

BEING READY FOR THE END TIMES

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

INTRODUCTION: Do you believe that the End Times described in Scripture are rapidly approaching?

I generally find people divided into two camps in answer to that question.

- Those who are somewhat familiar with what the Bible says about the End Times usually say, “Yes, I believe the End Times are approaching.”
- Those who say, “No,” are usually those who do not believe that the events described in the Bible, as a part of the End Times, will really happen at all.

But my friend, I tell you with all benevolent intent,

- no matter how you answer this question
- no matter whether you believe the End Times are coming quickly upon us or not

You need to be ready for those times.

I am not saying, I am right and you are wrong, even though I obviously am genuinely and seriously committed to believing the days of Christ’s coming rapidly approach.

But I am saying that even if I err in my understanding of the timing, God Himself tells each of us that we need to be ready. Those of us reading through the New Testament have read it the last two weeks in a row, first in 1 Thessalonians and now again in 2 Thessalonians.

God has always told His children to be ready for His coming, to live ready. If He sent this word to the Thessalonians nearly 2,000 years ago, how much more we need to heed His message.

Paul wrote the first time to the believers at Thessalonica to confirm what he had already taught them when he was with them in person. But even after Paul’s letter, which we know as 1 Thessalonians, because of false teachers claiming that Paul had

changed his mind, the Thessalonians became confused. So Paul writes in his second letter:

2 Thessalonians 2:1–5 (ESV)

1 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

3 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

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

Now quickly, for those of you who are accustomed to following my reading using the NKJV, I am not making a permanent switch. It is just that in this passage, the ESV and most of the other good contemporary translations do a better job than the Old KJV or the New KJV in translating this text because they are drawing from what has been learned from the abundance of New Testament Manuscripts uncovered by archeologists.

So, what does God tell us about being ready for the End Times?

I. BELIEVERS, STAND FAST IN YOUR HOPE THAT CHRIST WILL GATHER ALL OF US TO TAKE US TO HEAVEN.

- A. Paul refers to the gathering together with Christ in the first verse of this passage we just read, but he described it in his previous letter.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NKJV)

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive *and*

remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

This event is what we often call the Rapture of the Church.

Jesus spoke of this day and said that it would happen during a period on the earth like in the days of Noah, when wickedness, evil, and violence was pervasive upon the face of the earth.

Jesus said that two men would be out working in the field. One would be taken and the other left.

Folks, one day, and I believe it will be soon, but one day, whether it is soon or not, Jesus says it will happen:

- The Lord Jesus will appear in the sky.
- The trumpet of God will sound out of the Third Heaven.
- The archangel will shout.
- Suddenly all the men and women of faith who have died, people who had trusted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior while they were living, some of their bodies having been in their graves for centuries, but all that time their souls and spirits with the Lord.
- They will come back with Christ, and the Lord will command the atoms that made up their bodies, whether mixed with the dust of the ground, the ashes of the fire, or the water of the oceans, the Lord Jesus will command those dead bodies to rise, to be rejoined with soul and spirit, and made into a new glorified believer, a new resurrected follower of Christ.
- And when Jesus has finished raising the bodies of all His followers who have died, then He will turn to those believers who are still living.
- And their bodies, our bodies, will be transformed, in the twinkling of an eye, and we too will be raised off of the surface of this old earth to meet our Lord in the air.
- And He is going to take us all home to be with Him in Heaven.

That is what Paul is talking about when he says

2 Thessalonians 2:1 (ESV) Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him ...

B. Do not be alarmed because some are telling you that you missed the Rapture because the Day of the Lord has already begun.

1. **The Day of the Lord is a time of God's fierce judgment upon the earth.**

- It was prophesied in the Old Testament.
- It was sometimes called the great and terrible Day of the Lord

Isaiah 13:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes,

Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger,

To lay the land desolate;

And He will destroy its sinners from it.

2. **Paul had already taught them that the Day of the Lord came after the Rapture when believers were gathered together in Heaven.**

3. **Now somebody was telling them the Day of the Lord had begun already.**

4. **This meant they had missed the Rapture!**

That is why Paul says to them

2 Thessalonians 2:1–2 (ESV)

1 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Paul says, "Don't be shaken up. Don't be alarmed. It is not true. The Day of the Lord has not yet come."

In verse 15 Paul says,

2 Thessalonians 2:15-17 (NKJV) 15 Therefore, brethren, **stand fast** and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

Paul is saying

BELIEVERS, STAND FAST IN YOUR HOPE THAT CHRIST WILL GATHER ALL OF US TO TAKE US TO HEAVEN... before His fierce judgment falls upon the earth.

And then Paul proceeds to prove how he knows the Day of the Lord has not yet come.

But before we look at what Paul said to renew the hope of the Thessalonians and give them a certain comfort that they would not be present on the face of the earth to face the great and terrible Day of the Lord, let us pause for a very contemporary note.

There are many preachers and teachers today who tell people that the Rapture will not come until the middle or the end of the Tribulation.

