

3) The alleged “2 Thessalonians Problem”

The third alleged “problem” for Pre-Tribulationism, we are told, is found in 2 Thessalonians 2, which conclusively proves two things which are summed up as follows (my comments in brackets):

“The first is that . . . here Paul blatantly says there are *two events* that must occur *first [i.e., before the Rapture (observe the not-too-uncommon sleight of hand!), which are]*, the rebellion (sometimes translated as apostasy) and the revealing of the man of lawlessness.”

“The second problem for Pretribulationists is that at least one of the precursors mentioned here, the revealing of the ‘man of lawlessness,’ is an event that takes place at the *midpoint* of the 7-year period [*the timing of his ‘revelation’ being thereby conflated with his ‘deification’*] . . . So, the coming of our Lord and our being gathered to Him cannot occur until *after* the midpoint of the 70th week.”

In fact, according to Dr. Kurschner, “The most problematic passage in the Bible for Pretribulationists is 2nd Thessalonians 2.” Of course, absolutely nothing could be further from the truth, once we bow to God’s Word rather than seek to force it to conform to our notions or desired outcome. EVERYTHING about 2 Thess. 2 supports the Pretribulation Truth, including at least the following:

- the appeal of 2:1, “Now we beg you, brethren, **by** the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (the Rapture);
- the distinction in 2:1 and 2:3-4, between “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (the Rapture, 2:1) and the “Day of the LORD” (2:2);
- the distinction in 2:1 and 2:8, between “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (the Rapture, 2:1) and “the APPEARING [or MANIFESTATION] of His coming” (2:8);
- the implications of *that* which restrains and *he* who restrains the mystery of lawlessness “until he be gone out of the way” (2:6-7), which ONLY THEN allows for the revelation of the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist.

As will be demonstrated, the only true 2 Thessalonians problems are for all *non*-Pretribulation rapture ideas, including the contrived Pre-Wrath Rapture scheme.

First, refer back to the refutation of the first alleged problem, the “Precursor Problem,” as it answers a fundamental aspect of what Dr. Kurschner leverages here again to create a new problem in his mind, the “2 Thessalonians Problem.” And, among other things, confirms the true and full scope of the “Day of the LORD” epoch.

Now, as noted earlier, Dr. Kurschner not only mistakenly assumes that the Rapture must occur on the same day as the “Day of the LORD,” but to prop up his gross misunderstanding of 2 Thess.

2, he goes on to contradict everything else he has set forth by actually *equating* the Rapture with the “Day of the LORD” (the day of God’s wrath):

“He [Paul] says, ‘**Now regarding the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him—**’ Let me just stop there. Well, Paul hasn’t made any connections here. He’s just saying, ‘Now I’m going to talk about this.’ Now, isn’t it sort of odd if he says, ‘**Now, I’m going to talk about the rapture and the *parousia*.**’ And then he doesn’t mention it ever again? Well, he actually does. **He’s unpacking what it means: The Day of the Lord. Prewrath solves this problem** by understanding that these two events [the apostasy and the revelation of the Antichrist] that will occur **before the rapture and before the Day of the Lord**, and that **Paul is using both concepts interchangeably here as he often does in the New Testament.**”

The other critical blunder that Dr. Kurschner and company make here has to do with the proper understanding of the thrust of 2 Thess. 2:1, which blunder then skews everything else he deduces from there.

2 Thess. 2:1 **by no means** indicates that the *subject* taken up in the following verses is the Rapture, though the things set forth therein bear on the preservation of the blessed truth of the any-moment Pre-Tribulation Rapture in our outlook and hearts.

