

A Biblical View OF THE END TIMES

INTRODUCTION TO THE RAPTURE, PART 3

Week #17; April 19, 2026, 6PM

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REVIEW:

- Last week, we began to pull together the doctrine of the Rapture's imminency and an in-depth understanding of '*the day of the Lord.*'
- Our operative text for doing this was **2 Thessalonian 2:1-9**. This was a letter to a church – a new body of believers that Paul had spent about 3-4 weeks with.
- We learned that Paul had written **2 Thessalonians** very shortly after he had written **1 Thessalonians**, and he had TWO main reasons for writing this **follow-up** letter:
 - (a.) to address confusion, and...
 - (b.) to provide correction.
- These folks Paul was writing to were confused because they thought they were already IN '*the day of the Lord.*' They thought they had missed the Rapture, and they thought they had entered the Tribulation.
- But this is NOT what Paul had taught them! These people were wrestling with these errant ideas because this is what other people – AFTER Paul - had pushed on them.
- To help us understand the correction Paul gave this new body of believers, we did a deep dive on the Biblical definition of '*the day of the Lord.*'
- We learned the following:
 - The term '*day of the Lord*' originates in the OT. It describes those times when God directly intervenes in the affairs of human history.
 - When used that way, this term often carries a 'near-far' twofold application. Some other Bible prophecies hold this dual application as well.
 - Examples in several of the minor prophets show the '*day of the Lord*' first applied to a **regional past historical** event - - but the NT writers then clearly applied those same passages to a **global future eschatological** event.
 - These past "*days of the Lord*" were not literal, 24-hour days – but rather, they were *periods* of judgment.
 - So also, the future and ultimate eschatological '*day of the Lord*' should not be limited to a 24-hour day.
 - The FUTURE '*day of the Lord*' has a two-part nature to it. The Bible shows the future '*day of the Lord*' includes a period of darkness and judgment as well as a period of light and blessing.
 - We looked at multiple passages which make this two-part nature clear, and we reviewed some writings of key Biblical scholars which also affirm this.
 - We saw how the Bible makes it clear that the future eschatological '*day of the Lord*' includes that 7-year timeframe known as the Tribulation, but it also includes the 1000-year Millennial Kingdom.

- Again, the ‘*day of the Lord*’ includes a darkness and judgment phase, followed by a light and blessing phase. This conforms to the pattern of a ‘day’ cycle that was first established in **Genesis** during the Creation account.
- All that we learned about the ‘*day of the Lord*’ prompted us to ask the question, “When does this future eschatological ‘*day of the Lord*’ officially begin?”
- We looked at several passages, and the ‘*thief in the night*’ illustration, which is mentioned several times in several places in Scripture.
- This exercise helped us understand that the future eschatological ‘*day of the Lord*’ begins at the Rapture.
- So - all together, this ‘*day of the Lord*’ that Paul refers to in **2 Thess. 2:1-9** starts with the Rapture, and it ends with the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom.

NOTE: So, NOW we understand a little more about why Paul wrote this passage.

- He was responding to wrong doctrine. He was dealing with things that were not true. It’s why he said to these new believers, ‘*Don’t let anyone deceive you.*’
- He was **addressing confusion** and he was **providing correction**. They had been taught these issues properly from Paul.
- But meantime - others had foisted their own views and ideas on this new church instead. That sort of dynamic continues to happen today – there are always people that want to persuade others of things the Bible is NOT saying.
- Paul had to circle back again and remind these believers once more of the things he’d ALREADY taught them. It’s why he asks them in **vs. 5**, “*Don’t you remember that when I was with you, I used to tell you these things?*”
- This entire situation in this new church is clear if we let the plain text speak.

NOTE: That brings me to the information I want to unpack today. This will be a fascinating lesson. To get into its details, I want to return to our operative passage in **2 Thess. 2:1-9**.

As I shared at the conclusion of our lesson last time, these Thessalonian believers had been taught FOUR things by Paul when he was **FIRST** with them. This gives us an **over-arching four-point outline**, and those things are:

1. They were taught to expect a certain situation –
2. They were taught to understand a specific sequence –
3. They were taught to be assured of certain destiny –
4. They were taught they were preserved against judgment –

We’ll look at the **first two** of these today.