What is the Tribulation? The Tribulation is the name Jesus gave to the seven years of trouble, tragedy, and sorrow that would fall upon the earth with the fierce judgment of God.

Matthew 24:21 (NKJV) For then there will be great **tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The Day of the Lord is a part of the Tribulation.

The impact upon believers today is the same as the false teachers made upon the Thessalonians.

- God had given believers the promise that no matter what evil befalls you in your life,
- God is good, just, and righteous.

- There will be a day when all the wrong is made right.
- Justice will begin to fully arrive on the Day of the Lord.
- But do not fear, you who have trusted in Christ will be spared from enduring the wrath of that Day.
- You will be gathered together with all the other believers into Heaven as the unrighteous begin to face the justice of Holy God on the great and terrible Day of the Lord.
- In fact, in resurrection bodies, you shall return with Christ on the culminating Day of His victory over Satan and all evil, to begin His reign of righteousness over the earth.

But the false teachers stole that promise, that hope, and that comfort from the Thessalonians.

The Holy Spirit through Paul said to them,

BELIEVERS, STAND FAST IN YOUR HOPE THAT CHRIST WILL GATHER ALL OF US TO TAKE US TO HEAVEN... before His fierce judgment falls upon the earth.

And dear brothers and sisters, when some preacher or teacher tries to tell you that you will have to endure the wrath of God falling upon this earth in the tribulation, thus destroying your hope and comfort, remember what the Holy Spirit says to you here in 2 Thessalonians,

BELIEVERS, STAND FAST IN YOUR HOPE THAT CHRIST WILL GATHER ALL OF US TO TAKE US TO HEAVEN... before His fierce judgment falls upon the earth.

So, hopefully now that you see the very contemporary application of Paul's words, you may be pretty curious about the proof he offers.

Paul says, "They tell you that you missed the Rapture because the Day of the Lord has already begun." But ...

C. The rise and recognition of the antichrist must precede the Day of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:3–5 (ESV) 3 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

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

Paul is saying, “Brothers and sisters, think! I have taught you this. A part of the Day of the Lord is Jesus defeating Satan and the antichrist. So before the Day of the Lord, the antichrist has to be revealed and has to begin his wicked work.

Paul is saying, “That has not happened yet, so we cannot be living in the terrible Day of the Lord.”

Therefore

The second thing we should do to be ready for the End Times is

II. WE SHOULD BE WORKING.

A. We should not lazily look to the sky watching for the Rapture.

That is what some of the Thessalonians did, and Paul rebuked them.

2 Thessalonians 3:11–12 (NKJV) 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

God tells us in the Ten Commandments, “Six days you shall labor and work.” As long as a person is healthy and able he or she should work to provide for their own needs and the needs of their family.

That is God’s plan.

But God has more of a plan for us believers than just to earn money for our livelihood. So Paul says,

2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NKJV) *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.*

In other words, **keep doing the work Christ Himself has given you to do.**

- Walk in faith, filled with the Spirit.
- Make disciples everywhere you go.
- Go to your home town and to every town and to out of town.

Because the promise, hope, and comfort you have in Christ does not belong to everyone.

Those who have not yet trusted Christ as their own Lord and Savior will be left behind upon this earth to endure or to be killed in the seven years of tribulation. They will face the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. If they choose to remain apart from Christ, they will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Do not grow weary of ministering in Jesus' name so that you can minister to them the words of hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Oh dear teacher, don't get tired of teaching men or women this word that is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold.
- Oh dear children's worker, don't grow weary of having your patience tested by rowdy children, but remember how much your Father in Heaven loves them and how much easier faith comes to them than when they are older.
- Oh sweet singer who loves to sing the praises of God, don't get tired of passing on that love to little ones who learn so easily and readily the songs of Zion that they will remember the rest of their lives.
- Oh folks, as long as God gives us breath and health, let us live for His purpose. Let us teach the Bible to our children, make disciples of our teens, and grow up our fellow adults to maturity.
- Listen, I know sometimes the work gets tough. I know sometimes we need a rest. So take a rest ... for two weeks, not a year, or two years, or ten years, or the rest of your life.
- Let's commit our lives to the Lord to wear out rather than rust out. Let us spend our short lives here doing good like the Master told us to do.

Do not get tired of telling the good news!

May your tongue never be weary of telling them that Jesus loved them so much that He went to a cross and paid the death penalty there for their sins. May your lips continue repeating how Jesus rose from the dead, proving that He could give to them eternal life, if they would trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

Oh dear brother, oh sweet sister in the Lord, don't get lazy in the comfort of knowing that one day the trumpet will sound and the archangel will call out and you will rise to meet the Lord in the air.

Until that day, commit your life to work to take others with you.

Don't, please, don't grow weary in well-doing.

CONCLUSION: How can you be ready for the End Times?

1. Stand fast in the certain hope He will gather you with all the believers one day in Heaven.
2. Until then, work! Provide for yourself and your family and work in the Kingdom for your Master, serving Him and bringing others into the family. And don't get lazy doing it!