “removed.” (2 Th. 2:7.) First, if Satan is “he who . . . restrains” as shown above, he is necessarily he who is later “removed.” Second, Satan being “he” who is “removed,” provides a clear contextual explanation for the immediacy with which he then empowers the coming of the Antichrist. The empowering is an immediate strategy shift by Satan. Third, the reference in Dan. 10 to the removal of the prince of Persia, and Rev. 12’s account of the future removal of Satan himself from heaven, exemplify the removal of evil angels.

4. Evidence That Satan Is Removed By A Battle.

There is also Scriptural evidence that Satan is “removed” at 2 Th. 2:7 pursuant to a battle between godly forces and Satan. First, during the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15), “*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 will rise first.*” (Italics added.) And this rising of the “dead in Christ” is associated with a “last trumpet.” For Paul tells the Corinthian Christians at 1 Cor. 15:51-52:

“51 Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

(Italics added.)

The “Lord Himself” descends with a “shout,” “the voice of the archangel,” and the “trumpet of God.” This essay already has highlighted the role of angels in supernatural battles. The “dead in Christ” rise with the “last trumpet.” These facts not only are associated with the “coming of the Lord” and the rapture but suggest a supernatural battle between godly forces and Satan.

Moreover, 1 Th. 4:17 teaches that Christians will meet the Lord in the “air.” Eph. 2:2 evidences that Satan is the “prince of the power of the air.” (Eph. 2:2.) If so, the Lord descends into Satanic territory for Christians to meet Him there. Further, a victory then occurs, for 1 Cor. 15:54 proclaims concerning the resurrection of Christians, “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in *victory*.” (Italics added.) The Lord’s entry into enemy territory and the resulting *victory* suggest a battle. The totality of the above facts supports a reasonable conclusion that Satan is “removed” at 2 Th. 2:7 pursuant to a battle between godly forces (the Lord Himself and/or an archangel) and Satan.

A comparison of (1) “the coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) and the rapture with (2) the Old Testament battle of Jericho is illuminating and further supports an inference that Satan is “removed” at 2 Th. 2:7 pursuant to a battle. Joshua 6 records that, under Joshua’s leadership, the priests and people marched and circled Jericho once daily for six days while the priests blew trumpets and the people remained silent. On the seventh day, the priests and people circled in this fashion seven times. However, the people were told that the seventh time, i.e., the last time, the priests would blow their trumpets, the people would shout, the city wall would fall, and the people would go up. (Josh. 6:3-5, 15-16.) This happened as recited at Josh. 6:20:

“So the people shouted, and the priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, everyone straight ahead, and they took the city.”

(Italics added.) The people “utterly destroyed everything in the city.” (Josh. 6:21.)

Events of the Jericho battle support a conclusion that Satan is “removed” at 2 Th. 2:7 pursuant to a battle between godly forces and Satan. First, Joshua was the leader at Josh. 6. Jesus is the leader at 1 Th. 4:13-18, and “Jesus” is a translation of a Greek word that is a translation of a form of the Hebrew word translated “Joshua.”⁹⁴

⁹⁴ BAGD, p. 373.

Second, the Jericho battle involved a great “shout” and trumpets; the events associated with the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) involve a “shout” and the “trumpet of God.” Third, during the Jericho battle, priests blew trumpets. The Lord is the Christians’ High Priest (Heb. 3:1, 6:20) and His “coming” (1 Th. 4:15) is associated with the “trumpet of God.” (1 Th. 4:16.)

Fourth, during the Jericho battle, on the seventh day the priests blew the trumpets seven times. The seventh time, i.e., the *last* time, the people would hear “the sound of the trumpet.” (Josh. 6:5, 20.) To that extent, they heard the last trumpet. A “last trumpet” will sound during the rapture as well. (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Th. 4:16.)

Fifth, at Jericho, trumpets were associated with entry into enemy territory: Jericho. During the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15), a “trumpet of God” is associated with the entry of the Lord (and Christians) into enemy territory: the “air.” (1 Th. 4:17.)

Finally, during the Jericho battle, the last trumpet blew and the people went “up” into Jericho; at 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Th. 4:16-17, the “last trumpet” is blown and Christians are “caught up” into the air.

