

**A Controversy**  
**2 Thessalonians 2:1—2**

Paul has been spending a fair amount of time teaching the Thessalonians about the end-time events for Israel and the end-time events for the Church, the Body of Christ. Israel will be waiting for prophesied events to happen, including the Tribulation, Second Coming and Millennial Kingdom. We in the Church, the Body of Christ, are waiting for one thing to happen, the Rapture. Not only had Paul taught them in person about these future events, but he also wrote to them, sent Timothy back to check up on them and finally wrote 2 Thessalonians, all to make sure they were moving along on the right path in their understanding of these two different programs.

Unfortunately, the Thessalonians were pulled in the wrong direction from what they were experiencing. Instead of going back to what Paul had been teaching them, they viewed the persecution and tribulation they were going through as the seven-year Tribulation that Israel would experience prior to the Second Coming. Their difficult experiences led them to reason that they had missed the Rapture and were now going through the Tribulation.

**Mind, Spirit, Word, Letter**

The Thessalonians were primed to accept a different doctrine because they turned away from Paul's teachings. Although Paul came preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit (miracles) and they received the word in much affliction (1 Thessalonians 1:5—6) and treated it as the very words of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13), They quickly began to doubt what Paul had said when their trials continued. Once they began to doubt the teachings of Paul, they found themselves shaken and troubled. The mind dictates which path we will take. In this case, the Thessalonians began to question what Paul had taught, leaving them open to accepting false doctrines. Paul warns them not to accept anything different than what he had taught them, even if it came by spirit (from an angel or a prophetic utterance), by another preacher or from a letter.

This is the same warning given to the Galatians by Paul. Galatians was perhaps the first book, included in Scripture, that was penned by Paul with 1 and 2 Thessalonians closely following. He was trying to save the Galatians from turning back to what they had believed before they accepted his Gospel. The Gospel that Paul was preaching was not just about how to get saved, but included the whole body of Paul's doctrine revealed to him up to that time. This teaching included Jews and Gentiles now being on equal footings, and freedom from the Mosaic Law (Galatians 2:14, 19). Paul's warning to them was not to listen to anyone else other than what he taught them (Galatians 1:6—10). Any doctrine that does not agree with what Paul writes is anathema (accursed). This is so important that Paul repeats it almost word for word.

Now, these Thessalonians were beginning to go the way of the Galatians by turning away from God's Word as taught by the Apostle Paul. The solution is made clear in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 where Paul admonished them to stand firm by holding onto the traditions (teachings) that Paul taught them, both by his preaching (word) and by the epistle he wrote to them earlier (1 Thessalonians).

**Textual controversy**

We have studied the differences between the Day of the Lord and the Day of Christ in previous lessons. They are two distinct ages (or set of events), one for the Church, the Body of Christ and the other for Israel. Interestingly, some versions (like the KJV) speak of the Day of Christ, while other versions (like the NASB) speak of the Day of the Lord in verse two. Obviously, since these are two distinct events, one version must be wrong and the other must be right. First, let's see what the passage is saying and how it is translated.

**Day of Christ**

The King James Bible says that they are not to be shaken in mind or troubled as if the Day of Christ is at hand. This "day" is then described in verses 3—12 and includes the man of sin being revealed (3), who will oppose and exalt himself as God (4) followed by the coming of the Lord (8). According to Paul's previous

teaching, all these things have nothing to do with the Church, the Body of Christ, and everything to do with Israel. In other words, Paul is describing the Day of the Lord, not the Day of Christ.

So, the explanation for using the term *Day of Christ* in verse two is that this is the terminology used in the false letter written to the Thessalonians. Paul first introduces the topic of the Rapture in verse 1, and then tells them not to be shaken by a letter that states the Rapture has already come. The false letter incorrectly called this time they were experiencing the Day of Christ, and thus claiming Paul's teaching about end-time events was incorrect. Paul then goes on to tell them what will happen after the Rapture so they can compare that with what they were experiencing at the moment, thus proving the Rapture could not have come.

It must be noted that the KJV says the Day of Christ is *at hand*. The same word used five times in the New Testament means *present*. In other words, it should have been translated that they thought the Day of Christ is present (not at hand). This terminology would be more in line with the Day of the Lord, however, since this verse is seen as reporting what was falsely written, it still stands, I believe, as a possible interpretation.

### **Day of the Lord**

Other versions, using more recently discovered manuscripts that predate what the King James translators were using, use the term *Day of the Lord*. It would then read that Paul first introduced the topic about the Rapture in verse 1 and then told them not to fret as if they were now in the Day of the Lord, a period of time they thought they were currently going through. It would then be understood that it was Paul who is using the term *Day of the Lord*, not a deceptive writer mislabeling it as the Day of Christ.

### **How can this happen?**

Manuscripts were checked and rechecked for accuracy. Each time a manuscript was written, there were errors, and so there were people who checked to make a copy as free from errors as possible. These corrections were called correctors, with some manuscripts having thousands of corrector notations. In the case of 2 Thessalonians 2:2, there is a notation in the Claromontanus manuscript (designated by D<sup>P</sup>) that goes back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. This particular passage has three corrections attributed to it with the last corrector (D<sup>2</sup>) changing the *Day of the Lord* to *Day of Christ*. This happened in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This particular manuscript is a part of the Majority Text (Byzantine, Antiocheian or Syrian text). The Majority Text is made up of many manuscripts and is so called because if there were questions about a certain passage, all manuscripts are compared and it is assumed that the correct text is the one contained in the majority of the manuscripts. There are two versions dated 1982 and 1991.

The Textus Receptus (Received Text) is a compilation of seven late Byzantine text type manuscripts. Although many manuscripts are dated as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, the TR is based on those no earlier than the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It was first compiled by Erasmus in 1516 A.D. and 20 versions later, in 1633 A.D., became known as the Textus Receptus. The King James Bible was based most heavily on the 1598 A.D. edition of the TR, but also relied upon three other earlier editions along with the Bishops Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Rheims NT 1582 Catholic English translation and a couple of other sources.

Since earlier readings of this same manuscript (D<sup>P</sup>) used *Day of the Lord* and many other manuscripts used *Day of the Lord*, it appears that this could be the correct translation. This is also supported by the context of this passage, which makes more sense to read this verse as *Day of the Lord* instead of *Day of Christ*.

Obviously, I don't expect these few sentences to solve the controversy of which day is being addressed in this verse. I do leave it up to the reader as to how they want to interpret 2 Thessalonians 2:2. It is not an issue that should divide true believers.

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