“Now we beg you, brethren, by [or, for the sake of, in the interests of . . . NOT ‘concerning’] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him [i.e., the Rapture].” (2 Thess. 2:1)

Leon Morris (no Dispensationalist, by the way!) rightly notes:

“The preposition rendered “touching” is *huper*, which usually means “on behalf of.” Here it is more or less equivalent to *peri*, but it has its own particular emphasis. It signifies something like ‘in the interests of the truth concerning.’ Lightfoot (on Gal. 1:4) discusses these two prepositions and remarks that *huper* has “a sense of ‘interest in,’ which is wanting to *peri*.” This probably accounts for its use here.” (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*)

William Kelly further elaborates:

“for [or, for the sake of]: No doubt the preposition may, and does often, mean ‘in regard to,’ or ‘on behalf of,’ a little stronger than *περί*. But the question is the meaning of *ὑπέρ*, neither in itself, nor in other constructions, but with such words of entreaty as *ῥωτάω*, as distinguished from *ῥωτάω περί*, where the sense of ‘in the place of,’ or ‘instead of’ is excluded, as here. To me it appears that the precise meaning of *ὑπέρ*, in such a case as the present, can only be ‘by reason of,’ or briefly ‘by,’ and, if motive be made more prominent, ‘for the sake of,’ or briefly ‘for.’”

“For, as we have seen, false teachers naturally shake the righteous, instead of seeking to comfort and stablish them. On this occasion they contrived to excite no little panic and anxiety as if the day of the Lord had actually come. Not at all, says the apostle: do you not know that the Lord is coming to gather you to Himself? ‘We beseech you, brethren, by the coming (or presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind nor troubled.’ **He first [v.1] appeals to a known motive of joy and confidence in their hope and then [v.3] goes on to a prophetic reason, thus giving the idea a complete refutation.** But you may notice that it is never supposed that the saints wait for the day of the Lord to be taken up and meet Him in the air. It is the coming of the Lord they await for this. **‘The coming of the Lord’ and ‘His day’ [“the Day of the LORD”] are two quite different thoughts, often confounded by men.”**

“The coming or presence (παρουσία) of the Lord is a much wider term, embracing the day as well as what is just before the day. But the part of His coming that is called ‘the day of the Lord’ consists of the execution of His judgment on the earth and then of His reign. The first object is to gather home those He loves. Love would always secure the object of affection first. The coming of the Lord then is bound up closely with the gathering of the saints; the day of the Lord with the execution of judgment on His enemies here below. Hence we find here, ‘let no man deceive you by any means.’ It is evident there might be a great deal of mistake on this subject; ‘for that day shall not come except there come *the falling away* (or apostasy) first.’ *‘That day shall not come’* is an insertion of our translators, marked therefore by italics, though, I believe, substantially correct. **The ‘day’ [of the LORD] will come after the apostasy, the public abandonment of Christianity throughout Christendom.”**

“The distinction between these two, the παρουσία [2 Thess. 2:1] and the ἡμέρα of the Lord [2 Thess. 2:2], is the key to 2 Thess. 2. The whole chapter, not to say the entire province of prophecy, is embroiled in confusion where this is not seen. *For where would be the force or even sense of beseeching his Christian brethren by the presence or coming of the Lord not to be shaken by the rumour about His day [the Day of the LORD], if the day and His coming be the same?* Whereas it is thoroughly intelligible and pertinent to entreat them by a hope so full of good cheer as the presence of the Lord which is bound up with the gathering of the saints to meet Him above, not to be disquieted by the allegation, for which they falsely cited authoritative communications from the Spirit and a supposititious letter of the apostle himself, that His day — that day of judgment of the quick on the earth — was already present. **One corrective of the error is the recall of the Christian to his proper hope of joining the Lord at His coming [at any moment], so as to follow Him out of heaven for the day of His appearing. The other is the making known certain awful developments of evil, the apostasy and the man of sin brought fully out, before that day can come.”**

“Next the apostle turns to the source of their agitation. ‘We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled.’ ***Assuredly, the consolation administered here is not***

that Christ's coming was a distant thing! Can it be that theologian upon theologian has desired to make of this **fancied long and far-off absence of the Lord a balm for the tried and fearful?** Can it be that the poor church has but too willingly sipped the cup, and, heedless of His words, cheers herself on the delirious career of worldliness and folly, and of faithlessness to Him? 'Lord, how long?' "