This is not to say that the Jericho battle is a type or symbol of the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) and rapture. However, the parallels and above discussion support a reasonable conclusion that, just as there was a battle at Jericho, a supernatural battle leads to the removal of Satan at 2 Th. 2:7.⁹⁵

G. Conclusion.

2 Th. 2:3 teaches that the “day of the Lord” “will not come unless . . . the man of lawlessness is revealed.” This essay has shown that (1) Satan, through “the mystery of lawlessness,” hinders the revelation of the “man of lawlessness” and (2) as long as Christians are here, that hindering continues. If Christians must be gone before the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” then the rapture must precede that revelation. If the rapture precedes the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and that revelation precedes the “day of the Lord,” then the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” *This provides a second reason the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.”* And because the “great tribulation” period and Second Coming are part of the “day of the Lord,” the rapture precedes the “great tribulation” and Second Coming. The members of the Trinity simply view Christians as too precious to allow them to be present when the Antichrist comes.

⁹⁵ If Satan is “removed” at 2 Th. 2:7 but not pursuant to a battle, neither 1 Th. 4 and 5, nor 2 Th. 2 provides information as to how. Finally, after the rapture, events leading to the Second Coming will occur quickly. Jesus repeatedly said He is “coming quickly” (Rev. 3:11, 22:12, 20) and the Scripture states, “He who is coming will come, and will not delay.” (Heb. 10:37.) There will therefore be a short time between the rapture and the “removal” (1 Th. 2:7) of Satan.

V. THE RAPTURE PRECEDES THE “DAY OF THE LORD” BECAUSE AS LONG AS CHRISTIANS ARE HERE, “THE APOSTASY COMES,” THAT IS, “THE APOSTASY” HAS NOT YET OCCURRED, AND “THE APOSTASY” PRECEDES THE “DAY OF THE LORD.”

2 Th. 2:3 states, “the apostasy *comes*.” That is, as of the time that Paul was writing, “the apostasy” *had not yet occurred*; it was a *future* event.

Paul not only *wrote* that “the apostasy comes,” but he stressed that earlier he *had orally told* the Thessalonian Christians that “the apostasy comes.” For the reasons discussed below, when Paul orally taught the Thessalonian Christians that “the apostasy comes,” he was teaching them unchanging *doctrine* that applied to them and all Christians throughout the church age.

First, after referring at 2 Th. 2:3 to the fact that the “day of the Lord” “will not come unless the apostasy comes” and after referring to other related matters at verse four, Paul asked at 2 Th. 2:5, “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I *was* telling you these things?” (Italics added.) “Was” shows that when Paul had been with the Thessalonian Christians in the past, he had orally told them about certain things, one of them being: “the apostasy comes.”

This is important because Paul’s question was also, “*Do you not remember* that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?” (Italics added.) By his question, Paul also focused the Thessalonian Christians’ attention exclusively on what he *had orally told them in the past*, including “the apostasy comes.” In other words, Paul’s question confirmed to the Thessalonian Christians that what he had orally told them *controlled*: “the apostasy comes.” Paul was necessarily excluding consideration of anything else to the extent it conflicted with what he had orally told them. This included any purported authoritative spiritual communication as well as the very real suffering that the Thessalonian Christians were enduring. The decisive criterion that the Thessalonian Christians were to employ whenever they were confronted with the issue of whether they were experiencing “the apostasy” was what Paul *had orally told them*, i.e., *doctrine*: “the apostasy comes.” Using that criterion, the Thessalonian Christians would always conclude that “the apostasy” was a future event.

Second, at 2 Th. 2:1-14, Paul discussed “the apostasy comes” and other end-time events. He then wrote at 2 Th. 2:15, “*stand firm and hold on* to the traditions which you *were* taught.” (Italics added.) One such tradition was: “the apostasy comes.” Paul again focused the Thessalonian Christians’ attention on what he had orally told them in the past. If it were possible for the Thessalonian Christians to be *present* on earth when “the apostasy” occurred, then they could not “stand firm and hold on to” the tradition that they *were* taught, namely, that “the apostasy *comes*,” i.e., it is a *future* event. Paul would be commanding them to do the impossible. This too proves that what he had orally told them was doctrine.

Third, Paul ordered at 2 Th. 2:15 that the Thessalonian Christians “stand firm and hold on to the *traditions* which you were taught.” (Italics added.) Today one might view “traditions” as simply referring to, for example, a nonbinding custom. However, the word “traditions” in verse 15 is a

translation of a form of the Greek word “paradosis” (παράδοσις).⁹⁶ It means “the content of traditional *instruction* – ‘teaching, tradition.’”⁹⁷ Paradosis is “derivative of παράδιδωμι [paradidōmi] [fn. omitted] ‘to instruct.’”⁹⁸ Paradidōmi means “to pass on traditional instruction, often implying over a long period of time—to instruct, to teach.”⁹⁹ Paul’s use of the word paradosis shows that his teaching that “the apostasy *comes*” was Christian traditional *instruction*. Paul’s use of the word “traditions” proves that what he had orally told them, that “the apostasy comes,” was doctrine.

