

This letter is a follow up as are most “second” epistles. It became necessary after confusion arose in the minds of the believers in Thessalonica. While they did not have the benefit of modern communications or even a reliable postal service, news still managed to get out and about. Perhaps the carrier of the first epistle had returned with information about what had happened. He also returned with some good news as well. They were carrying on well spiritually despite continued severe persecution. Their faith was growing “exceedingly.” Love was flourishing—personal love for one another abounded. What an atmosphere to live in, especially while suffering. What a place to raise children. Any suffering they experienced was from others without. No attacks or snubs occurred among them. (In fact later in this epistle Paul had to exhort them to lovingly impose a social snub on some who had ceased working for their living.) They were hanging together in the face of very uncomfortable conditions Satan was bringing upon them because of their faith. Their faith was so marked that Paul gloried in them to the other assemblies he visited. He previously remarked on this early in his first letter, 1:4. And their mutual love overcame all the affliction the enemy could muster against them. Here we learn of the cunning of the devil and those whom he moves to do his work. If head-on opposition doesn’t faze faith then perhaps crafty deception and deceit will. If he cannot discourage the faith of a believer by force he will try to undermine it with a lie. He displayed this tactic in his encounter with the first humans. He lied outright and deceived the woman. The Lord Jesus exposes him for what he is. The Jews opposing Jesus had become unwitting but willing agents of the devil.

*John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. {of his own: or, from his own will or disposition}*

And they continued to be after the death and resurrection of the Lord, and still are today. Many occasions of unrelenting vehement resistance to the spread of the truth are documented in the New Testament and secular history. Yet Paul continually brought the gospel to them, “to the Jew first,” Romans 1:16.

The Thessalonians had been victimized by false teaching. Paul does not reveal how the deceptive teaching entered among them. He mentions several possible means in chapter 2. It was subtle indeed. Just the insinuation that the tribulation they were enduring was because the Day of the Lord was already present. (“At hand” in the KJV is not the exact meaning of the Greek text.) How disheartening for them! They had believed Paul when he told them while he was with them that it was yet future. They had believed Paul when he told them in his first letter of the rapture to precede the day of the Lord. Then

they receive something, supposedly from Paul, telling them the reason for their suffering was because they were enduring the Day of the Lord. But Paul had told them the rapture would come before the day of the Lord.

*1Thessalonians 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness*

Well might they wonder, what is going on? Paul immediately launches into a forceful affirmation of the truth he had taught them. This established, then he exposes the deception someone had put on them. We learn several things here about dealing with false teaching. .

1. Before anything else reestablish mutual confidence with those affected by it, vv. 1-4.
2. Then, preach the truth to expose the lies, vv. 5-10.
3. Don’t bother to attack the deceivers.
4. Caution others to always be alert to the possibility of deceivers and false teachers.
5. Reaffirm confidence in them, vv. 11-12.
6. Leave all vengeance to God, vv. 8-9.

Paul first presents the truth. The Day of the Lord had not yet begun then, nor has it yet now. He presents this truth in one breath as it were, in one immense sentence (vv. 3-10) in the KJV. Lets unpack it.

(Note: For sake of continuity these comments will treat all of this as one package even though our study is spread over two weeks split at item 7 below.)

1. Their patience (endurance) and faith despite the persecution they were experiencing was proof that God would righteously count them worthy of the kingdom of God for which they were suffering. *Philippians 1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*
2. They would be experiencing rest and peace while God righteously put their persecutors under tribulation. *1Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*
3. The promised tribulation and the impending judgement are still future. The saint’s rest begins when the believer dies. It continues bodily for all believers after the rapture whether they are alive or rise when the rapture occurs.
4. Judgement will commence when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.
  - a. He will be visible to all, not just the believers. *Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*
  - b. Mighty angels will accompany Him with flaming

fire to execute His judgement. Jude 1:14 *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, Hebrews 10:27* But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

5. When He comes He will take vengeance on those who are alive when He comes. Those who:

- a. **Know not God.** Note, that this judgement is very broad, not limited to those who persecuted the Thessalonians or limited to persecutors of believers. It includes **all** who know not God. All men are responsible to seek and to know their Creator and to submit to Him.
  - i. All have the surrounding witness of the creation.
  - ii. All are born with a conscience, the knowledge of good and evil.
  - iii. All have the witness of death.
  - iv. Infants and others similarly incapable of knowing God are excepted.
- b. **Obey not** the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Judgement falls upon those who refuse the gospel or neglect to obey it. Acts 17:24 *God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now **commandeth all men every where to repent:** 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Romans 2:5 *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Revelation 19:11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his***

*name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

6. These will be punished with everlasting destruction, that is, banished:
  - a. from the presence of the Lord. Matthew 25:30 *And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
  - b. from the glory of His power.
  - c. Many are not thankful and do not even acknowledge that their very existence and subsistence, much less the benefits and daily blessings, is under the providential care of their Creator. The unrepentant perish in their sins.

#### **(December 7)**

7. He comes in **that day** to be **glorified in His saints.**
  - a. He will then review and publically display His own and all they have experienced and done for Him in this life. He will receive glory from our performance and accomplishments for Him using what He gave us. Colossians 3:4 *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 1Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man [believer in this context] have praise of God.*
  - b. He comes to also be **admired in all them that believe.** 1John 3:2, *We shall see Him as He is.*
  - c. In that day the Thessalonian's belief of the testimony of Paul and his companions among them condemns those who do not see fit to believe, whether willfully or through neglect.

While Paul's exposition of the future is sufficient in itself, it is totally consistent with other prophetic passages in scripture. The prospect is thrilling or chilling depending upon one's relationship to God. Our gratitude for His mercy and grace is increased. Our compassion and concern for the souls of the lost is deepened by this "inside" information. He is still calling sinners to repentance. Are we calling too? Would we if they were persecuting us?

Oh! Have you come? Come now!

Next we will see how we believers should live in view of this revelation of what lies ahead, for us and for those who remain unbelievers.

By Ron Canner, November 30, 2005