



Know the Truth, Believe the Truth
2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

On July 4th we rightly celebrate with pride our country for the freedom it stands for. With events like the bombing of Iranian nuclear sights we often wonder if the United States will fight in another war. When it involves the Middle East we wonder if it might be the war the leads to biblical prophecy being fulfilled. The verses we study today are key to understanding future events and can give us comfort when wars and rumors of wars are in the news and we wonder if the end is near.

The Day of the Lord Hasn't Come

The Day of the Lord is a period of history in the Old Testament during which God brings judgement and blessings up on the people of the earth in a more direct and dramatic way than ever before (See Isa 13:6, 9; Zeph 1:14-16). From New Testament passages we learn the Day of the Lord begins with the Rapture and will include the Tribulation and Millennium. The Day of the Lord includes the wrath of God's judgement and Paul had taught the Thessalonians they would escape it (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9). Yet because of severe persecution and deceptive teachers they worried they were in the Day of the Lord. Paul wrote to teach them they weren't in the Day of the Lord. *The remedy for being deceived by false teaching is knowing the truth of God's Word!*

The Events that Must Happen Before

Paul said they weren't in the Day of the Lord because the events that precede the Day of the Lord had not happened. (And they still haven't happened)

1 – Apostasy (Rebellion) - The literal meaning is falling away. This is a revolt, a departure, an abandoning of a position once held. This will happen in the professing church. Although departure from true doctrine has always been a problem in the church, this is a specific distinguishable apostasy in the future (see 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-4; James 5:1-8; 2 Peter 2; 3:3-6; Jude).

2 – The Restrainer is Removed – Lawlessness has always been at work, but there is a restrainer who keeps full evil and the man of lawlessness at bay. The Holy Spirit is the Restrainer who through Christians, whom He indwells and through whom He works, holds back lawless living. He will be removed when the church is removed from the earth at the Rapture.

3 – The Man of Lawlessness is Revealed – This man is commonly called the Anti-Christ, although only John uses that term in 1 and 2 John. He is referred to in Daniel 9:26-27; 11:36-12:1; and in Revelation 13:11-18. He exalts himself above everyone and everything and demands to be worshiped. He is empowered by Satan who uses false miracles, signs and wonders and lies to deceive people into worshipping and following him. As powerful and deceptive as the Anti-Christ will be, it will only take the breath of Jesus to destroy him when Jesus comes back. *People will worship the Anti-Christ because they rejected God's salvation message of truth and delighted in unrighteousness. God solidified their choice by sending them a strong delusion. Don't keep rejecting the truth. Believe the truth! One day it will be too late!!*

There are many questions this passage raises that aren't answered in these verses. Christians have different answers to questions about the future. I believe we can have different opinions while still affirming the literal interpretation of Scripture, being confident in the return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. It's impossible to summarize every view in a half sheet in the bulletin. So, I will provide an outline of what I believe the Scriptures teach.

Church Age – In the present, Jesus is building His church. Towards the end of this age there will be increasing doctrinal and lifestyle apostasy.

Rapture – The coming of Jesus to meet resurrected and living Christians in the air. This can happen at any moment and is the glorious hope we Christians are waiting for. (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:50-58; Titus 2:12,13)

The Judgment Seat of Christ – In heaven, Christians' good works will be judged and rewards given. (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:1-15)

Tribulation – Following the Rapture, God will send seven years of judgment on the earth. (see Matt 24:15-28; Revelation chapters 5- 19:10; Dan 9:27) The amount of time between the Rapture and the Tribulation isn't given in Scripture. The Tribulation begins with a treaty or covenant made with the Jewish people (Daniel 9:27). The Tribulation ends with the battle of Armageddon (see Dan 11:4-45; Zech 14:2; Rev 14:14-20; Rev 19:11-21) during which Jesus will return.

Second Coming – At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will return to the earth. He will come to judge and to reign. The second coming is described in the most detail in Revelation 19:11-16 and Zechariah 14:1-11.

Judgment at the Second Coming – Immediately after Jesus' second coming, Old Testament Saints will be resurrected and judged (Dan 12:1-3). Also, people who became Christians during the Tribulation and died will be resurrected (Rev 20:4-6). Survivors of the Tribulation will be judged so that only believers enter the Millennium Kingdom. The judgement of Jewish survivors is described in Ezekiel 20:34-38 and illustrated in Matthew 25:1-30. The judgment of Gentile survivors is described in Matthew 25:31-46.

The Millennium – Jesus will rule on the earth from Jerusalem fulfilling the promise God made to David (2 Sam 7:12-16). In Revelation 20:2-7 the length of time of 1,000 years is stated 6 times. During this time, Satan will be bound. The earth's population will first consist of Christians who were saved during the Tribulation and survived. Resurrected Christians and Old Testament saints in glorified bodies will also live on the earth. People will be born to the survivors of the Tribulation. They will live and die as they do now. So, people will still have to believe in Jesus. Those who don't will rebel one last time when Satan is released, and Jesus will finally bring an end to Satan and sin.

Judgment at the End of the Millennium – Unbelievers from all time will be resurrected and face God at the Great White Throne Judgement. They will be judged for their sin and thrown into the Lake of Fire with Satan and his demons (Rev 20:10-15; John 5:29).

Eternity – God will create a new heaven, earth and Jerusalem. These will be where the saved of all ages live forever with God as His people in a perfect place with no sin, grief, sorrow, pain or death. (Revelation chapters 21 and 22)