

HERALD OF HOPE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q25) The Day of the Lord and the Day of Christ. Are They the Same?

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 Paul mentions two events that precede the period of the Great Tribulation. The KJV and NKJV state that the “*day of Christ*” shall not come except “*there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed*”. Other versions read, “*the day of the Lord*”. If it is “*the day of Christ*”, isn’t that the Rapture as in Phil.1:10 and Phil.2:16? If the correct reading is “*the day of Christ*”, how can the “*falling away*” be the departure of the Church if the “*day of Christ*” comes first?

The reading in some versions, “*the day of the Lord*”, originates from the corrupt 1881 Westcott and Hort Greek text which underlies most modern versions and should be rejected.

There are a number of “days” referred to in Scripture. There is “*the day of Christ*”, “*the day of the Lord*”, “*the day of the Lord Jesus*”, “*the day of God*”, and “*the day of God Almighty*”. To which period they refer, can only be determined by the context. There is no consistent meaning to any one day. For example:

The expression, “*the day of Christ*”, occurs only twice elsewhere, in Phil.1:10 and 2:16, where it undoubtedly applies to the Rapture. The Philippians were to be “*without offence till the day of Christ*”, and Paul would “*rejoice in the day of Christ*”. That cannot refer to the Tribulation.

The expression, “*the day of the Lord*”, occurs five times. (Acts 2:20; 1Thess.5:2; 2Peter 3:10; 1Cor.5:5 and 2Cor.1:14). Acts 2:20 quotes Joel 2:31, and its context is the appearing of Christ to judge the nations **at the second coming**. However, “*the day of the Lord*” in 1Thess.5:2 is **the Great Tribulation** from which the Church is preserved. In 2 Peter 3:10 “*the day of the Lord*” is the destruction of the earth at the **end of the Millennium**, when the earth will be burned with fire.

In the Old Testament “*the day of the LORD* (Jehovah)” occurs 26 times and generally applies to the coming Tribulation (Joel3:14; Zeph.1:14), but it also applies to the destruction of Babylon (Isa.13:6,9) which now is **fulfilled prophecy**. It is the “*day of God’s vengeance*” (Isa.34:8; Jer.46:10) whenever He acts to requite the ungodly. At all times it is a time of terror and fear for men.

The expression “*the day of God*” occurs twice in Scripture, in 2Peter 3:12 and Rev.16:14. In 2Peter 3:12 it is the conflagration at the **end of the Millennium**. “*The day of God Almighty*” (Rev16:14) refers to the battle of Armageddon **at the second coming** of Christ.

“*The day of the Lord Jesus*” in 1Cor.5:5 and 2Cor.1:14 is clearly the **Rapture**.

The proposition that the term, “*the day of Christ*”, can only refer to the Rapture, must be checked against the context of Scripture. In the context of 2Thess.2:2, “*the day of Christ*” is the **Great Tribulation**.

It is obvious from all of these references that there is no consistent pattern of meaning attached to each term **apart from the context**, which emphasizes the absolute necessity to get the context right. A Greek or Hebrew translator **MUST** understand the passage in order to get the context right, which determines the meanings of words in each application. Vincent, the Greek scholar, did not attempt to comment on the Greek of 2Thess.2 which, he said in 1886, “I do not understand” (page 67, vol.IV). So what is the context of 2Thess.2?

1) The Thessalonian believers feared that “*the day of Christ*” was “*at hand*”, or “**now present**”. Paul saw it as a **time of fear** that would shake the mind and trouble the believers. The Greek word “*shaken*” is like “the tossing or swelling of the sea”, and the word “*troubled*” means to be “unsettled or thrown into confusion”. The Rapture is the opposite, and is our blessed hope. Paul says he would rejoice “*in the day of Christ*”, but these believers saw the “*day of Christ*” as a **time of terror**.

