

LSB 2 Thessalonians 2:1 - 4 Pt 2

1 Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.

Last week we laid the groundwork for biblical prophecy. Things to come. Last things which is the meaning of the greek word eschaton from which we get our word eschatology. The study of last things.

And we spent the entire study last week laying a foundation to build upon, that the Word of God is a direct God breathed inspired revelation from God to men that includes information about what will come to pass in the eschaton, the last things, or last days.

If you missed that session I encourage you to find it at our web pages and listen or read through that foundation for scriptural prophecy concerning last things.

This morning having laid a foundation of belief that God gives us everything we will need to know about final events we're going to dive into this important passage that Paul has written to the church at Thessalonica.

*1 Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,***

This is a theme that runs strongly in all of Paul's and indeed all of the apostles letters which is promised to us by Jesus himself in the gospels.

We are orphans in this world. Our home is in the next world. We are fish

out of water in this world. Indeed, I often use the analogy of enemy combatants huddled in the middle of enemy territory.

Those of us who are the called out ones, the elect, who have been called out of this world by the quickening of our spirits from the dead, in Christ, we have literally been rescued from and called out of Satan's kingdom, Satan's authority to reign in this world, and we have been brought into new ownership, in Christ. We are His. We belong to Him. He is our King and Sovereign ruler. We have bowed the knee to His authority.

This world is condemned and judgement looms for all who have rejected God's only means of escape. Thus the enemy combatants analogy. We are transported by regeneration into the Kingdom of Jesus. But while we remain here in enemy territory we are to herald the soon coming true King and tell everyone of the Way of escape.

So then, we are citizens of another world. One little problem. We're still here. Called out of this world to belong to Christ, but we're still in this world ruled by Satan. And not only that, but a second issue looms large. My spirit was quickened to life together with Christ, but my body didn't get the memo.

My body and my soul which lives in it have become a dichotomy. A war zone. My spirit soars with the words of this book, but my body just wants to do evil continually. Sin dwells in me. And my soul finds itself in a war zone, both inside of me, and also in this world.

The new me still lives in the old world. The one that Satan rules. And we have found ourselves in a changing world, once user friendly to christian values and the thriving that came from some obedience to God's moral laws, and now no longer user friendly to anyone who would submit themselves to the authority of a God who has defined morality with crystal clarity.

That has happened in my lifetime. A somewhat friendly world has quickly

become a very unfriendly one. More and more the enemy combatant analogy is becoming defined by the world around me. I am different by definition. I bow the knee to the morality of this book. I'm one of "those".

Headline this week in the Washington Post; **I Don't Want Your God in Charge of My Health Care** an article by Kate Cohen. She's OK with church money building a health care facility, but the christian God along with His morality against absolute personal autonomy can go get lost.

And the battle lines are getting marked out in the sand. Meanwhile, the doctrine of getting out of this world and into the next one is suddenly more salient, more potent, more important now than it was even just 40 years ago.

The church in the United States of America, the most user friendly civilization and nation state to christians in the 2000 year history of the church, has almost considered the promises of end times events when we will see Jesus in the air, as somehow not that important.

We're perfectly comfortable right here. God has poured out blessings on me, on my family, on this nation. Compared to every other peoples group in history we are wildly rich. Cars, comfort, houses, feasts, security, physical wellness, low stress, high enjoyment of just being alive, we have everything.

And until just the past few years and months, there was no cloud on the horizon to challenge any of that. In the 2016 election cycle I copied a quote that struck me. It was by Simon Kuper. He wrote; "*The US inhabits a gated mansion in the safest neighbourhood in geopolitics.*" Simon Kuper

That was us in 2016. And within the mansion there was plenty of room for christians to be christians. Undisturbed. The storm was brewing even then. "If you want to believe idiotic things written 2000 years ago by goat herds with bad teeth, please go inside your church house and keep it to yourself." More and more those ideas are being expressed. Roe V Wade has brought

an anger directed at christians to the surface.

As tensions increase, how lovely is the doctrine of the gathering of all of the elect to Jesus, in the sky, where we will inhabit our resurrection bodies and be changed forever into His likeness, sin left behind and forgotten. Removed as far as the east is from the west by our redeemer who purchased us by suffering the death we deserved.

When we see Jesus, for the first time, we will all be changed. We will be clothed in a righteousness, not our own, the very righteousness of the sinless Christ, given to us. Eternity in the presence of Jesus and His Father in a new world. The kingdom of God. Rescue out of Satan's world completed!

