

Can those who reject the gospel now be saved in the Tribulation Period?

For many years I held the traditional view, based upon [2 Thessalonians 2:8-12](#), that a person who rejected the gospel before the Rapture would not have an opportunity to be saved during the Tribulation Period. Since this is the only text that seems to directly address this consideration, the Bible student must be sure he is properly interpreting this text, or his answer will be wrong.

I want to remind us all that it is important to not look for verses in the Bible to prove what we or someone else believes or teaches. If we do this, we will not be honest in our search of the Scriptures. We will have a tendency to read our interpretation into the Bible because that is what we want it to say. This is dangerous! I do not want to prove what I believe, but honestly discover from the Bible what God says, even if I have to stand alone in what the Holy Spirit has taught me. This is always a challenge. Our real problem is our pride. We do not like to admit that we have been wrong in what we have believed and taught in the past. However, I hope you agree with me that it is better to discover God's truth and get it right now, than to say that God has said something when He really did not. It is better to admit we are wrong than to answer to Him for our error in the future. We should never want to put words in God's mouth.

While interpreting any passage, we must pay attention to the context – the verses around the verses in consideration. Many honest and good Christians have unknowingly made poor interpretations of passages because they refused to pay close attention to the context. In this text, the context is very important.

First, please notice that [2 Thessalonians](#) was the second letter the Apostle Paul sent to the church at Thessalonica as a result of questions they had sent to him concerning the Second Coming of Christ. In the first letter ([1 Thessalonians](#)) the believers were concerned about what happens to dead believers when Jesus returns. Paul's response, as a Word from the Lord, gave them instruction concerning the order and events of the Rapture, as explained in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#). In the very next chapter, He informed them they had been taught concerning **"the day of the Lord,"** which is the Tribulation Period. He told them they were children of light and the approaching Tribulation Period should not be a surprise to them. But he said it will be like **"a thief in the night"** for the world. ([1 Thessalonians 5:1-3](#)) Therefore, he exhorted them to be ready for the Lord's coming at any moment.

Sometime after the believers in Thessalonica received Paul's first letter, they were confronted with another major question. Apparently the rumor was being circulated that they were already in **"the day of Christ"** ([2 Thessalonians 2:2](#)) – the same as **"the day of the Lord,"** a phrase used throughout the Bible for the Tribulation Period. In other words, they were being told they were already in the Tribulation Period. This was confusing to the believers, because they were looking for Jesus Christ, not the Tribulation Period! However, they were experiencing a time of great difficulty (see [1:6-8](#)) and were wondering if their tribulation was The Tribulation. [Please remember that all believers have tribulation ([John 16:33](#)), but we have been promised to be delivered from The Tribulation- [Revelation 3:10](#).]

As Paul wrote back to them, he wanted to explain to them that they could not be in the Tribulation Period because the Antichrist (**"the man of sin"**) had not yet been revealed. ([verse 2](#)) According to [Daniel 9:27](#), the Tribulation Period will begin when the Antichrist confirms a false peace covenant with **"the many"** Jews who have returned to Israel. Therefore, in our context, Paul informed the Christians at Thessalonica that they could not be in the Tribulation Period because the Antichrist had not yet been revealed. In order to help them know about this chief figure of the Tribulation Period,

the Holy Spirit directed Paul to inform these believers concerning what the Antichrist will do when he comes.

Verse 3- The Antichrist will come only after there has been “a falling way.” This speaks of a time of departure by the professing church from the doctrines of the Apostles. (See and compare [1 Timothy 4:1](#).) This had not yet taken place. So, Paul was saying it was impossible for the Antichrist to have already come.

Verse 4- The Antichrist will ultimately enter the temple and declare himself to be God. (This happens at the mid-point of the Tribulation- compare [Daniel 9:27](#) with [Matthew 24:15-26](#) and [Revelation 11:1-2](#).)

Verses 6-8a- The Antichrist will not be revealed until after the Holy Spirit, uniquely indwelling the church, is removed. In these verses, Paul states that the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, through the church, will be removed before the Antichrist comes. This has been very confusing for many to understand. In order to understand this, the believer must understand how the Holy Spirit restrains the world concerning sin. The answer lies in our understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit's indwelling work in the life of every true believer. When a person is really saved, he will be filled with the Spirit and become “salt” and “light” for those around him. (See [Matthew 5:13-16](#) and [John 16:18-17; 16:8-11](#)) In other words, the Holy Spirit, Who lives in the believer, uses the holy life of the believer as a restraining influence in the world. Therefore, the removing of that restraining influence must be understood as the Lord simply removing His church at the time of the Rapture. The same sense in which the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost ([Acts 2](#)), will be the same sense in which He will leave with the church at the Rapture. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit will be completely removed from the earth during the Tribulation Period. Note what Jesus said to His disciples in the Upper Room before Pentecost: “for he dwelleth **with you**, and shall be **in you**.” ([John 14:17](#)) Notice that before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was with the believer. However, after Pentecost He was in the believer. ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)) So, after the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will be with believers, but not in believers. Furthermore, we know that some Jews and Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation. (See [Zechariah 12:10-13:9](#); [Revelation 6:9-11](#); [7:9-17](#); [20:4](#)) It is impossible for a person to be saved without the work of the Holy Spirit. (See [1 Corinthians 12:3](#)) Therefore, the Holy Spirit must be at work during the Tribulation Period. As a matter of fact, God told Joel: “**I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh**” during the Tribulation Period. Please read the entire context of [Joel 2:27-32](#). According to these verses, God will uniquely pour out His Holy Spirit upon the Jewish people during the Tribulation to evangelize the world. Compare this with the ministry of the 144,000 sealed Jewish witnesses in [Revelation 7:1-8](#) and the two Jewish witnesses in [Revelation 11:3-6](#). The fact that the Lord will once again empower the Jewish people to be His mouthpiece during the Tribulation is an indication that the Church (which is predominately made up of Gentile believers) has been raptured. We are presently living in the Church Age, with the church serving as God's mouthpiece, reaching Jews and Gentiles. During the Tribulation, Israel will be God's mouthpiece to reach Jews and Gentiles. “**For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.**” ([Joel 2:32](#))