Finally, Paul uses paradosis only two other times to refer to Christian instruction, i.e., at 1 Cor. 11:2 and 2 Th. 3:6.¹⁰⁰ At 1 Cor. 11:2, Paul declared, “Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and *hold firmly* to the *traditions*, just as I handed them down to you.” (Italics added.) The word “traditions” there is a translation of a form of paradosis.¹⁰¹ Paul’s instructions to the Corinthian Christians were matters to which the Corinthian Christians were to “hold firmly.” “Hold firmly” is a translation of a form of katechō (κατέχω).¹⁰² A form of katechō is also translated “hold fast” at 1 Th. 5:21,¹⁰³ which says (KJV), “Prove all things; *hold fast* that which is good.”

At 2 Th. 3:6, Paul writes, “Now we command you, brothers *and sisters*, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother *or sister* who leads a disorderly life and not *one* in accordance with the tradition which you received from us.” (Underlining added.) The word “tradition” in this verse is also a form of paradosis.¹⁰⁴ Paul emphasizes the utmost importance of the paradosis—traditional instruction—that Paul gave the Thessalonian Christians by telling them to keep away from Christians whose lives were disorderly and not in accord with the traditional *instruction*.

1 Cor. 11:2 and 2 Th. 3:6 underscore the magnitude of Paul’s traditional instructions to Christians. This too establishes that when Paul orally informed the Thessalonian Christians of the “tradition” that “the apostasy comes,” this was doctrine.¹⁰⁵ Because what Paul had *orally* told them in the *past* was doctrine, his *current writing* at 2 Th. 2:3 that “the apostasy comes” was reiteration.

⁹⁶ Wigram and Winter, p. 590.

⁹⁷ Louw and Nida, vol. 1, § 33.239, p. 415, italics added.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Id.*, p. 415, § 33.237.

¹⁰⁰ Wigram and Winter, p. 590.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Id.*, p. 417.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*, p. 590.

¹⁰⁵ Paul commands at 2 Th. 2:15, “So then, brothers *and sisters*, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.” (Underlining added.) Those traditions include his teaching that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” because Christians belong to the “day,” not to the “night,” and the “day of the Lord” comes in the “night” (see part III of this essay). Paul taught this in 1 Th. 5, and 1 Thess. is a “letter from us” (2 Th. 2:15).

In sum, as long as Christians are here on earth, “the apostasy *comes*”; it is not here yet. It follows that the rapture precedes “the apostasy.”

Furthermore, “the apostasy comes *first*,” then the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” then the “day of the Lord.” (2 Th. 2:1-3.) The fact that the rapture precedes “the apostasy” means the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.”¹⁰⁶ *This is the third reason the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.”* And the “great tribulation” and Second Coming are part of the “day of the Lord”; therefore, the rapture precedes the “great tribulation” and Second Coming. The love that the Lord, and God the Father, have for Christians is suffused throughout Paul’s teaching on these issues, as reflected in his concluding blessing at 2 Th. 2:16-17:

“16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

¹⁰⁶ As mentioned (fn. 13 above), according to the 2020 NASB, Paul wrote at 1 Cor. 5:5 “*I have decided to turn such a person over to Satan for the destruction of his body, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.*” (Underlining added.) As mentioned, “day of the Lord” at that verse is a translation of the Greek phrase “hemera tou kuriou.” (Aland, et al., p. 588.) If Paul wrote hemera tou kuriou at 1 Cor. 5:5, that verse would suggest a connection between the fearful “day of the Lord,” i.e., a period God’s wrath, and Christians.