Are American christians thinking this way, or perhaps are they more like; That's all very nice, but, I wish you'd finish up because we're going to be enjoying some taco's at the Mexican restaurant. Seeing Jesus is nice to think about, but taco's are very nice too. That's kind of where we're at. Or recreation. Or whatever it is that looms large to you when we've put in our 90 minutes here. Waiting for Jesus to appear just isn't at the forefront for most of us. We're very comfortable here in our gated mansion.

How different for the Thessalonian christians. Coming out of the world and being gathered together in Christ, had cost most of them everything. You can read about the heat in Acts 16. Paul would have been murdered if he had remained in that city. They had to hustle him out of town for his own survival.

And the little church that was formed there found itself in hot persecution. It cost them everything to be a christian. Society and culture rejected them. Many of them lost everything in order to have Christ. Jobs, careers, positions, even family. Some I'm sure, even their beloved spouses. It was a high cost for them to belong to Jesus. Very high.

Suddenly a rescue from heaven sounded pretty good. And Paul and all of

the apostles taught that we wait in hope for our completion on the day when we will see Jesus. That's the christian hope. Completion. We have the downpayment, the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, who has made our friendship with Christ and God very real by living inside of us.

The downpayment is real. Meanwhile someone is painting a giant red N on your house. Nazarene lives here. Someone is burning your house down or whatever it is that God permitted Satan to throw at these folks, and they literally hoped moment by moment for the return of Jesus. Rescue! Completion. To the point that when some of them died, they had deep questions for Paul. What about so and so. He died. Did he somehow miss this gathering together of us to Jesus, in the air?

And Paul answers ***absolutely not*** in the first letter to them. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive will meet them in the air.

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thess.

4:13 - 18

That's the context for what Paul will need to tell these folks in this passage we're studying this morning. The return of Jesus and the completeness of their purchase by God in Christ was of critical importance to these folks. They expected it to happen momentarily. They needed it to happen quickly. They were living in duress. Pressure. Persecution.

Unlike us in our gated mansion who aren't looking for Jesus any time soon and who are rather praying for good health so we can enjoy the wealth we've stored up for perhaps into our nineties. Not really too concerned about Jesus. We're more than comfortable.

When was the last time you prayed, "*Thy kingdom come, **Thy will be done on earth**, like it is in heaven*" with your brain engaged to what those words actually entail? Rather, we pray for continued health and comfort in our gated mansion.

VS. 1 Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Paul is dealing with a situation, a problem, a malfunction at the junction that has happened in Thessalonica. All we can know about what actually has happened is before us in this verse.

Apparently someone is teaching them that Jesus isn't coming, they missed the rapture, or there isn't any rapture, and in fact, they're right in the middle of the tribulation. Not a hard sell. They were in persecution. And so they are upset. What happened to Jesus. We thought Jesus was going to remove us to safety before the heavies came on the world. Now we're in it?? How did that happen?

How can that problem happen? Well Paul gives us three possibilities of source for this false doctrine, untrue information that has caused them this problem, and maybe it was a combination of all of them. See them there in vs. 2? *whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us,*

Those words are still binding on Christians today. No spirit, no word, no letter, as if from Paul or anyone else can nullify the truth's of the words of this book. We have a complete revelation in our hands. Finished. Nothing can be added or subtracted without the perils and plagues delineated in

Revelation 22 being carried out. It is finished. Complete.

Not so for the new church at Thessalonica. Apparently someone had showed up with all the supposed credentials and told them, Oh, you didn't get the memo. We got a letter from Paul that a spirit has brought a new word about the rapture. Not gonna happen. In fact we're living in the tribulation period right now. As we speak.

2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

False teachers came and told them; We're actually in the Day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is upon us. It has come. Yikes. What does that mean? What had Paul taught them about the time period that the Bible in many places calls the Day of the Lord?

Apparently Paul had taught them much. Because to solve the problem, Paul gets right into some depths of prophetic things in the old testament that we can only surmise that they had previously been taught. Even in the short time Paul was with them.

The day of the Lord is the period of time, at the end of 7 years of tribulation on the earth, in which Jesus physically returns and slays antichrist and the false prophet and Satan is deposed and locked up in chains. Satan's rule on this earth ends at the finality of the day of the Lord when Jesus returns in battle array with thousands of thousands of His holy ones.

It is a bloody conflagration. Judgement when all of God's enemies will be eliminated from this earth. Horrific events surround that day. The luminaries in the sky, the sun and stars will go out. Thick darkness. Until Jesus is revealed, in the heavens, ripped open, the throne of God in view, as HE comes to wage war followed by all of His holy ones.

