

“What Is the Day of the Lord”

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

Theme: The Day of the Lord will not begin until after the Rapture.

I. THE PANIC ASSOCIATED WITH THE DAY OF THE LORD - vv. 1-2

A. The Occasion for Peace - v. 1

1. The approach that Paul takes in addressing the eschatological controversy swarming in Thessalonica was a pastoral one - *“Now we request you, brethren ...”*
 - a) He used the same approach re: the problem of sexual sins - **1 Thessalonians 4:1**.
 - b) He used the same approach re: the problem of dishonoring leadership - **1 Thessalonians 5:12**.
2. He is now attempting to address the delicate situation that had come about re: the timing of the rapture- *“... with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.”*
3. Paul refers to the Rapture with two descriptive phrases, but is referring to the same event:
 - a) *“... the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ...”* [παρουσία] - a general term used to describe both the Rapture and the 2nd Coming; context determining which is in view.
 - b) *“... and our gathering together to Him.”* - [ἐπισυναγωγή] - a specific term describing the assembling together with Christ - described in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.
4. When Paul was with them, He had taught them about the Rapture and then clarified their confusion in 1 Thessalonians.
5. The result of Paul’s teaching is that they had known peace and confidence - something that the Blessed Hope affords to those who understand it.

B. The Occasion for the Panic - v. 2

1. However, instead of remaining confident in what Paul had taught, they had listened to teaching that had conflicted the stability gained through biblical doctrine.
2. Paul states that instead of believing the truth, they had allowed aberrant eschatological teaching to upset them - *“... that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed ...”*
3. These two terms demonstrate that they were panicking:
 - a) *“shaken”* [σαλεύω] - describing a reed being blown in the wind, sometimes used to describe the effects of an earthquake.

- b) *“disturbed”* [θροέω] - frightened internally, inwardly aroused or agitated.
- 4. It describes these saints as having been mentally shaken loose of confidence in God’s truth and were therefore tossed about in a sea of anxiety, fear, and apprehension that they had missed the Rapture and *“the day of the Lord has come.”*
- 5. The *“day of the Lord”* - “includes the tribulation time preceding the second advent of Christ as well as the whole millennial reign of Christ. It will culminate in the judgment of the great white throne. The Day of the Lord is therefore an extended period of time lasting over one thousand years.”¹
- 6. The cause for this panic was the false teaching to which they’d been exposed in three forms: *“... by a spirit or a messenger or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”*
 - a) *“a spirit”* [πνεῦμα] - a reference to false prophets who circulated error - cp. **1 John 4:1-3**.
 - b) *“a messenger”* [λόγος] - a reference to a message, sermon, or word.
 - c) *“a letter”* [ἐπιστολή] - a reference to the “pseudepigraphal” letter.
- 7. *“... as if from us”* - claiming that all three were speaking under the direction or auspices of the Apostle or his assistants (Silas & Timothy).
- 8. In the few short months between the reception of his 1st letter to them and the writing of this 2nd letter, other alleged letters by Paul had been received by them, but they were from perpetrators of falsehood - cp. **Romans 16:17**.

II. THE PRECURSORS ATTESTING TO THE DAY OF THE LORD - vv. 3-4

A. The Indicator of the Apostasy - v. 3a

- 1. Paul quickly seeks to straighten out the confusion concerning the fact that the Rapture had not yet happened and that the Day of the Lord had therefore not begun.
- 2. He commands *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless ...”* - indicating that there are objective, non-negotiable things that will clearly indicate when the Day of the Lord begins.
- 3. The first indicator that the Rapture has already happened, and the Day of the Lord was upon them is something called *“the apostasy”* [ἀποστασία] -

¹ John Walvoord, The Thessalonians Epistles, p. 117.

“defiance of established system or authority, rebellion, abandonment, breach of faith²”.

4. This is a different term (a derivative) than is used elsewhere to describe the “falling away” from the faith - cp. [ἀφίστημι] - **1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 3:12**.
5. This is one of two places this term is used in the NT - cp. **Acts 21:21**.
6. It refers to **“the”** momentous defiance of the Christian Faith by the world unlike any previous rejection - an event precipitated by the abrupt absence to the “salt of the earth” - the Church - or the Restrainer who will have been taken out of the way - cp. **2 Thessalonians 2:6-7**.
7. The first indication that the Rapture has occurred will be the complete abandonment of the Faith by “those who dwell upon the earth” after the Rapture when all who are righteous will be “snatched away” and taken into glory to be with Christ.

B. The Introduction of the Antichrist - v. 3b-4

1. The second precursor that begins the Day of the Lord will be the introduction of the Antichrist - **“... the man of lawlessness is revealed ...”**
2. Upon the removal of all believers, the chaos that results will provide a leader to rise into a position of prominence sufficient to provide peace to the Middle East - cp. **Daniel 9:27**.
3. This is the “lawless one” foreseen by Daniel - cp. **Daniel 7:24-25; 8:23-25; 11:36**.
4. This wicked **“man of lawlessness” is “the son of destruction”** - [ἀπώλεια] indicating that his loss of well-being, not extinction or annihilation; it is the opposite of salvation.
5. “He is fixed for punishment and judgment; he is human trash for the garbage dump of hell.”³
6. The Antichrist will be one who is so blasphemous that he sets himself up as god - **“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 God.”**

² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 120.

³ MacArthur, p. 273.

7. This describes the event at the mid-point of the Tribulation when the Antichrist performs what is called “**the Abomination of Desolation**” - cp. ***Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.***

III. THE PRIORITY OF APPRECIATING THE DAY OF THE LORD - v. 5

A. The Attentiveness to Eschatology - “*Do you not remember ...*”

1. Paul had been with the Thessalonian believers for a very brief time - and was run out of town.
2. However, in that time Paul had prioritized teaching them about the Rapture, and the coming Day of the Lord.
3. These are not truths to be relegated to a seminary classroom or considered by arrogant saints who think they have the acumen needed to sort it all out.
4. It is something that brand new believers need to understand for it accomplishes great spiritual effects:
 - a) It motivates for holy living.
 - b) It motivates for evangelism.
 - c) It motives diligent service as we await the Rapture.

B. The Authority in Eschatology - “*... that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*”

1. He essentially calls them to recall the truth of God repeatedly delivered to them by an Apostle - “*... I was telling you these things*”
2. These truths, delivered through the Apostle to us in the Word of God provide us the clarity of the prophetic picture - something that Paul expects believers to sustain within their worldview.

**The Day of the Lord cannot begin until
after the Rapture of the Church.**