

“THE DAY OF CHRIST” VERSUS “THE DAY OF THE LORD” IN 2 THESSALONIANS 2:2

The study that follows is taken in its entirety from Lecture 11, The Days And Times Of Scripture, pages 175-180, from the Bible Institute course titled “Landmarks Of Bible Prophecy” by Pastor Robert Sargent. This volume is available from Bible Baptist Publications of Oak Harbor, Washington 98277, <http://www.baptistpublications.org/>.

A. References.

There are 7 passages referring to this time, all found in the New Testament. They are as follows:

1. *I Corinthians 1:7,8* — *“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless **in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”*
2. *I Corinthians 5:5* — *“To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved **in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”*
3. *II Corinthians 1:14* — *“As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours **in the day of the Lord Jesus.**”*
4. *Philippians 1:6* — *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it **until the day of Jesus Christ.**”*
5. *Philippians 1:10* — *“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence **till the day of Christ.**”*
6. *Philippians 2:16* — *“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice **in the day of Christ**, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.”*
7. *II Thessalonians 2:2* — *“That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that **the day of Christ is at hand.**”*

More will be said about this Scripture below.

B. Explained.

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To correctly interpret what the ‘day of Christ’ is, we should note the following:

1. It Is A Time Period, Not A Single Event.

We have already noted that the expression “day” can mean an extended period of time during which a specific course of events unfolds. This has been demonstrated above under “the day of salvation” and “the day of the Lord.”

2. It Relates To The Believer, Not The Jew Or Gentile.

This is abundantly clear from the first 6 references to the phrase in the New Testament.

a. *Philippians 1:6,10* uses the expression “until the day,” and refer to the present.

b. The other verses use the expression “in the day,” and refer to the future.

— a comparison of *I Corinthians 1:8* with *Jude 24*; *I Thessalonians 5:23*; and *II Corinthians 5:9,10* brings us to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

— a comparison of *I Corinthians 5:5* with *I Corinthians 3:15* takes us to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

— a comparison of *II Corinthians 1:14* and *Philippians 2:16* with *I Thessalonians 2:19, 20* takes us to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

3. Conclusion.

The Day Of Christ refers to that period of time relating to the believer which begins with the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints, encompasses the Heavenly events associated with the Judgment Seat of Christ, and ends with the coming of Christ to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe ... *in that day*. “—*II Thessalonians 1:7-10*.

It begins concurrently with the Day of The LORD (coming like a thief in the night), but ends with the second coming of Christ.

4. Related Scriptures.

Other passages do not use the phrase ‘The Day of Christ’ but appear to refer to it.’

a. According to *II Peter 1:19* we must walk by faith (by taking heed to

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the “*more sure word of prophecy*”) until this day comes with the advent of *the bright and morning “day” Star* — *Revelation 22:16*.

- b. According to *Hebrews 10:25*, faithful attendance in church meetings becomes increasingly important as we approach this day.
- c. According to *Romans 13:11-13*, our lives should be lived in accordance with the nearness of this approaching day.

C. Explained.

The passage in *II Thessalonians 2* is one of the more problematic passages in the prophetic Word. The difficulty lies with the expression, “...*that the day of Christ is at hand...*” (*verse 2*), and the association with it of the apostasy (“falling away”) and the revealing of the man of sin.

1. The Problem.

- a. Two things in verse 3 are said to occur before the day of Christ shall come:

- i. A “Falling Away.”

The Greek word here is ‘apostasia’ from whence we get the English word “apostasy.” This is defined as a “deliberate repudiation of something once held” (generally The Faith, but word is also translated ‘divorcement’).

- ii. The Revealing Of The Antichrist.

There is no doubt as to whom this verse is referring, since *verses 4-10* give a detailed description of the character, career, and collapse of the Man of Sin.

- b. If the return of Christ for His saints “*shall not come*” until a great apostasy from The Faith occurs and the Antichrist is revealed, we are obliged to accept the position that:

- i. The Rapture Is Not Imminent.

This is because certain known events must take place prior to Christ’s return — notably the revealing of the Man of Sin.

- ii. Christians Would Endure At Least Part Of Daniel’s “70TH Week.”

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This means present day believers may expect to enter into, and endure, the period of Tribulation.

The doctrine of imminency is peculiar to the Pretribulational Rapture position. All other views — Midtribulational, Pre-Wrath, and Posttribulational — reject the doctrine of the imminency of Christ’s return.

- c. The usual “answer” to this difficulty is to declare the expression “*the day of Christ*” in verse 2 to be a mistranslation in the Authorized, King James Version.

“Westcott and Hort changed ‘the day of Christ’ to ‘the day of the Lord’ on the basis of certain corrupted manuscripts. Most modern versions have followed Westcott and Hort in this. Many of the ‘pre-tribulation rapture’ fundamentalists have been quick to accept that change, thinking it helps their doctrine. However, the KJV and the Textus Receptus contain ‘the day of Christ’ reading and we shall stick to that and accept what the Scripture says, rather than to change it to suit our doctrine. There is no doubt but what ‘the day of the Lord’ rendering would make the pre-tribulation rapture easier to explain. While this writer steadfastly believes in a pre-trib rapture, nevertheless he will not change the Scripture in order to strengthen his position. Pre-trib writers go astray in accepting rigid rules of interpretation which will not fit the Scriptures, and then are forced to accept the work of modernists who have tampered with the Scriptures, because the mutilated passage supports their rigid rules.”

