

Message Two

The Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Gathering Together to Him

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 4:15-18; 5:16-18; 2 Thes. 2:1-12; Dan. 9:24-27

I. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians were written in the light of the Lord's coming:

- A. Every chapter of 1 Thessalonians ends with the coming of the Lord; this shows that the writer, Paul, lived and worked with the Lord's coming before him, taking it as an attraction, an incentive, a goal, and a warning—1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-18; 5:23.
- B. Because we are awaiting the Son of God from the heavens, our future is focused on Him; our life declares that we have no hope on this earth and no positive destiny in this age, and that our hope is the coming Lord, who is our destiny forever; this governs, holds, and keeps our Christian life for the church life—1:10; 2 Thes. 2:1, 8.

II. We need to see "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him"—v. 1:

- A. The Greek word for "coming" is *parousia*, which means "presence."
- B. Christ's coming will be His presence with His people:
 - 1. This presence will begin with the rapture of the man-child and the rapture of the firstfruits and will end with His appearing on earth with the saints—Rev. 12:5; 14:1-4; 2 Thes. 2:8.
 - 2. During the period of Christ's Parousia there will be the great tribulation, Christ's descending to the air, the rapture of the majority of the believers, the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage of the Lamb—Rev. 14:14; 1 Thes. 4:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-9.
 - 3. Before the three and a half years of the great tribulation, the overcomers among the believers will be raptured into Christ's presence (parousia) in the heavens—Rev. 12:5-6; 14:1-5; Luke 21:34-36; Matt. 24:36-44.
 - 4. At the end of the three and a half years of the great tribulation, the second half of the last week in Daniel 9:27, the majority of the believers, both the dead and resurrected and the living, will be raptured into Christ's presence (parousia) in the air; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 speaks of this rapture, which corresponds to the reaping of the harvest in Revelation 14:14-16.

III. The prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 shows that the day of the Lord's coming is very near; the seventy weeks are divided into three parts, each week being seven years in length—cf. 2 Pet. 1:19:

- A. First, seven weeks (forty-nine years) were apportioned from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8) to the completion of the rebuilding.
- B. Second, sixty-two weeks (434 years) were apportioned from the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the cutting off (crucifixion) of the Messiah—Dan. 9:26.
- C. Third, the last week of seven years will be for Antichrist to make a firm covenant with the people of Israel (v. 27); in the middle of that week he will break the covenant, terminate Israel's sacrifices and oblations to God, and persecute those who fear God (v. 27; Rev. 13); this will be the beginning of the great tribulation, which will last for three and a half years:

1. When there is news that such a strong man signs a treaty of seven years with Israel, we have to prepare ourselves to be raptured—Matt. 24:32-44.
 2. At the beginning of the great tribulation, Antichrist's image will be set up in the temple as an idol, and he will sit in the temple of God, exalting himself above every object of worship; this means that the temple must be rebuilt before the great tribulation begins—vv. 15, 21; Rev. 13:14-15; 2 Thes. 2:3-4; Dan. 11:36-37.
- D. There is a gap of unknown duration between the first sixty-nine weeks and the last week of the seventy weeks; this gap is the age of mystery, the age of grace, the age of the church—Eph. 3:3-11; 5:32; Col. 1:27:
1. During this age Christ is secretly and mysteriously building up the church in the new creation to be His Body and His bride—Eph. 5:25-32.
 2. At the end of the last week of the seventy weeks, Christ with His overcomers, His bridal army, will come as the smiting stone to crush the totality of human government and become a great mountain, the kingdom of God, that fills the whole earth—Dan. 2:34-35; 2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20.
- II. Every day that we have is truly the Lord's grace; therefore, we should love the Lord and His appearing, await the Lord's coming, and always take His coming as an encouragement—1 Thes. 5:1-11; 2 Tim. 4:1, 6-8; Luke 12:16-20.**
- III. We need to keep the word of the Lord's endurance, stand against the wearing-out tactics of Satan, and live, walk, and work by faith and love in the hope of the Lord's coming back—Rev. 3:10; Dan. 7:25; 1 Thes. 1:3.**