

THE DAY OF THE LORD

2 THESSALONIANS 02:01–03

Introduction

When the Bible refers to the day of the Lord, it does not mean a single day in history. It is using the word *day* in a forceful or emphatic sense just like men do when they speak of the great day of space exploration or the great day of some world leader or the great day of creation. The day of the Lord covers a long span of time and some very significant events. In the Bible it covers the whole span of history beginning with the two events of this passage and reaching forward to the end of time. It will be a terrible time of trouble, a time that is known as that great and terrible day of judgment, the day when the wrath of God will fall upon all the meanness, viciousness, ugliness, and filthiness of men. However, note the point of this passage: no believer has to fear the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord launches God's judgment against unbelievers; it is not the judgment of believers.

- I. Guard against being shaken or alarmed by the day of the Lord (vv. 1-2).
- II. Let no man deceive you — watch for two events first (v. 3).

I. 2 Thessalonians 02:01–02 *Be not Alarmed by the Day of the Lord*

Guard against being shaken or alarmed by the day of the Lord. The believers at Thessalonica thought the day of the Lord had begun — that great and terrible day when God's judgment is to fall upon the earth. Verse two explains why. Remember: the believers were suffering fierce persecution (see note, 2 Th. 1:6). They were suffering as much as human beings could bear; apparently some were even being martyred. Verse two says that some person was even claiming...

- “that a prophecy (a message by the Spirit) had revealed to him that the day of the Lord had begun.”
- that he had a special report, a special revelation from God that the day of the Lord had begun.
- that he had either received or heard about a letter from Paul that said the day of the Lord was at hand.

Combine these three claims with the suffering of savage persecution and it is easily understood why some of the believers would be *unsettled and alarmed*. In fact, the word “unsettled” means to be shaken, tossed about, agitated, shocked; and the word “alarmed” means a continued state of tension and nervousness. Paul says two quick things that we must keep in mind as we look toward the day of the Lord.

1. Look to the coming of the Lord and toward our gathering together unto Him, not to the judgment that is coming. Note that this is an appeal from Paul, an urgent appeal: he begs his brothers in the Lord. And he begs them “by the coming of our Lord
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Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him.” The point is striking: the believer is to focus upon the Lord’s return and not upon the judgment of the Lord’s day. The day of the Lord is to be the judgment of unbelievers, not of believers. The believer is not appointed to receive the wrath of God; he is appointed to salvation. Therefore, he is not to fear the day of the Lord. He is to be looking to the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

1 Th 5:9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:12-13 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

2. Let nothing shake or alarm you about the day of the Lord: not a prophecy, nor some so-called spiritual message, nor a writing from some so-called spiritual man. Note: the best manuscripts and the great majority of commentaries translate and understand this to be the *day of the Lord*.

II. 2 Thessalonians 02:03 Do not be Deceived

Let no man deceive you — watch for two significant events; for that day — the great and terrible day of the Lord — will not come until these two events happen. Note the emphasis upon guarding against deception: let no man deceive you *in any way* — no matter what any person says or claims or uses against you, do not let him deceive you about the day of the Lord. That terrible day — the day when God’s judgment will begin to fall upon the world and its unbelievers — cannot come until these two events happen. But note: the idea is that these events *will launch* the day of the Lord, that is, the terrible judgment of God upon all those who have cursed, denied, ignored, neglected and defamed the name of Him who is the holy Sovereign of the universe (see note, pt. 2, 1 Th. 5:1-3).

1. The first event that will launch the day of the Lord will be a great rebellion of believers against God. The word “rebellion” is much too weak for what the Greek says. The Greek is forceful: “rebellion” means apostasy, revolt, falling away. The picture is that of multitudes — millions from all over the world — rebelling and revolting against God. As the eminent scholar Leon Morris says: “In the last times there will be an outstanding manifestation of the powers of evil arrayed against God” (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*. “Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 126). The point is this: before the day of the Lord — before the terrible judgment of God can come upon the earth, there will be a great apostasy, a tragic turning away from God by millions. Note a most significant point: apostasy is one of the causes for the day of the Lord. The revolt and rebellion against God will be so massive that it will necessitate the return of Christ in judgment. Man and his world will be so evil and sinful and so immoral and unjust — so much in rebellion against God — that

Christ has to return and judge the world. Most of the people in the world will have gone so far that they will be beyond ever repenting.

Mat 24:10-13 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

1 Tim 4:1-2 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

2 Tim 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy; without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

2 Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

2. The second event that will launch the day of the Lord will be the revelation of that man of lawlessness — the man doomed to destruction, that is, the antichrist himself. Note the following facts:
 - a. The antichrist will be *revealed*. This fact indicates that he existed before his appearance (Leon Morris. *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*. “Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 126). A.T. Robertson says, “the implication is that the *man of sin* [lawlessness] is hidden somewhere who will be suddenly manifested” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 50).
 - b. The antichrist is “the man of *lawlessness*” the man doomed to destruction; the man who will be the very embodiment of lawlessness or total rebellion against God. He will do all he can to lead a total revolt against God — do all he can to lead every man, woman and child to turn away from God.
 - c. The antichrist is “the man of lawlessness.” This means that he will be so evil that he will be just like the man of doom and destruction, of the devil himself. It also means that he is doomed to perdition; he is doomed to destruction.
 - d. The antichrist is not just another evil world leader who is a mass deceiver or murderer of millions. This is not what Scripture means in this passage. Scripture speaks of other antichrists, others who will appear in the world and mislead people and do

much evil upon the earth (1 Jn. 2:18; 2 Jn.7). But this Scripture is not dealing with antichrists (plural), but with the most infamous antichrist of all — the one antichrist...

- who will launch the day of the Lord, and who must appear before the day of the Lord can come.
- who is so terrible that his very name is “this man of lawlessness” and “the man doomed to destruction”.

Note: the antichrist is not Satan, but he is said to be a man who will be sent by the very “work of Satan” (cp. 2 Th. 2:9).

Thought 1. Some idea of just how evil the antichrist will be can be gleaned by thinking of some of the evil men in history. Just think: their evil was nothing compared to the evil of the antichrist. Think of the evil of such mass murderers as Hitler, Stalin and other dictators down through history who have slaughtered millions.

Mat 24:15 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ [the antichrist] spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand.”

Mark 13:14 “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ [the antichrist] standing where it does not belong — let the reader understand — then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

2 Th 2:3-4 Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

2 Th 2:8-9 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.

Rev 13:4-9 Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. He who has an ear, let him hear. ■