1. FIRST, THEY WERE TAUGHT TO EXPECT A CERTAIN SITUATION.

- One thing is obvious in **2 Thessalonians 2:1-9**: these people did not expect to find themselves in the ‘*day of the Lord.*’ Right there, we should understand that Paul had taught them they would NOT be.
- Again, it’s not a ‘day’ in the classic 24-hour timeframe, but an extended period. It begins at the Rapture of the church as we have already learned.
- But specifically, it is implied that Paul’s readers thought they were already in ‘Daniel’s 70th week’ of **Daniel Ch. 9**. Specifically, they thought they were in the Tribulation.
- Between what others had told them, and the various persecutions they were experiencing, they wondered if they had somehow missed the Rapture.
- This seven-year portion of the entire ‘*day of the Lord*’ is a terrible time - (**Cf. Matt. 24:21, and Jesus’ words**) – “*For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.*”
- The Tribulation will overwhelm human capacity – (**Cf. Rev. 6:17**) - “*For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*”
- That’s why these Thessalonian believers were alarmed to think they were IN the day of the Lord.
 - They weren’t supposed to be there! They expected to be gone.
 - They knew it followed the Rapture. That’s what Paul had said.
 - So they wanted to know what had gone wrong.
- To address their confusion and fear, Paul clarifies the truth by providing an authentic and divinely inspired word **in contrast** to the false teaching they had received.
- **There’s a takeaway for us here:** The plain, factual, bold declaration of Scripture will always expose deceit. Put God’s Word first!
- Paul combats three things as he writes to them:
 - **FIRST, he combats the idea that the ‘prophecy, report, or letter’ was from him.**
 - ✓ We need to be aware that there are many concerted efforts to misrepresent the truth, especially about Bible prophecy.
 - ✓ Sometimes these elements come from sources that seem to be legitimate, but in fact are not!
 - ✓ It is very hard to find SOUND COMPREHENSIVE BIBLICAL teaching on Bible prophecy (lots of charlatans out there).
 - ✓ Besides the Gospel itself, I don’t think any other theme of Scripture is attacked more than Bible prophecy.
 - **SECOND, Paul combats the assertion that the day of the Lord had already come.**
 - ✓ His response is (I paraphrase), “*That’s impossible! You cannot be in the Day of the Lord because certain things must happen first, and those things haven’t happened!*”

IMPORTANT: Paul outlines THREE things that had not yet happened:

- **First, the ‘rebellion,’ ‘apostasy,’ or the ‘falling away’ hadn’t happened (Cf. vs. 3).**
 - ❖ Terms like ‘rebellion,’ ‘apostasy,’ and ‘falling away’ are not good renderings.
 - ❖ The Greek word here is ‘*apostasia*’ which means a ‘departure’ away from something. Most of our English translations seem to suggest the idea of a willful spiritual ‘departure,’ or a spiritual ‘rebellion’ or ‘falling away.’
 - ❖ Some scholars argue this: “Paul is saying the ‘*day of the Lord*’ (**in vs. 2**) hadn’t come because there hadn’t yet been a willful OBVIOUS spiritual ‘falling away’” (**in vs. 3**).
 - ❖ I have good friends and very sound Bible prophecy scholars that take this view. They believe that some sort of major watershed **spiritual** apostasy will need to take place BEFORE the antichrist can be revealed.

NOTE: Keep in mind the natural dilemma that this position poses. The greater church has gone through periods of very **great** spiritual apostasy before (think of The Dark Ages). It is going through that now in our present Laodicean times with many false teachers.

- ❖ There is another view concerning the question of what Paul meant when he mentions this Greek term ‘*apostasia*.’ And that is a **physical departure**.
- ❖ There are various good historical examples to show how the term ‘*apostasia*’ was applied to THIS sort of departure concept.
- ❖ And this conforms well to what Paul mentions as his topical issue in **vs. 1**: ‘*our being gathered to Him.*’
- ❖ This verse clearly refers to the Rapture, and so it makes sense that ‘*apostasia*’ in **vs. 3** is referring to this **physical departure**.

NOTE: One prominent scholar and Bible prophecy teacher that holds this latter view of ‘*apostasia*’ being a physical departure is Dr. Andy Woods. He wrote a book on this matter, and he also has an **excellent** article online called ‘*Second Thessalonians 2:3a — Spiritual or Physical Departure?*’ (on Chafer Seminary’s website). In that article, Dr. Woods states:

*“....the apostasia is not a **spiritual** departure but a **physical** or **spatial** departure. In other words, the apostasia in **2 Thessalonians 2:3** is not speaking of a departure **from the Word** but rather a departure **from the world** through the rapture. In this interpretation, Paul’s simple point is that the Thessalonians were not in the Day of the Lord because they had not yet departed via the rapture. Thus, the Day of the Lord had not yet started because it represents a manifestation of divine wrath, which the Thessalonian believers had been promised an exemption from (**1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9**).”*

WHAT IS MY VIEW?