"Full well they [the Thessalonians] knew that His coming was to end their sorrows and crown their joys. Under apostolic guidance they had looked, and the Holy Ghost had commended their looking, for Christ. Was it not the part of the evil servant to say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming? {Matt. 24:48}. But Paul was a blessed faithful servant, and never says anything of the sort. He uses the fact of the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as a comfort against the anxiety created by the idea that the day of the Lord was already arrived—nay more, as a proof that such an idea was false. His ground of entreaty is twofold. He urges [1] a reason connected with the Lord and heaven, and [2] a reason connected with earth and the man of sin. There must be our gathering above {2 Thess. 2:1}, and the falling away below {2 Thess. 2:3} *In the first place* the Lord was to come, and they were to be gathered together unto Him, in order that He and they might bring in the day and appear together from heaven. This had not taken place, and therefore they were not to be disturbed as if that day had come, or could come, previously. *In the next place* he presses the point that the evil must first be developed completely which that day is to judge. 'Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come the falling away (or the apostasy, ἀποστασία) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or object of worship; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God' {2 Thess. 2:3, 4}. But the apostasy was not then come, nor the man of sin revealed, and therefore the day of the Lord, the day of vengeance upon these evils, is yet to come. 'And now [if one may translate the apostle's word a little exactly] ye know what hindereth that he might be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that now hindereth till he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the appearing of his coming' {2 Thess 2:6-8}."

"No! the Thessalonian believers were not mistaken in waiting for the Son of God [to come at any moment]. It is not wrong to believe that "the Lord is at hand," (ἐγγύς) as the apostle pressed upon the Philippians when drawing to the close of his career [Phil. 4:5]. It is not wrong to stablish our hearts because the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (ἤγγικεν, James 5:8). Nor does the language of the Spirit in the passage before us depict excitement from a too eager anticipation of this glorious event — alas! that Christians should suppose we could too earnestly desire it. The expressions in v. 2 denote fright and agitation. **The enemy sought to instill the idea that the day, the judgment, was come,** and that they were obnoxious to its terrors. Where then was their hope to be caught up to the Lord and to come along with Him? Would it have been sorrow and fear if Christ had come and they had been translated to meet Him in the air? Rather would it have been

their chiefest joy, as it had been the object nearest their heart since their conversion. Their faith was growing exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded; and, far from weakening that which he had already taught, the apostle prays for them in the last chapter of the second epistle, that the Lord would direct their heart into the love of God *and into the patient waiting for Christ*. That is, he confirms them in their expectancy of the Lord.”

“But the deceiver had affrighted them, not of course by presenting the coming of the Lord as an imminent thing, which was what the Holy Ghost had done, and which is for the church a hope of unmingled comfort, but by the report that the day of the Lord was actually present—’a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.’ The apostle had already told them (1 Thess. 5) that they were not in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief. The tempter disturbs and confounds them with the thought that, as a thief, it was really come upon them; using it would seem some false spirit, or word, or letter {2 Thess 2:2}, to give to it the colour of the authority of Paul himself. And how does the apostle defend them from such assaults of others, and fears of their own? For, let it be repeated, it was not high-wrought feeling as though Christ were at hand, but **terror arising from their giving heed to the false representation that the day of the Lord was present, and they in tribulation on earth, instead of being caught up to Jesus above.** The apostle at once brings them back to the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him {2 Thess. 2:1} *as their ground of comfort and protection against the alarms of the day of Jehovah*. As if he had said [in effect]: the Lord Himself is coming, and you will be gathered to Him. When His day comes, you will be with Him. You are the children of the day: you will come along with it, for you will come with Him who ushers it in. You therefore need not be troubled; be rather in peace. That day is not come. **You will go to meet Him whom the church knows as the bright, the morning star (Rev. 22:16, compared with Rev. 2:28); so that, when the day breaks and the Lord appears, you too will appear with Him in glory. You will introduce the day together—that day of retribution, when those who trouble you shall have trouble, and you, the troubled, shall have rest with us, when Jesus is revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance.”**

And as noted earlier, the Thessalonians were **shaken in mind and troubled** because they believed that they were then and there in the Tribulation/70th Week, by being misled into thinking that "the Day of the LORD is present." ***Which itself proves absolutely that the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him (2:1, the Rapture) can in no way be one and the same as the arrival of “the Day of the LORD” (2:2): for the former (truth) they eagerly and joyfully looked for, while the latter (deception) greatly troubled them.*** The *anti-Pretribulation error* of the then presence of the Day of the LORD is what the apostle, by the Spirit, masterfully disproves.