Indeed, most perversions of the Word of God have “the day of the Lord,” which dissolves all difficulties since the Day of the Lord indeed begins with the manifestation of the Antichrist.

However, we also reject any ‘solution’ which corrects or questions the Word of God. We also realize that “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private [isolated] interpretation,” and that the context of all related Scriptures must be considered.

2. The Answer.

There are two ways of looking at this difficulty:

¹Bynum, E. L. Excerpts from unpublished Sunday School lesson notes, Tabernacle Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas.

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- a. *“The basic mistake made by pre-trib writers is to say that the ‘day of Christ’ always refers to the rapture and that ‘the day of the Lord’ always refers to the day of God’s wrath being poured out. We agree that this is generally true, but not always a hard and fast rule. No doubt II Thess. 2:2; refers to the day of God’s wrath, but after all Christ will be preeminent in bringing this wrath, so why all the furor over ‘Christ’ being mentioned in connection with that day? After all He is ‘the Lord Jesus Christ.’ “²*

OR

- b. The “day of Christ” refers not to the Rapture, but specifically to what *follows* the Rapture.

The context of the passage is that some of the members of the church at Thessalonica had been deceived into believing the Rapture (resurrection) had already taken place — no doubt as a result of some severe persecution (*II Thessalonians 1:4,5*) and false teaching (*II Thessalonians 2:2* — see also: *II Timothy 2:18*).

Consider the following:

- i. The members of the church at Thessalonica were well aware of the doctrines relating to the coming of Christ and associated events — cf. *I Thessalonians 1:10a; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13a; 5:1,2; II Thessalonians 2:5*. If Paul had taught them that the Rapture was going to be either Midtribulational, Pre-Wrath, or Posttribulational and that churches could expect to pass through some or all of Daniel’s 70TH Week, why then were they troubled? Surely they would rejoice that the end was near and endure whatever befell them!
- ii. The term “*at hand*” means ‘the **next** event’ — not necessarily to occur immediately, but next. This fact is demonstrated from the following Scriptures:
- *John 2:13, John 7:2*
 - *John 11:55* — this ‘at hand’ was at least 6 days prior to the actual event, *John 12:1*
 - *Luke 21:29, 30* — trees bud in the Spring, but

²Ibid

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even though summer may be a couple of months off it is ‘at hand’, i.e. next.

For the present-day believer it is the Rapture (an event) which is at hand (next) — *Philippians 4:5, 1 Peter 4:7*, **not** the Day of Christ (a period), although it immediately follows. However, for the ‘left-behind’ believer (if that were possible, which it’s not!) the Day of Christ (an event) would be at hand (next)!

- iii. The Day of Christ and the Day of The LORD have concurrent beginnings. Although the Day of Christ is Heaven-centered and affects the saved (whereas the Day of The LORD is earth-centered and affects the lost) both days begin with the Rapture.

In that sense, the Day of Christ could not come without a wholesale outbreak of lawlessness and the revealing of the Man of Sin — especially if you had been left behind!! What the apostle is saying in effect to the church is, “If the Rapture has taken place and the Day of Christ has come and you are left behind (how troubling and shaking a thought!) you would see the Antichrist. But because you have not seen the Antichrist revealed and since the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is still in effect (*II Thessalonians 2:6,7*) neither the Day of Christ nor the Day of The LORD has arrived.

- iv. This simultaneous beginning of the Day of Christ and the Day of The LORD accounts for the text of *I Thessalonians 5:2-4*. Why would the Day of The LORD ever ‘overtake’ the believers — unless the Lord intends for His churches to enter Daniel’s 70TH Week? Answer: because the surprise beginning of both the Day of Christ and the Day of The LORD comes in the twinkling of an eye with the Rapture. It would have to be that the believers at Thessalonica were in darkness (i.e. unsaved) if the great and terrible Day of The LORD was to overtake them as a thief. The same would also apply to the Day of Christ.

I Thessalonians 5:9, in this context, assures the believer that he is not appointed to pass through the wrath of the Day of The LORD on the earth.

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- v. There are a number of important exegetical matters to contemplate in *II Thessalonians*.
- Churches and Christians will suffer tribulation and persecution during the present age — *II Thessalonians 1:4,5*.
 - Church-age tribulation is contrasted with the future period of tribulation during Daniel’s 70TH Week — *1:6*. Apart from being a “*time of Jacob’s [Jewish] trouble*” (*Jeremiah 30:6*), the events on earth immediately following the Rapture will also punish those who persecuted the faithful churches — see: *Revelation 17:6; 19:2*.
 - The consummation of this divine recompense during the 7 year period is the second coming of Jesus Christ with His saints — *1:7-10*. See also: *Revelation 19:11-21*.
 - The apostle’s plea for the church at Thessalonica not to be shaken or troubled is prefaced by a reminder that the next prophetic event they face is the imminent *ingathering* together (full-Rapture) unto Christ — *2:1*.
 - The Day of Christ (and the Day of The Lord) will be heralded in with the sudden apostasy and the revealing of the Antichrist — *2:3*. This sudden apostasy will come when the Hinderer (the Holy Spirit) is taken out of way (*2:7*) as far as His present ministry to the world is concerned and the nations shall completely throw off all restraint (bands and cords — *Psalms 2:2, 3*).
 - That the revealing of the Antichrist follows the Rapture is also demonstrated by the order of John’s rapture experience on Patmos in *Revelation 4:1,2* followed by *6:2*.
 - The desolations which will follow the revealing of the Antichrist are contrasted with the blessings in store for the present-day saints — *2:13* “But..”