Trust me. It's a time period when you want to come charging out of heaven

in His armies. You do NOT want to be His enemies here on earth. Terror.

Let's take a moment and argue for a pre-tribulation rapture with a logical argument I've not heard given before, from the different images of the sky at the two separate comings of Christ, once for His saints to bring them to safety, and a second time in terror and fire.

In the 1 Thess. 4 passage about Christ coming to gather His saints to Himself in safety, the sky is pictured as azure. Clouds. Beautiful clouds in a lovely blue sky.

And we have the record of the angels who with the disciples watched as Jesus ascended into the sky. Clouds are mentioned. Us photographers are always aware of the beautiful contrast and interest that clouds add to an otherwise non cloudy blue sky. The angels told the disciples and by extension the church;

9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Acts 1:9 - 11

The angel stressed the "way" that He will return for His disciples. Just the same way. Blue sky. Clouds. Silently. That's how He returns for His church. We believe He'll say the words in Revelation 4; ***Come Up Here***, and the church will rise up to meet Him in the air. Now compare that to the Day of the Lord.

In the day of the Lord when Christ returns in judgement, it isn't *that* sky. Listen to Revelation 6;

12 And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great

earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

At the Day of the Lord, the sky is black and the elements are disturbed until the sky is rent open and the throne of God is visible in terror as Jesus comes in judgement. Two events. Two very different skies.

Isaiah speaks of this horrific day when the heavens disintegrate; *Isaiah 34:4 All the stars of heaven will be dissolved. The skies will be rolled up like a scroll, and all their stars will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like foliage from the fig tree.*

The prophet Ezekiel tells of that day in; *Ezekiel 38:20 The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that crawls upon the ground, and all mankind on the face of the earth will tremble at My presence. The mountains will be thrown down, the cliffs will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground.*

The skies are thick blackness until the heavens are rent open and the presence of God will be revealed at the second coming of Jesus at the Day of the Lord.

So, Paul has a problem, someone has showed up and told these saints, no rapture, no rescue, we're currently in the day of the Lord, next time you see Jesus there'll be fire, and their reaction is; How did that happen!!??

And what I find most interesting and most telling to us who would want to copy Paul, WWPD, what would Paul do, it's very encouraging and telling to me that Paul uses prophecy to solve this problem.

To Paul prophecy isn't ethereal, mystical, nonsensical stuff that you need to make an allegory out of and then summarily dismiss as nonsense. That's really important to us in 2022. Because frankly, that's where a LOT of the church is at. Especially the reformed folk. It's all an allegory. It doesn't mean much.

Or my personal favorite; "how dare you be so bold as to think you can understand what God is saying in prophecy. You need to repent of that pride. No one can effectively understand prophecy and if you think you do, you're committing gross sins of pride. Us humble folk know it's beyond our capacity and so we ignore it."

That isn't Paul's approach at all. In fact Paul is kind, but there's a note of upbraiding here. You idiots should know better. In the future I expect better of you. Maybe I'm reading something into Paul's response that isn't there. But here's Paul's approach.

Prophecy is a straight line in time. There is a sequential aspect to it. This needs to happen before this can happen. Straight line. And Paul says you listened to some one who told you you're here on the line, but that's impossible, because this and this have to happen first. Everybody knows that. I told you that.

Listen to Paul's logical answer to their problem in vs. 3 and 4;
*3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for **it** (the day of the Lord) has **not come** unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.*

Two distinct things on God's timeline of prophecy will precede the "day of

the Lord". 1) Apostasy. 2) Antichrist will be revealed. And the way Paul presents it those could very well be almost a single event. Antichrist causes the apostasy? The apostasy is coincidental with the revealing of Antichrist

Two markers that cannot be missed precede the return of Christ in fiery judgement. Paul's logic is simple. We know those things have not happened, therefore you are not in the "day of the Lord", neither have you somehow missed the gathering together of the saints to Jesus in the rapture.

I'm going to reserve speaking about the entire gigantic doctrine of anti-christ until next week if the Lord allows it. It's a big topic, well covered in scripture, with many prophecies about this person who leads the whole world astray using satanic powers and miracles to convince and delude people.

This morning I want to look at Paul's other marker. Something called the apostasy. The division. The de-marcation. The splitting of one group into two groups separated from one another. That's what the greek word means.

Let's look at that; apostasia It means a defection, revolt, a split.

apostasía is a compound word that combines ideas from two words. (It is a derivative from /aphístēmi, "to leave, to depart," from /apó, which means "away from" and /histēmi, to "stand") – properly, departure (implying desertion); apostasy – literally, "a leaving, from a previous standing."