Moreover, as also noted earlier, the apostle Paul clearly distinguishes between the Rapture and the times and seasons of the “Day of the LORD” in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 as well. For it is possible to be very “ignorant” of vital details pertaining to the truth of the Rapture on the one hand (as per 1 Thess. 4:13, 15), while “perfectly well” knowing the times and the seasons connected with

the “Day of the LORD” (as per 1 Thess. 5:1-2). **“Plainly then they are two different things, quite distinct from each other.** Were the rapture an essential part of the times and seasons, then to be wholly ignorant of it [*of the details of the Rapture of the saints*] would mean partial ignorance as to them [*of the times and seasons of the Day of the LORD*]. The Thessalonians however were *quite ignorant* as to it, while being *so well instructed* as to them that the apostle could say you ‘know perfectly’ and ‘have no need that I write unto you.’ ” (F.B. Hole)

Next, we call attention to the importance of the distinction in 2:1 and 2:8, between “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (the Rapture, 2:1) and “the APPEARING [or MANIFESTATION] of His coming” (2:8), which we touched on earlier under the alleged “Olivet Discourse Problem.”

“Instead of confounding Christ's Parousia and the connected gathering of the saints unto Him in 2 Thess. 2:1 with the Epiphany of His Parousia which annuls ‘the man of sin,’ **the pointed difference of the phrase ought to have led him [Mr. B.] to distinguish them. If His coming to gather the saints together to Himself were necessarily visible, where is the force of adding the appearing of His coming when it is a question of destroying the Antichrist?** But there is much more when we take in the light afforded by the second verse, and the context generally. **For the error which the Thessalonian misleader taught was that ‘the day of the Lord was actually present.’ This the apostle dissipates, first, by beseeching them by, or for the sake of, the Lord's coming (παρουσία) and our gathering together unto Him;** secondly, by the declaration that that day was not to be unless the apostasy first came and the man of sin were revealed, whereas a hinderer acted as yet till he should go. **Mr. B.'s confusion not only makes the added epiphaneia {v. 8} meaningless, if Parousia in itself is a display, but it renders the motive, urged in v. 1 against the delusion of v. 2, not only powerless, but unintelligible. For if the Lord's coming and His day coalesce, as they do absolutely in Mr. B.'s view, there is no sense in the passage;** whereas to recall the saints to their hope was calculated to guard them from the false rumor that the day had set in. Then we have the plain disproof that follows: the cup of Christendom's iniquity was not yet full, as it must be before the Lord Jesus judges it (not at His coming, but) at the appearing of His coming.”

“2 Thess. 2: 1-12 cautions us against the error of those who confounded the coming of the Lord to gather His saints on high with His day upon the lawless one. The misleaders of the Thessalonian believers sought to alarm them by the false cry that the day of the Lord was already present (ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου). **This the apostle dispels, first, by a motive of consolation for the heart, as well as, secondly, by an express prophecy. First, he beseeches them, by the coming of the Lord and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken or troubled by this pretense** (for which they feigned a revelation and even a letter of the apostle). **The first act of the Lord, bound up with His very presence, is the translation of His own beloved ones to Himself.** But, secondly, that day (mark, he does not say the Lord's παρουσία, but His day) should not come till the full development of the evil which His day is to judge. The mystery of lawlessness is now restrained: when he who hinders its outburst is withdrawn, then shall be revealed the

lawless one whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by the breath of His mouth and annul by the appearance of His coming. **Observe the striking difference between the terms in vv. 1, 8. When it is a question of gathering the saints, the phrase is simply His coming or presence; when it is a question of His day or dealing in judgment with the lawless one, it is the shining forth of His coming — not παρουσία only, but ἐπιφάνεια τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ.** The real caution of the chapter would have preserved the querist from an error kindred in principle, though not in form, to that which wrought among the Thessalonians. ***We are then to be continually expecting the Lord, apart from either external signs or the final great tribulation, which Scripture connects with others, not with us, after we have been translated to heaven.***”

