

Last lesson we examined “the rapture” theory in the light of Scripture context. Not one word or phrase in 1Thess.4:13-18 provided any hint that either our Lord or those who would “meet” him in the air were returning back into heaven. Those believers were going to “meet” Him as He descended out of Heaven to the earth just like Moses did in Exodus 19.

We have noted that the Gospels and Acts were not the beginning of anything but were in fact the “ends of the ages”. During that time the believers were to be blessed with faithful Abraham in the inheritance promised to him (Gal.3). They were expecting the Lord’s return. For recent lesson in this series please visit;
www.bibleunderstanding.com/pastissues.htm .

This lesson we shall examine the second letter to the Thessalonians which will also prove the hope was all earthbound. In his second letter, Paul wrote of prophetic things regarding Israel and her final days.

When Paul wrote these letters, Israel remained God’s people (Roms.11:1-2). Israel was not cast aside at the Cross or Acts 2 or 9 or 13. God’s purposes for the earth were in operation during that time. When Israel was finally put aside at Acts 28, the hope of Thessalonians was postponed and a new hope revealed. We are working towards making this new hope clear to all our readers.

Before we look at the second letter here is the opening commendation of Paul in the first;

1Th 1:9 For they themselves witness what kind of entrance we had to you, even how you turned from idols to God in order to serve the living and true God,

1Th 1:10 and to wait for His Son from Heaven (whom He raised from the dead), Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

The preposition “ek” translated “from” in verse 10 is defined by Strong’s as “out of, from, by, and away from” and not in any sense means to go to Heaven with His Son.

In chapter two Paul assures them he wanted to visit but was hindered;

1Th 2:18 Therefore we desired to come to you, truly I, Paul, both once and twice; but Satan hindered us.

1Th 2:19 For what is our hope or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are you not even to be in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

The original word for presence means “in front of, before, as in the presence of” and the original word for “coming” which is parousia, means “a being near”, “the coming, the arrival of”. The believers were only going to meet Him when He arrived. Please see these Acts period references where “parousia” means arrival, not departure; 1Cor.16:17, 2Cor.7:6, 10:10. After Israel were set aside at Acts 28, Paul uses parousia twice and never in a context of our Lord “second coming”, see Phils.1:26 and 2:12.

Parousia was used in ancient manuscripts to denote the arrival of a dignitary, not the departure of anyone to go and be where the dignitary originated. Parousia is used by Paul seven times in the two Thessalonian epistles. Here are a couple more references;

1Th 3:12 And may the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another and toward all, even as we also toward you,

1Th 3:13 in order to establish your hearts blameless in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

When considering verse 13 we need to remember that “with all His saints” might not mean with all the Christians. Saints means “holy ones” and could refer to either Christians or other beings obedient to the Lord. Consider this verse;

Mat 25:31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit on the throne of His glory.

By the way, there are 76 references to angel and angels in the book of the Revelation another book which describes the Lord’s “second coming” in power.

The Acts period hope was the Lord’s parousia, that is, His personal presence on the earth. This they expected in their lifetime and Paul wanted the Thessalonians to be blameless right up until that day of glory;

1Th 5:23 And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blamelessly at the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We now turn to 2Thessalonians will show beyond doubt that the hope was the return of the Lord to the earth to deliver Israel from their enemies.

In the 2nd chapter Paul repeats that the Lord Jesus was coming back to the earth and they would be gathered to meet Him in the clouds as He descended;

2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, my brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

Then Paul goes on to set this return of the Lord in exact frames of reference so that His friends would not be deceived. These terms of reference are the very things which show the hope of Thessalonians is not ours today;

2Th 2:2 that you should not be soon shaken in mind or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word or letter, as through us, as if the Day of Christ is at hand.

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 2:5 Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you?

2Th 2:6 And now you know what holds back, for him to be revealed in his own time.

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, only he is now holding back until it comes out of the midst.

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 (parousia),

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

2Th 2:10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness in those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved.

Paul clearly says in this passage that the “Day” they were looking for did not come until after apostasy, deception and the “abomination of desolation” was set up in Israel’s Temple in Jerusalem. What has Israel’s Temple to do with any heavenly purpose? Thessalonians is a context of Israel’s prophecy and prophecy of Israel is not prophecy about us today.

The Day of the Lord is one great subject of prophecy and the reader is encouraged to search through the prophets regarding this great day and read the elements in those O.T. passages. The Book of the Revelation is all about this “day of the Lord” (Revelation 1:1-2, 10) and so are the epistles to the Thessalonians. Remember, prophecy does not exist about the Church which is His Body, see Ephs.3:8-9 and Col.1:26.

The setting of Thessalonians is all prophetic and easily identified with Israel and the last years of its history. Please consider these words and phrases which link Thessalonians with Daniel, Isaiah, Matthew, Corinthians and Revelation as well as other Acts period epistles;

2Th 2:2 .. the Day of Christ (some have the day of the Lord) shall not come unless

2Th 2:3 ...first .. a falling away... the man of sin ... the son of perdition,

2Th 2:4 ... exalts himself above .. God, or that is worshiped ... he sits as God in the temple of God, setting himself .. God.

2Th 2:7 .. the mystery of lawlessness is already working, only he is now holding back until it comes out of the midst.

2Th 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed,

2Th 2:9 whose coming .. is .. with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Notice in this version nothing is “taken out of the way” in verse 7 but rather something “comes out of the midst”.

Let us see how Thessalonians fit in the purposes of God for the earth by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In the book of the Revelation we have the terrible trinity, Satan and the two beasts.