We will next examine [2 Thessalonians 2:8-12](#). Before we do so, please notice that [verses 8-10](#) are one sentence. This is a significant observation that demands we treat these verses together within the proper context. Let us look at each of these verses and ask what event in the last days they are speaking about.

Verse 8a- “**And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed,...**” The wicked one is the Antichrist, who will be revealed at the beginning of the Tribulation, when he “**confirms**” the covenant with Israel.

(Daniel 9:27) This is the event that starts the Tribulation Period. Antichrist will arrive riding on a white horse, which the Bible tells us is a sign of his appearance. (Revelation 6:2)

Verse 8b- "...whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: ..." The Antichrist will be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation when the Lord speaks and he is cast alive into the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 19:20) The prophet Daniel wrote that the Antichrist will "come to his end, and none shall help him." (Daniel 11:45) Therefore, please notice that **verse 8** is speaking about the Tribulation Period, mentioning the opening event (the revelation of the Antichrist) and the concluding event (the destruction of the Antichrist).

Verses 9- "... Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, ..." At the mid-point of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist will be empowered by Satan to perform supernatural works (signs and miracles) in order to deceive many. (Compare Matthew 24:4-25; Revelation 13:4-18.) The Antichrist will be indwelt by Satan at the mid-point (Revelation 13:4), having just been cast out of heaven. (Revelation 12:9-12) Notice that the words "power," "signs" (same Greek word translated as miracles), and "wonders" are all found in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and Revelation 13:11-15. Therefore, in this verse, the Apostle Paul was speaking of events that will take place at the middle of the Tribulation Period.

Verses 10- "... And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." The Antichrist will deceive many because God will send a strong delusion, leading some to believe the Antichrist is god. Many will take the mark of the Antichrist-666. (Revelation 13:16-18) Notice that according to Revelation 14:9-11, all who take the mark of the Antichrist will be damned, which means they can never be saved.

Verses 11-12- "And for this cause God shall sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." With these verses the Apostle Paul begins another sentence. However, we must conclude that he is referring to the same people as in **verse 10**, which speaks about people living during the Tribulation Period. The pronouns, "them" (verse 10), "they...they" (verse 10), "them" (verse 11), "they" (verse 11), and "they" in **verse 12**, according to the context, must all refer to those who will be deceived by the Antichrist's false miracles in **verses 9-10**. Compare Revelation 9:20-21, which is a statement about those who have rejected the Word of God and have refused to repent of their sinful pleasures, even after all of the judgments of the first half of the Tribulation. Therefore, it is wrong to refer to "those who have received not the love of the truth" in **verse 10** as those who heard and rejected the gospel before the Rapture, which takes place before the Tribulation Period begins. Instead, to be true to the context, it must refer to those who hear the gospel during the Tribulation and reject it and believe the lie that the Antichrist is god, and receive his mark and are damned forever.

So, we must conclude that people who have rejected the gospel before the Rapture may have a chance to be saved during the Tribulation Period. Some may respond that we are giving these people "a second chance." So what? Many people have had many chances to be saved. Even some of those who lived before the death of Christ and rejected Him got saved after He ascended back to heaven. Please remember that "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

However, we must be careful to not provide any notion that it is permissible for a person to wait for a

Page 3 / 4

second chance to be saved. It is absolutely foolish for a person to reject the gospel and hope he will have another chance at a later time, even during the Tribulation Period. We must warn those who hear the gospel in this age of grace to not spurn the call of the Holy Spirit to salvation. We should give them the following warning:

Thinking that you can wait and receive Christ on your timetable is dangerous. You are not seeking Him. [Romans 3:11](#) says, “**there is none that seeketh after God.**” He is the One who is seeking you. [\(Luke 19:10\)](#) You have no guarantee that He will send the Holy Spirit to draw you to Him at another time. [\(1 Corinthians 12:3\)](#) He, not you, is the One who opens and closes your heart to the gospel. God declares: “**I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I [assisted] thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.**” [\(2 Corinthians 6:2\)](#) No one has any guarantee he will be alive in the next few minutes. Furthermore, the last days are becoming increasingly filled with deception and people’s hearts are being hardened by their sin and the temptations around them. The Bible warns us: “**But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**” [\(Hebrews 3:13\)](#) Many people in hell had good intentions of getting saved. But, they waited too late! Don’t let that happen to you.

If you choose to wait, you are taking a big and dangerous gamble. Hell is real. Jesus said so. [\(Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31\)](#) Eternal damnation is forever. “**For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**” [\(Matthew 16:26\)](#)

Unique solution ID: #1005

Author: n/a

Last update: 2015-05-26 15:22