“The presence (παρουσία) of Christ is His coming, or rather state of being present, in contrast with His absence, and is in itself equally compatible with being visible or not at His pleasure (as we see after His resurrection). The solution of the question depends on other scriptures and cannot be decided by the bare word ‘coming’ or ‘presence.’ One of these scriptures is the comparison of 2 Thess. 2: 1 with v. 8. On the face of it, verse 1 binds together His coming or παρουσία with the gathering together of the saints to Himself. This is the motive for comfort against the terror of the day of the Lord, which the false teachers were seeking to bring on the souls of the Thessalonians. The false rumour that His day was actually arrived, or present (ἐνέστηκεν), was effectually dispelled by the sweet information that that day of awful associations for the world should not be there before the . . . open display of that lawlessness, which was already at work in secret ways. **For the day of the Lord is ever the predicted period of judgment on man's evil,** which it is to [be] put down and cleared away, in order that the good of God's kingdom may be no longer hidden or hindered but shine out to His everlasting praise. Hence it is said that the lawless one (for so it will end) shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy, or annul, by the appearing of His coming [not] with the Lord's presence to assemble His saints to Himself, but with His judicial action on the Antichrist.”

“Plainly, the coming or presence of the Lord is the great general truth. It embraces indeed His appearing as one of its acts or characters, but it includes much more. Hence, when precision is sought (as here to counteract a false impression, which the enemy sought to endorse with the apostle's name), we have the παρουσία distinguished from the epiphany, or shining forth of that παρουσία. Now it is evident that, if the coming of Christ necessarily implies visibility to all the world, there is no force in the distinction; if, on the contrary, He might come to gather His saints without appearing to any beyond themselves, and then subsequently cause His coming or presence to be manifest in the destruction of the lawless one, nothing can be more appropriate or exact than the phraseology here employed.” (W. Kelly)

Now in this connection, consider Col. 3:4 in relation to the Rapture and the Appearing. When Christ appears in glory, we will *appear together with Him in glory . . . at the very same time.* It is not: He appears *and then* He catches us up *and then* we appear with Him in glory. No, *precisely*

when He appears, we appear with Him in manifested glory. That means we are already with Him. Thus we had to have been previously caught up unto Him (when He does not yet “appear” to the world) and then subsequently we all together with Him “appear in glory” to the world (i.e., first He comes without “appearing” or being openly “manifested” or “revealed,” catches us up unto Himself, and then subsequently we “appear” together with Him in glory at the “manifestation” or “revelation” of His coming.)

“ ‘When Christ our life shall appear,’ says the apostle addressing the heavenly saints, ‘then shall ye also appear WITH HIM in glory’. **Christ will not be manifested first, and the church be caught up subsequently; both are to appear together and at the same time in glory. But with the elect Jews the case widely differs.** ‘And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other’ (Matt. 24: 30, 31). They are delivered and gathered *after* the Son of man has *already appeared*. **The church had not only been caught up before, but had come out of heaven along with Christ preparatory to His appearing (Rev. 19: 11-14).**” (W. Kelly)

This brings us to the tremendous implications of *that* which restrains and *he* who restrains the mystery of lawlessness “until he be gone out of the way” (2:6-7), which *only then* allows for the revelation of the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist (2:8).

When we understand *who* the restrainer is and *that* which restrains, then we will see how, yet again, it is *absolutely impossible* to maintain the Pre-Wrath notions that: a) the Church will be persecuted by the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness; and b) whatever occurs before the "Day of the LORD" occurs before the Rapture.

In 2 Thess. 2:6-7 we see that *He* who restrains the ‘mystery of lawlessness’ (*now for the past 2,000 years*), thereby preventing the manifestation of *the* ‘lawless one’ (man of sin, Antichrist), must be “gone out of the way” (2:7) **before** the manifestation of the lawless one can occur. **That Restrainer must be none other than God, and specifically the Holy Spirit who is the Person of the Triune Godhead who is dwelling in the Church on earth.** And when He is “gone out of the way,” the Church, necessarily, must go with Him (for He has been given to be with us *forever*, John 14:16). The fact is, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit on earth (in the *unique capacity* in which He arrived on the Day of Pentecost, cf. John 7:39 and Acts 19:2) **makes it impossible** for the mystery of lawlessness to culminate in the manifestation of the lawless one. Until the Holy Spirit “goes out of the way” (as no longer on earth in the *distinctive sense* in which He came at Pentecost, and thus requiring the Rapture of the Church), **there will be no Antichrist and no 70th Week—and thus no Pre-Wrath absurdity of the Antichrist persecuting the Church!**