However, Aland, et al.’s *Greek New Testament* observes that, based on the manuscript evidence, there is a “considerable degree of doubt” as to whether Paul wrote hemera tou kuriou, as opposed to one of several alternative Greek phrases. (Aland, et al., pp. xiii, 588.) The alternative Greek phrases, translated, were: “day of the Lord *Jesus*,” “day of [the] Lord *Jesus Christ*,” “day of *our* Lord *Jesus*,” and “day of *our* Lord *Jesus Christ*.” (Aland, et al., p. 588.) The difference is significant. The 2020 NASB acknowledges, for example, that Paul used the phrase “day of *our* Lord *Jesus Christ*” in a gracious, not fearful, context when 1 Cor. 1:7-8 record Paul telling the Corinthian Christians that the Lord Jesus Christ would “confirm you to the end, blameless on the *day of our Lord Jesus Christ*.” (Italics added.) Similarly, the 2020 NASB reflects that Paul employed the phrase “day of *our* Lord *Jesus*” in a complimentary, not fearful, context when he told the Corinthian Christians at 2 Cor. 1:14 that “we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, on the *day of our Lord Jesus*.” (Italics added.) This evidences that, e.g., the phrases “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “day of our Lord Jesus” refer to the day of the rapture, not the fearful “day of the Lord.”

As previously discussed, Paul teaches at 1 Th. 5 that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” because Christians belong to the “day,” and the “day of the Lord” comes in the “night.” There is no debate among textual scholars that, in that teaching, Paul uses the Greek phrase “hemera kuriou” at 1 Th. 5:2 (Aland, et al., p. 710; Berry, p. 533); this is translated “day of the Lord” (2020 NASB). Paul also teaches at 2 Th. 2 that for a number of reasons (which this essay has discussed) the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” Manuscript evidence discovered after the 1611 publication of the KJV demonstrates that, in that teaching, Paul employs the Greek phrase “hemera tou kuriou” at 2 Th. 2:2 (Aland, et al., p. 715, Berry, p. 536; see fns. 37 and 38 of this essay). This too is translated “day of the Lord.”

Because Paul is teaching at 1 Th. 5 and 2 Th. 2 that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord,” this doctrinal consideration precludes a conclusion that the Greek text at 1 Cor. 5:5 contains the phrase hemera tou kuriou, translated “day of the Lord.” In other words, this precludes a conclusion that 1 Cor. 5:5 suggests a connection between the fearful “day of the Lord” and Christians.

VI. 2 TH. 2 CORROBORATES THAT THE RAPTURE PRECEDES THE “DAY OF THE LORD.”

Additional evidence from 2 Th. 2 corroborates that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” First, this explains why the *first* event that Paul referred to in 2 Th. 2 was not “the apostasy” but “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *and our gathering together to Him*” (2 Th. 2:1, italics added). The phrase “our gathering together to Him” is a reference to the rapture. Before Paul began discussing the events of “the apostasy,” the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and/or the “day of the Lord,” the first thing Paul wanted on the minds of the Thessalonian Christians was his previous oral teaching that because of the “coming of the Lord” and the rapture, the Thessalonian Christians would experience none of the remaining future events. This would “comfort and strengthen” (2 Th. 2:17) their hearts.

Second, because the rapture precedes “the apostasy,” it made perfect sense for Paul to *contrast repeatedly* the apostates with the Thessalonian Christians. Thus, Paul observed that the apostates “did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Th. 2:10), and “did not believe the truth” (2 Th. 2:12). But he indicated that the Thessalonian Christians had “faith in the truth.” (2 Th. 2:13.) This too is true of all Christians.

In another contrast, God gives the *apostates* a supernatural “deluding influence” (2 Th. 2:11; KJV: “strong delusion”; American Standard Version and ERV: “working of error”). That is, using evil spirits, God gives the deluding influence so that the apostates will “believe what is false.” (2 Th. 2:11.)¹⁰⁷ The “man of lawlessness” comes according to the activity of Satan “with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness.” (2 Th. 2:9-10.) Thus, lesser supernatural beings directly shape the future of the apostates. But Paul wrote at 2 Th. 2:13-14 concerning the Thessalonian Christians:

“13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers *and sisters* beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(Underlining added.) In their love for Christians, all three persons of the Trinity, not lesser supernatural beings, directly shape the future of the Thessalonian Christians; this is true for every Christian.

In yet another contrast, Paul discussed the Antichrist and the apostates at 2 Th. 2:9-12, and he always referred to the apostates in the third person. Paul wrote about:

“9 . . . the one [“the man of lawlessness”] whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and false signs and wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for *those* who perish, because *they* did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this

¹⁰⁷ God does not do evil. However, He allows and sends evil spirits to do evil, for which they alone are responsible. (See, e.g., 2 Chr. 18:18-22; Jn. 13:21-27.)

reason God will send upon *them* a deluding influence so that *they* will believe what is false, 12 in order that *they* all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

(Italics added.) But Paul, speaking to the Thessalonian Christians (and effectively to all Christians), referred to them in the *second* person, stating at 2 Th. 2:13-17:

“13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers *and sisters* beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers *and sisters*, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

(Underlining added.) This applies to all Christians.

