



1 Thessalonians

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For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.
1 Thessalonians 5:2

To explain what he just said in the previous verse about “time and seasons” being unknown even to believers, Paul now says, “For you yourselves know perfectly.” The word means “accurately” because it is examined down to the minutest detail. It is as if a probing examination has made the determination completely sure and there is no reason at all to go further.

This shows us that Paul had already discussed this part of the matter with them. They had not been given the incredible details of what the resurrection of the dead at the rapture would be like, and so those details were penned by him in Chapter 4. But they had been told about when the coming of the Lord would be. Someone had probably asked, and Paul then gave them his complete answer so that the matter would be settled. And that answer to them concerned “the day of the Lord.”

This “day of the Lord” is explained in the coming verses, not as the rapture, but as what follows the rapture, meaning the “day of the Lord’s judgment” upon the world. It is a seven year time-frame which is explained by the prophets and apostles in numerous passages. Paul’s words are then explained further in 2 Thessalonians 2 with these words—

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” -2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

In this passage from 2 Thessalonians, “the day of Christ” (some manuscripts say, “the day of the Lord), will not come until after the rapture of the church. The words “that Day will not come” are inserted by the translators for clarity, but they are correctly inserted. As “the day of Christ” is the nearest antecedent, it is speaking of that event. The reason for Paul telling them this was because some had obviously told the Thessalonians that it had arrived. This gave them reason to fear that they had missed the rapture which he explained in 1 Thessalonians. Paul wrote to them the second letter to show them this was not the case. Thus, these verses show that the doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture is correct. First will come the rapture, and only then will come the day of the Lord which comes “as a thief in the night.”

This term is a simile which is used to indicate with all suddenness. There will be a time when the day of the Lord comes, and it will plunge the world into its self-destruct mode. And so what is correctly seen when taken as the Bible reveals these things to us is:

- 1) The church age
- 2) The rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- 3) The day of the Lord after the rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:2)
- 4) The revealing of “the lawless one” (meaning the antichrist) after the rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

It is the rapture which initiates the unfolding of the next occurrence in the sequence of events, “the Day of the Lord.” As this event comes as a thief in the night, it is obvious that Paul is tying that phrase in with the “times and seasons” of verse 1. And as the antichrist is the one who is behind the 7-year peace deal with Israel, and as we will not know who he is because his identity is only made known after the rapture, then it is again plainly obvious that the rapture must be pre-tribulation. Each step is methodically recorded so we don’t have to fall into the error of misaligning the timing of the rapture as commonly occurs.

The main point is that actual timing of the rapture is not known, and it will not be known until after it has taken place. It falls under the “times and seasons” which both Jesus and Paul state we are not privy to. Unfortunately, Paul’s words, “For you yourselves know perfectly” apparently don’t pertain to date-setters. Time and again (and again) they set dates, and these predictions are always incorrect. The Lord told us that it is not for us to know these things, and Paul reaffirms the Lord’s word. And yet we presume to know better than those from Whom (and through whom) came the word of God.

Life application: The world is spiraling down the tubes, and we may have great fear that the Lord has forgotten about us, but such is not the case. When the time is right, and at the perfect time of His choosing, the Lord will come to gather us to Himself. Let us not set dates

about when it will come about. Instead, let us do as we are instructed, and continue to tell others about what God has done in Christ. If we don't do this, only terrible things lay ahead for them. It is either judgment at the cross, or judgment on the world who has rejected the cross.

For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 1 Thessalonians 5:3

The whole world is focused on a tiny sliver of land in the Middle East, Israel. It is so overly concerned with it, because of the countless enemies which surround that nation. Because of this, there can be no peace. The Islamic nations have oil, vast numbers of people, strategic lands for military purposes, etc.

Further, Muslims have spread out into the non-Islamic nations of the world and have become a threat within those societies. One of the main issues that stirs them up is Israel. Without dealing with Israel, they then cause death and turmoil wherever they go, using the lack of peace between Israel and the Muslim population in the land as a reason to work their evil.

Until the issue is supposedly handled, they vehemently state that there can be no peace. If there is no peace, then there is no safety. It is from this state that Paul's words of the end times now make sense.

He begins this verse with "For when they say." "For" is given based on the preceding words concerning Christ's coming as "a thief in the night." It is obvious that the two issues are being tied together. It also explains what is meant in 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7. There is a restraining force in the world.

When that Restrainer is removed (which is speaking of the Holy Spirit), then the end time events will rapidly unfold. Thus, there is the rapture of the church at the removing of the Restrainer. After this happens, the world will then make its peace deal with Israel. The words, "when they say" are vague and form a general meaning, thus it is speaking of the world at large.

When the world sees the peace deal signed, they will say "peace and safety." The enemies who have signed will say "Peace!" The world who believe that the Muslims are now pacified will say, "Safety!" There will be rejoicing at the state of kumbaya which has seemingly come upon the world.

However, the belief will be a false one indeed. Paul tells what the outcome of this "peace" agreement will be. It will be a time when "sudden destruction comes upon them." The Greek indicates literally, "stands over them," or "takes its stand over them." Paul writes this in the

present tense to give it the most vivid effect on the mind. His words here closely reflect what is said in Luke 21 –

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

-Luke 21:34-36

Jesus was speaking not to the church in those words, but to Israel. They would again be gathered back to Israel at some point, and it is at this time that the words would be fulfilled. The church age has ended, the rapture has taken place, and only now will these prophetic words find their fulfillment. There is no such thing as a “mid-tribulation” rapture. It is at the mid-point of the tribulation that the antichrist is working out the full force of his wickedness. Before that, there must be the perceived peace, but this perceived peace only comes after the rapture. Paul’s words form a doctrinal treatise on the sequence of events of the end times.

When the whole world has seen the peace deal signed, they will shout out, “Peace and safety,” but that is when the destruction stands over them, ready to destroy the world. And it will come, “as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.” The pains of a woman in labor increase both in intensity and in frequency, right up until the birth of the child. So it will be with the world. The supposed peace and safety will have been nothing but a precursor to strife and destruction. The people of the world will be hemmed in as if in a prison planet, and “they shall not escape.”

The book of Revelation shows that there will be no exit, no second rapture, for the people of the world. They will either take the mark of the beast and perish, or they will not take it, and they will perish. The difference between the two is that those who take it will perish, facing ever-lasting death at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:12). Those who refuse it will perish physically but be rewarded at the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5).

Surprisingly, the Old Testament gives prophetic pictures and details of these things so that we won’t make the error of incorrect analyses of eschatology (the study of end times events). The pre-tribulation rapture, the signing of the seven-year peace deal, the tribulation period, the return of Christ – all of it – it is all given in types, shadows, and prophetic utterances in the Old Testament to give the sound believer in Christ the surety and hope of not being around when these calamitous events take place.

Life application: What kind of hope is there in being stuck on a prison planet for 3 ½ years, waiting for the Lord to come as His bride is being pummeled and torn apart by her enemies? No, God has not appointed us to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and he has promised to keep us from the hour of testing which is coming upon the whole earth (Revelation 3:10). Ignore those who have failed to take the time to properly evaluate these verses, and who provide us with only an unhappy doctrine of insecurity and uncertainty.