“Lawlessness is the very essence of sin. It is the refusal of all controlling authority and restraint, and therefore in deadly opposition to God. The lawlessness, which has long

been at work in Christendom in a mysterious or hidden way like a suppressed fire, is going to blaze forth in the lawless one. But this will only be when the [heavenly] saints of God are removed from the scene of conflict by the coming of the Lord for them. At present the forces of evil are under restraint . . . There is '**He** who restrains' [*masculine pronoun, v.7*] and also '**what** restrains' [*neuter pronoun, v.6*]. The former doubtless refers to the Holy Spirit of God, who is at this time personally upon earth as He never was before and will not be again. The latter, we believe, refers to the presence of the church on earth; the church being the house of God wherein the Holy Ghost is dwelling." (F.B. Hole)

In 2 Thess. 2:6-7, we are told by the apostle Paul:

"And now ye know [*Gr. oida*] **that which restrains**, that he should be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only there is **he who restrains** now until he be gone."

There is vital significance to every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Let us thus note that the Greek word for "know" here is *oida* not *ginosko*. This has bearing on the identity of the Restrainer.

"Two Greek words are used for 'to know' in the New Testament - *ginosko* and *oida*. The former [*ginosko*] signifies objective knowledge, what a man has learned or acquired. The English expression 'being acquainted with' perhaps conveys the meaning. *Oida* conveys the thought of what is inward, the inward consciousness in the mind, intuitive knowledge not immediately derived from what is external [though it *may* have been first learnt from without]. The difference between the two words is illustrated in John 8:55, 'ye know (*ginosko*) him not, but I know (*oida*) him,' in John 13:7, 'What I do thou dost not know (*oida*) now, but thou shalt know (*ginosko*) hereafter,' and in Heb. 8:11, 'they shall not teach . . . saying, Know (*ginosko*) the Lord; because all shall know (*oida*) me.' The word *oida* is used of Christ as knowing the Father, and as knowing the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, of Paul's knowledge of 'a man in Christ,' and of the Christian's knowledge that he has eternal life. 'I know whom I have believed,' 2 Tim. 1:12 - I have the inward conscious knowledge of who the person is: see also 1 Cor. 16:15, 2 Tim. 3:14 and 15 - all of these refer to inward conscious knowledge. The difference between the significance of the two words is often slight and objective knowledge may pass into conscious knowledge, *but not vice versa*. The Greek for conscience is derived from *oida*: see [1 Cor.] ch. 4:4, 'I am conscious of nothing in myself,' that is, not conscious of any fault. In the present passage [1 Cor. 8], 'We know that an idol is nothing' is conscious knowledge [*oida*]: 'we all have knowledge' and 'knowledge puffs up' is objective knowledge [*ginosko*]. 'If any one think he knows [*oida*] (conscious knowledge), he knows [*ginosko*] (objectively) nothing yet as he ought to know it [*ginosko*] (objectively):' 'he is known [*ginosko*] (objectively) of him,' so 'knowledge,' ver. 10." (J. N. Darby)

With this distinction applied to the matter at hand, we have additional ground for identifying the Restrainer as the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church on earth. For why

would these Christians *intuitively know* who the Restrainer is, if He is anyone other than God the Holy Spirit? And that, moreover, in the face of the attempted deception perpetrated by those who were seeking to corrupt the blessed hope in the hearts of the Thessalonian saints. They intuitively knew who the Restrainer is, the very One who, in omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal power, prevents Satan from bringing forth his man, the Antichrist, onto the scene before his own time as determined by God. (Based on what they had been taught of God and of distinctive Church truth, they intuitively knew the *only One* who could be the Restrainer, without needing the apostle to spell it out.)

Again, the Holy Spirit departs out of the world with the Church, solely with respect to the *special manner* in which He arrived and commenced His *unique ministry and residency* on the Day of Pentecost, after the Lord Jesus ascended in heavenly glory at the right hand of God, to form the heavenly people—Christ’s Body & Bride, in which the Spirit of God dwells corporately and individually.