Satan is identified as the “old serpent” (Rev.12:9) who, having been cast out of heaven, attempts to destroy the faithful remnant then makes war on Israel, Rev.12:12-17. Eventually Satan is bound for 1000 years (Rev.20:2) then released and eventually destroyed, (Rev.20:7-10). Satan’s purposes against God and Israel are facilitated by the two beasts.

We read about the first beast (the antichrist) in Revelation 13:1-8. We notice that this individual is a great military power for as verse 4 says, “who is able to make war with it?” We notice this beast has a pseudo resurrection (v3) and it made war with “the saints”. This is not the church which is His Body but Israel. This military engagement lasts 3.5 years and the antichrist is empowered by Satan, the dragon.

The second beast is the first beast's promotions manager. We can read about this second beast in Rev.13:11-18 (cp 16:13-14, 20:10). This second beast is the false prophet who deceives Israel by bringing fire down from heaven and other great wonders, compare 2Thess.2:9 above. This false prophet sets up an image to the beast which is given power to speak and worship of this image is demanded. I believe this to be the abomination of desolation of Daniel, Matthew and Thessalonians. Compare the image in Daniel 3.

So this terrible trinity of Revelation is composed of Satan who empowers an undefeatable military commander and a false prophet who deceives Israel with false signs and wonders. I think we have a great harmony between prophecies of the O.T., Thessalonians and Revelation. Eventually many kings of the prophetic world, who were also deceived by false miracles, gathered with forces to destroy Israel for "these will make war with the Lamb who will overcome them" (Rev. 17:14). The Lord returns to save Israel by destroying these armies set against "His people". These events are described as "the fullness of the gentiles" and you can read about them in Romans 11:25-26 and Luke 21:20-27.

To sum up then, we have Satan on the earth, the Antichrist who is a military power and the false prophet. These characters are set in the prophetic earth and the final years of Israel's history when an image is set up in Israel's temple. In other words, the book of Revelation deals with the "kingdoms of this world" (Rev.11:15, 15:1-4) and the crushing of gentile dominion over Israel when the Lord returns to take his authority. This is precisely the setting of Thessalonians.

Now let us consider some other passages of Scripture which speak of the same things. For brevity I cannot post every verse but trust the reader will examine each reference. Please compare Is.11:4 (where "smite the earth" could be "smite the oppressor"), Daniel 7:24-25, 9:26-27, 11:31, 12:11, Joel and then this passage;

Mat 24:6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled, for all *these things* must occur; but the end is not yet.

Mat 24:7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in different places.

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).

Mat 24:16 Then let those in Judea flee into the mountains.

Mat 24:17 Let him on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house;

Mat 24:18 nor let him in the field turn back to take his clothes.

Mat 24:19 And woe to those who are with child, and to those who give suck in those days! (Let the reader reconsider 1Cor.7)

Mat 24:20 But pray that your flight is not in the winter, nor on the sabbath day; (Sabbaths no hindrance to a Gentile)

Mat 24:21 for **then shall be great tribulation**, such as has not been since *the beginning of the world to this time*; no, nor ever shall be.

Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here *is* Christ! Or, There! Do not believe it.

Mat 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders; so much so that, if *it were* possible, they would deceive even the elect.

Our Lord speaks to the 12 disciples of these very things which are later featured in the book of Revelation and Thessalonians. Not only so, He goes on to add specific details as to what will take place after the wars, deception, false christs and false prophets;

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

Mat 24:30 And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of *the heavens* to the other.

How plain can words be? "immediately AFTER the tribulation of those days... they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory.. angels....trumpet ..gather His elect.

The coming of the Lord in Matthew 24 is in an identical setting of Thessalonians. If Matthew 24 and Revelation is about Israel's deliverance by the Lord's coming, then so is Thessalonians.

The word "elect" in Matthew 24 refers to Israel and it is they who shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven. It is Israel who will see Christ at God's right hand from where He descends to the earth. It is the tribes of Israel who will "mourn for Him", see Matt.24:30, Zech.12:10 and Isaiah 53.

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians are perfectly in harmony with these prophecies regarding Israel. The abomination of desolation is the image set up by the false prophet in the middle of the last 7 years of Israel's history. The "lawless one" of

2Thessalonians 2 is destroyed with the Lord's coming, that is His parousia or personal presence on the earth. Not one element of Thessalonians has to do with God's' purposes for the church which is His Body seated in the heavenly places above the clouds and the air and the prophetic earth.

The setting of 2Thessalonians is exactly the same setting of Matthew 24, the prophecies listed above and the book of Revelation. The "second coming" of our Lord is after the final 3.5 years of Israel's history which years are called the "day of Jacob's trouble (see Jer.30:7). During that time the remnant wandering in the wilderness will be praying "lead us not into tribulation but deliver us from the evil one". If these things of prophecy, Revelation and Matthew have nothing to do with our Lord as Head of the Church which is His Body in the heavenly places, then how can the same things in Thessalonians be about us and our hope today?

After those horrific final three and a half years, our Lord descends to the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He saves Israel by destroying the armies set against them. These events were in view during the Acts period and the believers of that time were waiting for the Lord's return. They were waiting for His return because they would go and meet Him as He descended, then they would rule and reign with Him on the earth. However, Israel and the hope associated with her was put aside and postponed at the end of Acts. These things will all take place in the future. The "rapture" is a false concept of a past and postponed hope dragged into the present.

The "rapture" theory is a human endeavor which mixes the hope before us today with the earthly purposes of God for Israel. The "rapture" drags back from Paul's later epistles a hope which has nothing to do with the earth and forces it into an earthly context and thus blinds nearly all of Christendom from their hope of today.

May the Lord give us space and time to show this new hope of glory as found in those letters of Paul written after Israel were put aside.