A third point corroborating that Paul was teaching all Christians that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” is that at 2 Th. 2:13, Paul declares: “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through *sanctification* by the Spirit.” (Italics added.) Sanctification means “separation, a setting apart.”¹⁰⁸ Sanctification is positional; Christians are “in Christ” and are therefore saints.¹⁰⁹ Sanctification is experiential; this expresses itself in holiness of life.¹¹⁰ Sanctification is “ultimate”; this is the “glorification or complete conformity to Christ at His coming.”¹¹¹ Viewed from this perspective, the rapture is part of the ultimate “sanctification by the Spirit”: our glorification.

VII. “THE APOSTASY” IS PART OF A CONTINUUM OF EVENTS INVOLVING UNBELIEVERS WHO LIVE THROUGH THE RAPTURE.

“The apostasy” is one event in a continuum of events involving unbelievers who live through the rapture. We identify those events below. First, during the church age, the Christian gospel is presented to unbelievers. For example, 1 Th. 2:14-16 indirectly refer to Paul’s efforts to evangelize when those verses indicate that during Paul’s second missionary journey, he was hindered “from speaking to the Gentiles *so that they may be saved.*” (1 Th. 2:16, italics added.) This involved a hindrance to Paul’s *past* efforts *during the church age* to spread the Christian gospel. So too, when Paul indicates that the unbelievers at issue in 2 Th. 2:10 “did not accept the love of the truth *so as to be saved*” (italics added),

¹⁰⁸ Unger’s, “Sanctification,” p. 965.

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*, “Entire Sanctification,” pp. 965-966.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

this will occur following Christians' *future* efforts, *still during the church age*, to spread the Christian gospel.

Similarly, during Paul's second missionary journey, he successfully spread the Christian gospel to the Thessalonians (Acts 17:1-4); accordingly, he later wrote to them that they had "faith in the truth." (2 Th. 2:13.) So too, when Paul indicates that the unbelievers at issue in 2 Th. 2:12 "did not believe the truth," this will occur following Christians' future efforts, *still during the church age*, to spread the Christian gospel. In sum, the first event in the continuum of events involving these unbelievers is that *during the church age*, the Christian gospel will be *presented* to them.

Second, even after the presentation of the gospel to these unbelievers, *the church age will continue for a brief time*, not exceeding their lifetimes (indeed perhaps a much shorter period), to permit them *to accept* the gospel. This is implied by 1 Th. 2:8-10, which teach that the Antichrist will come "with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved." This in turn implies that they had *an opportunity* to "accept the love of the truth so as to be saved" and thus that the church age *remained open* briefly to provide that opportunity. It can hardly be said that the Antichrist will come "with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, *because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved*" (italics added), if they *never had a chance* to "accept the love of the truth so as to be saved" in the first place. The second event in the continuum is that the church age will continue for a brief time to permit these unbelievers to accept the gospel.

The third event is these unbelievers will not accept the Christian gospel after having been given an opportunity to accept it. However, these unbelievers will be unique. They will be the final, worldwide group of people to not accept the Christian gospel, and this will lay the groundwork for them to later believe in the lies of the Antichrist.

Fourth, the rapture will subsequently occur.

Fifth, these unbelievers will subsequently commit "the apostasy" with its three elements. Sixth, because these apostates "did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved," they "perish" (2 Th. 2:10). Seventh, because these apostates "did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved," God sends on them a supernatural "deluding influence" so that they will believe the Antichrist's deceptions. Eighth, these apostates will be present when the Antichrist comes with his efforts to deceive. Ninth, because of the Antichrist's deceptions, and the "deluding influence" sent by God, the apostates will affirmatively "believe what is false" (2 Th. 2:11; KJV: "believe a lie"; NIV: "believe the lie").