The Holy Spirit will, of course, be at work during the Tribulation Period/Daniel’s 70th Week, in much the same way He was in OT times, working faith and divine life in the souls of elect Jews and Gentiles, and enabling, equipping, authenticating ministry in speaking forth the Word of God, etc.

“Having the declaration that the Lord should come and gather them together to Himself before that day, and being themselves still on earth, the Thessalonians had, *by this very fact, a proof that the day was not yet present.*”

Verses 3, 4. Here is another proof. The one who will be the object of the Lord's judgment in that day was not yet on the scene. As long as, on the one hand, those who are to be on the seat of judgment are not gathered together (the saints above), and while, on the other hand the criminal is not brought to the bar, there can be no judgment.

Verse 6. ‘What withholdeth.’ It is not in order to prevent the revelation of the lawless one that God has put a restraint; it is **to prevent his being revealed before his time**. The adversary is always ready for evil. In the day that God takes away the bridle, Satan will immediately shew himself at work to drag men into apostasy.”

“[T]he hindrance [*that which restrains and he who restrains*] is, at the bottom, *the presence of the church and of the Holy Spirit on the earth.*” (J. N. Darby)

Next, as noted earlier, observe that in 2 Thess. 2, the apostle Paul does not correct the Thessalonian saints by telling them that the Day of the LORD could not be present *unless the Son of Man is revealed*, but that it could not be present *unless the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition is revealed!* Which he will be **when** the Restrainer and that which restrains be gone (2:6-8a), and he is thus revealed when the covenant is confirmed for seven years by the head of the revived Roman empire with the mass of apostate Israel in the land **at the onset of the 70th Week**

(Dan. 9:27). **The fact of the matter is that 2 Thess. 2:3-4 does NOT say that the man of lawlessness will be revealed only when he “sits down in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God,” during the mid-point of the 70th Week. Verse 4 is simply a description of the *character and objective* of the man of lawlessness.**

“Let not any one deceive you in any manner, because it will not be unless the apostasy have first come, and the man of sin have been revealed, the son of perdition; **who** [not **when** he] opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God, or object of veneration; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” (2 Thess. 2:3-4)

Finally, with regard to the “the apostasy” (2 Thess. 2:3), it indeed does not refer to the Rapture, but to the wholesale abandonment of Christian Truth, which takes the form of Mystery Babylon, the Anti-Church, during the first half of the 70th Week, and then (with her destruction, making way for) the worship of the Antichrist during the second half of the 70th Week.

This apostasy, "THE apostasy," entails the total abandonment of the Christian faith. While the true Church is on earth, that is impossible. While the true Church is on earth, there will never be a wholesale abandonment of Christian Truth, for God always has His remnant on earth who constitute the Body and Bride, till the Rapture. "THE apostasy" is coming, and is encompassed by the “Day of the LORD.” Once the Church is gone out of the way—with the Holy Spirit, in the same sense in which He arrived on the Day of Pentecost—then there will briefly be no believers at all on earth, the apostasy being present. But then, in the midst of that total apostasy, the Lord will start to call out a godly remnant of Jews and Gentiles (who form no part of the already completed and raptured heavenly Body and Bride of Christ).

"The idea is still quite widely held that the Lord will not return until the world has been prepared for His advent by the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of most, if not all, its inhabitants. There is no support for this idea in the passage we are considering, but quite the contrary. **The fact is, that what will precede His advent in glory is a total abandonment of the faith by those who formerly professed to hold it. This apostasy will pave the way for the revelation of a great personage, who will be the direct representative of Satan, called here 'the man of sin,' for in him sin will find its highest expression.** This man will be marked by the most arrogant self-exaltation. He will oppose God by claiming himself to be God. **A claim such as this would be impossible amongst people calling themselves Christian** — it would merely excite ridicule — were the way not prepared for it by the apostasy. **The apostasy then will be of such a nature that the minds of men will be prepared to accept such gigantic claims on the part of a mere man as quite possible and reasonable. The deification of man will be the logical and reasonable outcome of the movement.** This throws a flood of light as to what the main drift of the apostasy will be. God will be dethroned and man will be enthroned [from man’s perspective]!" (F.B. Hole)