- Having taught these Bible prophecy series several times, having written articles about this matter, and having faced numerous questions and discussions about it, I have developed my ‘own unique take’ on it.

- I lean towards the interpretation of Dr. Andy Woods that ‘*apostasia*’ in **vs. 3** means a physical departure (AKA the Rapture).
- His arguments are excellent. And besides, I think this position makes good sense given the contextual flow of **2 Thessalonians Ch. 2** and Paul’s own goals in writing.
- But - - I also see room to incorporate the spiritual ‘falling away’ idea as well, and here is how I work that in.
- I have taught that I believe there will be a return of the fallen angels into the sphere of human and earthly experience very soon AFTER the Rapture.
 - I addressed this matter in-depth in prior lessons in this series. The world will think these are aliens, and mankind is being prepped right now to believe this.
 - I believe these fallen angels will convince the remaining world that the Biblical Rapture did NOT happen, but rather **they** took the true Christians off this planet.
 - This explanation – as we’ve learned – is something that these fallen entities are **already** communicating to various leaders within the occultic and New Age movements.
 - Since Scripture tells us ‘*many*’ who think they are saved really are NOT, they too will miss the Rapture, and they will become convinced by this deceptive message from these fallen angels.
 - A great apostasy (or a ‘willful departure from Biblical truth’) will quickly sweep the world. It will persuade many who are left behind in the churches they’d always been part of.
 - A global false religious system that is steeped in New Age and occultic beliefs – as well as in the practices and heresies of Roman Catholicism (we’ll learn later why I say this) – will take over the world soon after the Rapture.
 - **IMPORTANT:** That global false religious system will be something which supports the rise of the antichrist.
 - We know this by discerning the close relationship between the ‘*woman*’ and the ‘*scarlet beast*’ she rides in **Revelation Ch. 17**.
 - So, there is a **willful spiritual departure away from Biblical truth** that takes place in parallel with the rise of the antichrist.
 - However, this dynamic is STILL dependent on the Rapture taking place **first**. Be that so, both interpretations of ‘*apostasia*’ have some relevance here.

NOTE: The bottom line is Paul is making something VERY clear to his readers. He’s saying, “You can’t possibly be in the Tribulation period because your physical departure (or the pre-Tribulation Rapture that I’ve previously taught you) has not happened!”

So – that’s the first of the three things that Paul argues had not happened. The ‘*apostasia*’ had not taken place. Here’s another thing Paul says had not happened, and so they COULD NOT be in the ‘*day of the Lord*.’ It is this:

- **Second, the man of lawlessness had not been revealed.**

- ❖ This point shares some overlap with Paul’s previous argument, but this one is specifically about the antichrist as we see also in **vs. 3**.
- ❖ Paul tells his readers, ‘You cannot be in the *‘day of the Lord’* because nobody knows who the antichrist is. He’s not come on the scene and shown himself.’
- ❖ **IMPORTANT:** We need to understand the antichrist’s rise will be a **process**.
 - His political ascent will NOT be a quick snap of the fingers. It will take some time.

NOTE: We’ll be studying all this much more (later) – but here are the high points for now:

- A globalist takeover will follow in the wake of the Rapture. Many Christians who were patriots, conservatives, and nationalists will not be around anymore to resist this trend - and the Rapture will be the universal crisis the elites have longed for.
- Ten ‘kings’ will arise and be recognized as a group or coalition of some sort after the Rapture (**Cf. Dan. 7:8, Et al**).
- They will not be REAL kings with REAL geographical territory, but they will be so powerful and influential as individuals that they are ‘*as kings*’ in **Rev. 17:12**.
- The antichrist will rise from among this group of ten individuals in **Dan. 7:8**. That implies they must first be organized (maybe ‘recognized’).
- After THAT point, the antichrist will emerge from within their structure somehow.
- This may not be well known from a public point of view. But, it’s still a process, and so it will take an unknown period of time.
- Also, in **2 Thess. 2:9**, we see the antichrist’s political ascent will be ‘*in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders.*’ Again – this suggests a period for ‘*all kinds*’ of these things to be shown.
- The antichrist MAY ‘fly under the radar’ for a bit until he eventually ‘*confirms the covenant with many*’ (**Cf. Daniel 9:27**).
- It’s **that** event that STARTS the Tribulation, and discerning post-Rapture believers will know for certain who the antichrist is at THIS point – but perhaps they may be guessing a bit before.