VIII. SUMMARY

A. Summary Of The Essay.

Part I, the essay's introduction, discusses the following. At 1 Th. 3:13, the apostle Paul, using the phrase "coming of our Lord Jesus *with all His saints*" (italics added), refers to the Second Coming when Jesus will physically return to earth from heaven and bring all Christians with Him. In 1 Th. 4:13-18, Paul teaches on the "coming of the Lord" (1 Th. 4:15) and on the rapture of Christians that occurs when they are "caught up" (1 Th. 4:17) to meet the Lord in the air. Paul alludes to the Second Coming again at 1 Th. 4:14, which says, "God will bring *with Him* [Jesus] those who have fallen asleep." (Italics added.) In 1 Th. 5, Paul examines whether Christians will be present on earth when the fearful "day of the Lord" comes. It includes the "great tribulation" and later Second Coming. In 2 Th. 2, Paul instructs on the rapture, "the apostasy," the revelation of the "man of lawlessness" (the Antichrist), and the "day of the Lord." Paul again addresses whether Christians will be present on earth when the "day of the Lord" comes.

Moreover, 1 Th. 5 and 2 Th. 2 show that *before* Paul wrote First Thessalonians, he had *orally* taught the Thessalonian Christians about the rapture generally, and about "the apostasy," the revelation of the "man of lawlessness," the "day of the Lord," and whether the rapture would precede the rest of those events. In 1 Th. 4, Paul addressed a specific issue about which he had not previously informed the Thessalonian Christians: whether Christians who had died before the rapture would go up in the rapture and be present with Christ during the Second Coming; he taught that they would.

The essay maintains that a careful review of the Scriptures will demonstrate that the rapture occurs prior to "the apostasy," the revelation of the "man of lawlessness," and the "day of the Lord" (including the "great tribulation" and Second Coming).

In part II, the essay observes that there are two different "comings" of the Lord. One is the "coming of the Lord" at 1 Th. 4:15 (connected with the rapture); the other is the "coming of our Lord Jesus *with all His saints*" (1 Th. 3:13), i.e., the Second Coming.

Part III demonstrates that the rapture precedes the "day of the Lord" because Christians belong to the "day," not to the "night," and the "day of the Lord" comes in the "night." To this end, the essay reveals that the "day of the Lord" is a fearful period of God's wrath and destruction. Rev. 6:17, referring to God the Father and Jesus Christ, states, "the great day of Their wrath has come." Shortly thereafter, Rev. 7:2 references the "rising of the sun," symbolic of the beginning of a day. These two verses mark the commencement of the "day of the Lord" in the Book of Revelations. The "day of the Lord" ends with the destruction of the present heavens and earth.

In 1 Th. 5, Paul mentions three different *periods*: a "day" (associated with spiritual light), a "night" (associated with spiritual darkness), and the "day of the Lord." Christians are "sons of day," meaning they belong to the *period* of the "day." Christians do not belong to the "night." And as long as

Christians are here, it is “day.” The “day” therefore ends with the rapture; then the “night” begins. Christians will not be present during the “day of the Lord” because the “day of the Lord” comes in the “night.” This is the first reason the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.”

Part IV proves based on 2 Th. 2 that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” because as long as Christians are here, Satan restrains, through “the mystery of lawlessness,” the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and that revelation precedes the “day of the Lord.” This part explores these concepts and the meaning of “the apostasy” in 2 Th. 2. There are three elements of “the apostasy”: those who commit it (1) “did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved,” (2) “did not believe the truth,” but (3) “took pleasure in wickedness.” “The apostasy” is committed only by unbelievers; they have never been Christians. The “man of lawlessness” is the Antichrist. Something and someone “restrains,” i.e., hinders, the revelation of the “man of lawlessness.” The something is “the mystery of lawlessness . . . at work” (2 Th. 2:6); the someone is Satan (2 Th. 2:9). Satan restrains through “the mystery of lawlessness . . . at work.” It was working in Paul’s day and is working today. However, Satan will be “removed” and the “man of lawlessness” will then be revealed.

Nonetheless, as long as Christians are here, Satan, through “the mystery of lawlessness . . . at work,” hinders the revelation of the “man of lawlessness.” Therefore, the rapture must occur before the revelation of the “man of lawlessness.” Since the rapture precedes the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” and that revelation precedes the “day of the Lord,” then the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” This is the second reason the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.”

