

During the Acts period, Paul wrote clearly about the hope he and all believers were expecting. They were waiting for the Lord to return to the earth out of heaven.

The modern day “rapture” theory has exposed millions of Christians to doubts, uncertainty and weakened faith. How many times in living memory can we recount the false joy and disappointment experienced after yet another zealous Christian individual or group proclaims the imminent silent thief in the night snatching away of the Church? The reason why we constantly entertain such false claims is because the rapture concept is the breeding ground for them. You and I want truth not tradition as the basis of our understanding.

Last lesson we looked at the Feasts of Israel in Paul’s great resurrection chapter of 1 Cor. 15. The Lord as the First Fruit of Unleavened Bread, and the believers of that time were to be resurrected at the last trumpet of the Feasts of Trumpets. The Feasts of Israel know nothing of God’s above heavenly purposes involving us today. We examined Paul’s quotes at the conclusion of his exposition and saw 1Cor. 15 looked to the restoration of Israel, a purely earthly theme totally unrelated to our inheritance today in heavenly places. Let us now identify this identical Israeli theme in Thessalonians.

We return to the “rapture” passage” and again ask all readers to find one word or phrase which actually says anyone, including the Lord, would return back into Heaven. This passage is about those who are asleep in Christ and like 1Cor.15, the Lord died and rose again as the first fruit and the harvest is at the (last) trumpet. Here are Israel’s Feasts exactly as they are in 1Cor.15.

1Th 4:13 But I would not have you ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others who have no hope.

1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. The first fruit of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. The Harvest, the faithful of that calling at Trumpets.

In Matt. 24:1-3 the disciples asked about the final Feast grouping; the Lord’s coming (Trumpets) and “harvest ingathering” which is the Feast of Tabernacles. The Lord’s discourse included the wars Israel will experience and the Anti-messiah setting up an image in Israel’s Temple. He then describes His second coming at the Feast of Trumpets and following that is the Feast of Atonement and “harvest ingathering” called Tabernacles. The Lord descends to sit on David’s throne as per Matt. 25:31 and we note in verses 1-6 wise **virgins** go to “meet” Him as He comes to them. All this belongs to God’s earthly purposes for the world through Israel.

In 2Cor.11:2 Paul also describes the believers of that time as “chaste **virgins**” and in 1Thess.4:17 they were going to “meet” the Lord as He comes back to them. If Matt.24-25 is about the earth, then so are Corinthians and Thessalonians; how consistent can the Scriptures be? In Matt.16:27 & 25:31 the Lord comes back with His holy angels. This is exactly what Paul writes about in Thessalonians, see 1Thess. 3:13 and 2Thess.1:7 and compare 1Cor.6:3.

It could not be made any plainer. The Old Testament Feasts of Israel are the great “second coming” elements in Matt.24, 1Cor.15, Thessalonians and the Day of the Lord in Revelation. All these were written before Israel were put aside at the end of the book of Acts.

Here are some comparative passages for your consideration:

Mat 24:9 Then they will deliver you up to be afflicted and will kill you. And you will be hated of all nations for My name's sake.

Mat 24:29 And immediately after the **tribulation** of those days,

2Th 1:5 For *this* is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer,

2Th 1:6 since *it* is a righteous thing with God to repay **tribulation** to those who trouble you,

(Note Paul does not tell the Thessalonians to flee into the Judean hills when they hear about the image being set up because they don’t live in Israel but Paul prays for their preservation unto the second coming of the Lord, 1Thess.5:23.)

Mat 24:11 And many false prophets will rise and deceive many.

Mat 24:15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand).

2Th 2:3 Let not anyone deceive you by any means. For *that Day shall not come* unless there first comes a falling away, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition,

2Th 2:4 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, setting himself forth, that he is God.

2Th 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming,

2Th 2:9 whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Rev 13:11-14 And it deceives those dwelling on the earth, because of the miracles which were given to it to do before the beast, saying to those dwelling on the earth that they should make an image to the beast who had the wound by a sword and lived.