NOTE: This is all important stuff, because many believers today compress these timelines artificially. It’s as though they feel the Rapture takes place at 8:00AM, the antichrist splashes on the world stage as a political powerhouse at 8:30AM, and he confirms a covenant with Israel at 9:00AM. That line of thinking is not supported at all in Scripture.

So, in reverse perspective here, Paul tells his readers, the antichrist hasn’t been revealed. Therefore, you cannot be in ‘*the day of the Lord*’ if that has not happened.

And before that, the ‘apostasy’ or ‘falling away’ comes first. Paul said, “*Let no one in any way deceive you, for it (‘the day of the Lord’) will not come unless the apostasy comes first...*”

- **(Here’s the third thing Paul brings up). They were taught to expect a certain situation, and Paul specifically combats the notion that they would ever BE in ‘the day of the Lord’ when it DID come.**
 - ❖ Paul had already taught his readers well. They knew enough about ‘*the day of the Lord*’ to know it was a time of God’s final judgment. It was a time of His wrath.
 - ❖ In his first letter (**1 Thessalonians Ch. 4**), just a few weeks before, Paul had also explained the Rapture (**Cf. vss 13-18**) in very great detail.
 - ❖ Some of his readers had been worried they might miss the Rapture, and some were concerned that others had already died and that THOSE folks had missed the Rapture.
 - So, Paul says to them, “No, when the Rapture comes, you’re going!
 - And then in **2 Thessalonians**, he adds, ‘Since the Rapture precedes the Day of the Lord, you won’t miss the Rapture, but you WILL miss the day of the Lord.’”
 - So, all said, they were **taught to expect a certain situation**. Paul reminds them of this.

2. THE NEXT THING IN OUR OVER-ARCHING FOUR-POINT OUTLINE IS THIS: THEY WERE TAUGHT TO UNDERSTAND A SPECIFIC SEQUENCE.

NOTE: (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

- Consider **vs. 13** which says, “*Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant*”
- Ignorance, in matters of eschatology, is not bliss. In fact, our hope and our joy resides in our full knowledge of the truth as God has revealed it to us.
- This recalls **Daniel 9:23** when Daniel has his vision explained to him. He’s told, “*...consider the message and understand the vision...*” (It’s God saying, “Focus. Get this one right.”)

NOTE: With the issue of not being ignorant in view, Paul discloses a detailed sequence of events that take place with the Rapture. There are seven things that occur systematically in **vss. 16-17**. Here they are:

- **#1, the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven** – at some unknown imminent point in the future, Jesus Christ will come down from Heaven.
 - He will descend into our atmospheric space, but He will not come all the way down to this earth.
 - We see in **vs. 17** that we will meet Him ‘*in the clouds.*’
 - This all conforms to what Jesus Himself said in **John 14:3** – “*I will come back and take you to be with me where I am.*”

- **#2, this will happen with a shout** – this is a Greek word signifying a military shout or command such as when a military leader steps out of his tent and shouts an order.
 - This shout – or command – by Jesus is the first thing He does after He descends into our atmospheric space.
 - His command sets in motion the resurrection and bodily translation of all TRUE believers.
- **#3, with the voice of the archangel** – Angels are often used to execute God’s plan. That happens with the Rapture too.
 - This archangel is probably Michael because this moment will be the close of the church age and the return of God’s attention to the redemption and restoration of Israel.
 - Michael is noted in **Dan. 12:1** to be ‘*the great prince and protector*’ of the Jewish nation.
 - We cannot be sure of the archangel’s identity – we can only guess given the things we know.
 - We are also not told what the archangel says, but if we continue in the military vein, then God’s command is likely repeated and the systematic program of the Rapture begins.
- **#4, we see all this happens with the trump of God** – That’s the next audible. There is the shout by Jesus Christ, the ‘voice of the archangel,’ and THEN the trump (or trumpet) of God.
 - Trumpets were used for many purposes, but chiefly for important announcements or to call for assembly or to rally troops.
 - This trump is NOT the same as the 7th trumpet in Revelation. Some folks like to feel that it is in order to argue for a mid-trib Rapture.
 - But here we see the Tribulation has not even started yet (more on all of those things later in this series).
- **#5, we see the dead in Christ shall rise first** – makes sense, they have six feet further to go.
 - The ‘*in Christ*’ criteria limits the resurrection at this time to those who were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.
 - These are dead ‘church age’ saints. They are all the TRUE believers who have died - from the start of the church age in **Acts Ch. 2**, and up to this point of the Rapture.
 - OT saints – as we will see later in this series – will be resurrected at a subsequent point in God’s prophetic plan - **after** the Tribulation.
 - Here we see the Rapture involves the phrase ‘*rise first.*’ This cannot be a reference to ‘rising from the dead,’ because that would imply that others need to ‘rise from the dead’ **next**.
 - But the only ‘others’ involved here are those who are already ALIVE. They don’t have to ‘rise from the dead.’