Part V shows that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” because as long as Christians are here, “the apostasy comes,” i.e., it has not yet occurred, and “the apostasy” precedes the “day of the Lord.” First, when Paul had been personally with the Thessalonian Christians, he had orally told them about various end-times matters, including the fact that “the apostasy comes.” He asked them at 2 Th. 2:5, “*Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*” (Italics added.) His question implied that what he had orally told them *controlled*. Second, therefore, he commanded them at 2 Th. 2:15 to “stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you *were* taught” (italics added), including the tradition that the “the apostasy comes,” i.e., it was a future event. If it were possible for the Thessalonian Christians to be *present* on earth when “the apostasy” occurred, then they could not “stand firm and hold on to” the tradition that “the apostasy” was a *future* event, and Paul would have been commanding them to do the impossible. Third, the Greek word translated “traditions” means “the content of traditional *instruction*.” In sum, when Paul orally told the Thessalonian Christians that “the apostasy comes,” he was presenting *doctrine*. Thus, the rapture must precede “the apostasy.” Furthermore, “the apostasy comes first,” then the revelation of the “man of lawlessness,” then the “day of the Lord.” Therefore, the fact that the rapture precedes “the apostasy” means the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” This is the third reason the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” Moreover, the above three reasons that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord” also provide reasons that the rapture precedes the “great tribulation” and later Second Coming, since the last two occur during the “day of the Lord.”

Part VI presents Scriptural corroboration that the rapture precedes the “day of the Lord.” Part VII presents “the apostasy” as one event in a continuum of events involving unbelievers who live through the rapture. Thus, during the church age, the Christian gospel will be presented to unbelievers. Moreover, the church age will continue for a brief time to permit these unbelievers to accept the gospel. However, they will not and they will be the final, worldwide group of people to not accept the Christian gospel. The rapture will subsequently occur. These unbelievers will later commit “the apostasy.” Because these apostates “did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved,” they “perish” and God will send on them a supernatural “deluding influence” so that they will believe the Antichrist’s deceptions. These apostates will be present when the Antichrist comes with his efforts to deceive. And because of those deceptions, and the “deluding influence,” the apostates will believe the lies of the Antichrist.

B. A Brief Chronology.

The following then is a brief chronology. As long as Christians are here, it is “day,” associated with spiritual light. Christians are “sons of day,” i.e., they belong to the “day.” The “day” corresponds to the church age. During the “day,” “the mystery of lawlessness” is “at work,” hindering the coming and revelation of the Antichrist, the “man of lawlessness.” Moreover, Satan hinders by means of the working of the “mystery of lawlessness.” This hindering continues until the revelation of the Antichrist. Meanwhile, during the church age, unbelievers hear the Christian gospel but fail to “accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.” Later, the “coming of the Lord” (1 Th. 4:15) with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God happens; the rapture occurs; and the “day” then ends. Christians are not involved in the subsequent earthly events of the “night”; Christians have gone to be with the Lord.

The “night,” associated with spiritual darkness, begins. Some people subsequently become saved believers, i.e., saints (but not Christians; they have already been raptured). The above unbelievers commit “the apostasy.” Sometime during the “night” and before the revelation of the Antichrist, Satan is “removed.” After “the apostasy” occurs and Satan is removed, the revelation of the Antichrist happens. His coming is in accord with the working of Satan. At some point after the coming of the Antichrist, and before the “the day of the Lord,” the sun becomes “as black as sackcloth made of hair” and the moon becomes “like blood.” God sends a deluding influence upon the above unbelievers and they believe the Antichrist’s deceptions. After conquests, the Antichrist makes a seven-year peace “covenant with the many,” and it permits Jewish rituals of sacrifice and grain offerings. As a result, unbelievers cry “Peace and safety.” Sometime after the “night” begins, but before the “day of the Lord,” the prophet Elijah comes. However, when unbelievers cry “peace and safety,” sudden destruction comes upon them: the “day of the Lord” commences.

The “day of the Lord” commences sometime after the start of the seven-year covenant and during its first three and one half years. The “day of the Lord” ends when the first heavens and first earth are destroyed. Meanwhile, halfway into the seven years, the Antichrist breaks the covenant and the “great tribulation” begins. Unbelievers, and the above mentioned saints (not Christians), are present. The “great tribulation” lasts three and one half years, the final half of the seven-year period.

After the “great tribulation,” the Second Coming (the “coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” (1 Th. 3:13)) occurs. Satan is thrown into an abyss. Christ, with Christians and other saints, reign for 1,000 years. After a later, final, unsuccessful rebellion by Satan, he is thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. (Rev. 20:7-10.) Everything above occurs during the period of the first heaven and first earth. However, the first heaven and first earth will be destroyed. The “day of God” then begins with “a new heaven and a new earth.”