2) The believers equated the “*day of Christ*” to a **PERIOD of time**, and **not an event**. The Rapture is a split-second event too fast for the world to see. This is the only place where the Greek word “*enistaymee*” is translated “*at hand*”. Five times it is translated “*present*”, as in Rom.8:38; 1Cor.3:22 and 7:26; Gal.1:4; Heb.9:9. The Thessalonians were concerned that the Tribulation (“*day of Christ*”) was “**NOW PRESENT**” (2Thess.1:4). If “*the day of Christ*” was the Rapture, their fear would have been that it was a **past event**.

So if the believers thought that the Tribulation, “*the day of the Lord*” to which Paul had referred in his first epistle (1Thess.5:2), had already come, how should we understand “*the falling away*”(2Thess.2:3)? The Greek word *apostasias* is transliterated (not translated) into English as apostasy but that is only one application of the Greek word and it is utterly wrong to translate *apostasias* as apostasy in every case. The word means “departure”.

The verbal form is applied to a departure from truth in only 3 instances (Luke 8:13; 1Tim.4:1; Heb.3:12). It is a departure from iniquity (opposite to apostasy) in 2Tim.2:19 from men, in 1Tim.6:5, from the Temple Luke3:37, and from the human body in 2Cor.12:8. An angel departed from Peter-Acts 4:13, the Devil from Christ-Luke4:13, and the Jews from the Apostles-Acts5:38.

All English translations before the KJV, translated the Greek word *apostasia* in 2Thess. 2:3 as departure or departing. They include Wycliffe (1384), Tyndale (1526), Coverdale (1535), Cranmer (1539), Breeches Bible (1576), Beza Bible (1583) and the Geneva Bible (1608).

The definite article **“the”** is missing from the KJV, whereas it is in the Greek Received Text. *Apostasia* is a noun, and the article indicates that it was **a specific departure** known by the reader and previously mentioned by the writer.

In the Epistles to the Thessalonians there is no prior mention of an apostasy or departure of the Church **from the truth**. Two verses before, however, there is mention of the physical departure of the Church - *“our gathering together unto him”* (2Thess.2:1). In the first epistle we have the physical departure of the Church described at length in 1Thess.4:13-18. It is mentioned in 1Thess.1:9-10; 2:19; 3:13; 5:9. The thought of the Rapture is still on Paul’s mind in 2Thess.3:5. If the believers were to be comforted in trial, then their departure would be the greatest comfort, not the prospect of apostasy.

To what departure was Paul referring? If it was the apostasy of the man of sin, then the order is wrong for the “falling away” comes **“FIRST”**. The man of sin is revealed **after the departure**. Antichrist’s apostasy, when he sets up his image in the Temple, actually occurs halfway through the 7 years, 42 months later. However, “the departure” is an event, not a period of apostasy.

Why then is *“the day of the LORD (Jehovah)”* called the *“day of Christ?”* Because Christ is Jehovah. If *“the day of the Lord Jesus”* in 1Cor.5:5 and 2Cor.1:14 can be the Rapture, it is not inconsistent for the *“day of Christ”* be called the day of Jehovah or the Tribulation.

It becomes apparent that there is **no exclusive meaning attached to any day of the Lord, Christ, God or the Lord Jesus, apart from the one demanded by each context**, and the context in 2Thess.2:1-12 is all about **two events** which must occur before the period of God’s wrath falls on the world.

Furthermore, there is a doublet in 2Thess.2:1-12 which demands that *apostasia* be the departure of the Church. **Two things** must occur BEFORE the day of the Lord comes. Verse 3 mentions *“the departure”* and *“that man of sin be revealed”*. In verses 7 & 8 the same two events are given. The restrainer is *“taken out of the way”* and *“THEN shall that Wicked be revealed”*. The second confirms the first.

Other Scriptures speak of apostasy in the last days (1Tim.4:1; 2Tim.3:1-7; 2Peter 3:3-4; and the prophetic significance of the Laodicean Church), however, this passage is clearly showing that the day of Tribulation shall NOT come unless the Church departs FIRST. The Thessalonian believers would thus be reassured and comforted.

There is no greater comfort to the believer in these last days than to know that at any moment we could be caught up with the loved ones who have gone before, to be *“for ever with the Lord”*.