- This is all about ‘rising’ from the earth and into the clouds. The ‘dead in Christ will RISE first,’ and then those who are alive and remain will RISE next. There is a delay between the two groups.
- This also squashes the notion that we will simply vanish or disappear. That’s a popular idea, but it’s not Biblical.
- **#6, THEN we that are alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds.**
 - As I said, there is a delay here, and we don’t know how long. It could be minutes – possibly an hour or two.
 - It’s enough time that Paul says **‘then.’** There is an order of events.
 - The resurrection and translation of dead saints will be followed by the translation of saints who are alive.
 - As I said, this second group will RISE too. I believe the unbelieving world will watch both groups gradually ascend (think of the many scenarios and their implications - - utter chaos on earth).
- **#7, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord –** We meet our Lord and we permanently remain with Him from that point, fulfilling the promises of **John 14:1-3.**
 - Paul concludes in **1 Thess. 4:18** by saying, *‘Therefore comfort (encourage) one another with these words.’*
 - Logically, this instruction makes zero sense if we are not intended to understand all this.
 - This instruction to promote and have comfort makes no sense if God INTENDS for us to endure His wrath in the Tribulation.
 - This instruction makes no sense if we are supposed to take our chances against the extreme odds and hope to not be martyred.

NOTE: Now, I want to move over to **1 Corinthians 15:51-54.** It’s here that Paul adds a few more details about the Rapture, including the following:

- The Rapture is a ‘mystery.’ That means it was ‘unknown’ within the content of the OT, but it is now divinely revealed in the NT.
- Not everyone is going to die.
 - Every true believer has hoped to miss that ‘divine appointment with death,’ but the Rapture will be a moment that preserves some from dying.
- Everybody, regardless of having died or not, is going to be changed the same way.
 - It is that supernatural change – that bodily transition from mortal into immortal, from perishable into imperishable, from corruption into incorruption – all of that takes place *‘in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye.’*
 - We go from ordinary to glorified in a split second. This is a description of our **physical change**, and not a description of our **physical departure**.
 - We do not disappear and vanish, leaving our dirty underwear and dentures on the floor. That’s a wrong concept that was pushed for decades; it became the basis for the popular *Left Behind* book series.

- As we saw in **1 Thessalonians Ch. 4**, we will ‘rise’ to meet the Lord in the air. We will rise as Elijah did, as Jesus did, and as the Two Witnesses of **Rev. 11:12** will do. Their enemies will watch them go up. Others will watch us go up too.

NOTE: Our glorified bodies will be like the bodies of Jesus Christ (more on this topic later in this series).

- These events are all associated with ‘*the last trumpet.*’ (a few comments about this)
 - The significance of ‘*the last trumpet*’ (**Cf. 1 Cor. 15:52**) is probably twofold.
 - **First**, it probably signals the end of the church age. It’s not unusual to find the word ‘*last*’ being used to describe events involving the end of the church age, like ‘*last times.*’
 - Various uses of the word ‘*last*’ to denote the conclusion of the church age are found in **Acts 2:17; 2 Timothy 3:1–5; Hebrews 1:1; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:5, 20; 1 John 2:18; Jude 1:18 Et al**.
 - **Second**, ‘*the last trumpet*’ may also be a technical term that indicates the gathering of the church.
 - In **Numbers Ch. 10**, the sounding of a trumpet was employed to gather an assembly of the people or to signal a change of locations.
 - Here in **1 Cor. Ch. 15**, ‘*the last trumpet*’ may infer a heavenly rallying call indicating that the church is being fully assembled.
 - The church will now change locations (from earth to heaven), much like Israel was summoned together to change locations in the wilderness.

NEXT WEEK: We’ll continue our study on the Rapture. We’ll look at the next two points on our primary outline from **2 Thess. Ch. 2:1-9**. We’ll see how Paul’s readers were taught to be assured of certain destiny – and they were taught they were preserved against judgment.



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The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don’t pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don’t teach what is NOT there. Don’t force a passage to mean something it really doesn’t.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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