How can we continue to entertain any thought of an imminent “rapture” when Paul says nothing happens until after the image in Israel’s Temple? How can Thessalonians, which has as its prophetic key the setting up of that image, be anything other than the hope of Daniel, Isaiah, Matthew and Revelation?

Thessalonians were written in the Acts period when Israel stood and the truth for today had not been revealed. I think we could write the following verse over Matt.24-25, 1Cor.15, both Thessalonians letters and the book of Revelation don’t you? Certainly Paul refers to this passage in Romans 15:10 where he writes of the hope at that time.

Deu 32:43 Rejoice, O, nations, *with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His foes and will be merciful to His land, to His people.*

The evidence is overwhelming. Up until the end of the book of Acts the hope before believers was the Lord’s parousia, that is, the second and third stages of His “second coming”; His descent out of Heaven and His feet on the earth. Those faithful ones of that time were to be caught up to a meeting in the clouds of the air as the Lord descended back to the earth. This took place after the tribulation, those last three and a half years which followed the setting up of the image in Israel’s temple. This did not take place because Israel was set aside at Acts 28 and this hope was postponed.

If there was ever an opportunity for Paul to describe or introduce the first stage (that is the phaneroo and epiphaneia) of the Lord’s “second coming” as a hope, then the epistles to the Thessalonians would certainly be the place to do that but Paul did not.

It wasn’t that Paul did not use the words phaneroo or epiphaneia during the Acts period. Paul uses phaneroo about 15 times in his Acts period writings but not once does he use this word in reference to the Lord’s second coming or as the basis of a hope. Please compare these uses of phaneroo in the Acts period, Roms.1:19, 3:21, 16:26, 1Cor.4:4, 2Cor. 2:14, 3:3, 5:10-11, 7:12 and Hebrews 9:26. Now compare this passage written after Acts, Col.3:4. Paul had no idea during Acts that the first stage of the Lord’s second coming, the appearing, was a hope before any company of believers.

What about epiphaneia another post Acts word for our hope today, did Paul use this word during Acts? Yes, once only in Thessalonians as given here:

2Th 2:8 *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness* (epiphaneia) *of His coming* (parousia),

Just as Paul does not use phaneroo as a word describing the hope of the Acts period so he does not use epiphaneia in the Acts period to describe the hope of that time either. Paul uses epiphaneia to emphasize the parousia aspect of the Lord’s “second coming”. For those who would like to compare Paul’s use of epiphaneia during Acts and after, please compare these references. Epiphaneia during Acts once only here 2Thess.2:8. Now compare Paul’s use of the word after Acts, 1Tim.6:14, 2Tim.1:10, 4:1:8 and Titus 2:13. What an amazing difference! We have been instructed to “distinguish things that differ” and here are marked differences in Paul, will we recognize and acknowledge them?

In the Acts period, Paul, like Peter and John, knew about the first stage of the Lord’s “second coming”, that great blazing forth of light which revealed the Lord at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly places, but Paul gave no inkling, not one hint in his Acts period letters, including Thessalonians, that anyone was to participate in that first stage of the Lord’s return.

In Thessalonians Paul knew of the manifestation, that great light revealing of the Lord which begins His “second coming”, but that appearing first stage is not the hope of the believers of that Acts period economy.

There are some right dividers who assert Paul had a progressive revelation, that he was gradually given the present truth, proclaiming Acts as a transition period. Paul's dramatic and clear cut contrasting use of phaneroo and epiphaneia before and after Acts 28 certainly demands a reassessment of that theory. The error that the church started at either Acts 7, 9 or 13 is not sustainable by any progressive revelation theory.

Our hope is not found in the Moses and the Prophets, Matthew, Romans, Corinthians, Thessalonians or the book of Revelation. Our hope today is found in Paul's post Acts 28 letters; those written after Israel were set to one side and God's purpose for them postponed. However, the timing of all hopes is the same event. Please consider this verse for your further study;

[Eph 1:9-10](#) (the mystery is) [for an administration of the fullness of times, to head up all things in Christ, both the things in Heaven, and the things on earth, even in Him,](#)

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