A divorce is a sad picture of this word. A couple who stood together now stand apart. Separated. Somehow, sadly, this will happen on a very large scale within what calls itself the church of God. Let me show you what I believe this may mean.

The word apostasia from ahistemi actually perfectly defines what we believe will happen at the rapture itself.

Think about the possibilities surrounding the rapture. What if what calls

itself christianity, a gigantic group of peoples who identify in some fashion as christian, a number in the billions that polls say reaches 40% of the earths populations were all standing in one spot at the moment of the rapture, and 5 minutes after the rapture 98% of them are still standing there.

The word apostasia or apostasy certainly works. There is a clear demarcation of one group into 2. We don't like the percentages in my guess but those are just a wild guess. But one group became 2, at the rapture.

And what if coincidentally the group who remained are suddenly overwhelmed by a very charismatic person who does miracles and explains what just happened very convincingly with the miracles and those who were left behind find themselves believing in a new messiah. A very convincing charismatic miracle performing messiah. Who is the antichrist.

It has been 50 years ago when I first studied the book of Revelation under the original teaching of my pastor at that time, John MacArthur. And I can remember being fascinated, not with the usual tantalizing prophetic things, but with the teaching that the seven churches in Asia Minor not only represented 7 real churches with varying degrees of problems and challenges, but in some sense those churches were prophetic in their order of 7 ages of the church over the centuries.

Ephesus, the doctrinally sound church that fell out of love with Jesus.

Smyrna, the persecuted church that smelled sweet.

Pergamum, the church where Satan dwells

Sardis, the church in bed with the world

Thyatira, the dead church (that makes the real christians dead by burning them at the stake)

Philadelphia, the church with the open door because they kept God's words

Laodicea, the lukewarm church who presumably, abandon God's words

If you're interested our study of the book of Revelation is posted at our web pages. Let's just speak about the two final eras of the church.

Philadelphia represents the church from the Puritans to perhaps the mid

20th century. The great missionary eras when the church produced western civilizations that we still enjoy. The door for them was open because they were faithful to God's word. The robust church.

*Because you have **kept** the **word** of My perseverance, I also will **keep you from the hour of testing**, which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Rev. 3:10*

Laodicea represents the church that is neither hot nor cold. The church dulled. The church neutered. Neutralized. The church where Jesus is outside, knocking on the door. The church that is not like Philadelphia in respect to God's book. Can we surmise that this church abandon's God's word? Steps away from honoring God's book, His morality?

'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Rev. 3:15b,16

I'm here to tell you something that I've never heard taught before. That's never a good thing these days. I believe those two events happen at the same time. The faithful church goes up, the lukewarm church vomited out.

There is an overlap. The faithful era becomes a remnant, a few faithful churches and believers in an age where the multitudes of those who say they are evangelicals, or mainline denominations or catholics or cults are actually lukewarm. Neither hot nor cold.

I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world; ~ because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth

One group is taken out of harms way. The other group is projectile vomited directly into the revealing of their new messiah, the antichrist. I see both truths happening at the same moment. The rapture of the faithful true church. The spewing of the nauseating pop church.

I think Paul's argument is, someone told you you're in the Day of the Lord and you believed them? If this is the day of the Lord, you were obviously in the wrong group in the apostasy. Or . . . it hasn't happened yet. And if it did, where is THE antichrist?

The rapture, the departure of the faithful who have kept Christs words and the coincidental departure out of christianity of those who are left behind who will follow after the antichrist are two markers on the timeline of the eschaton. Last things. They have NOT happened, therefore, you are NOT living within the Day of the Lord. Silly heads.

Paul's solution to the false teaching is so simple. Someone told you you're here on the timeline but the rapture hasn't happened and the revealing of the antichrist hasn't happened so what you've bought into is impossible. Period. Case closed. False teaching crushed into nothing by truth.

But he gets into some details about the Anti-Christ with a capital A that are pretty fascinating.

*3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for **it** (the day of the Lord) has not come unless the apostasy (which I believe is co-incidental with the rapture of the church) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, (also co-incidental with the rapture perhaps) the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.*

Next week if it pleases God to give us breath and life for 7 more days, I hope to get into who this person is who is the anti-christ of scripture, old testament and new. Also the time line that I believe Paul refers to which is in Daniel chapter 9. This person is distinctly described by Daniel in several places and a distinct time line is laid out. Fascinating stuff.