

2 Thessalonians 2:3 “Let no man deceive you...”- S. M. Platt

2 “Thessalonians 2:1 “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

For as long as I can remember, I have heard this passage explained this way: The believers in Thessalonica were so troubled and persecuted that they thought they must have *missed the rapture* and were enduring the Great Tribulation (This interpretation of course, assumes that they expected the rapture to precede the great tribulation). It is then explained that Paul is writing to reassure them that they had not missed it, because, as he had already told them, there must be a falling away first and the man of sin revealed.

Paul’s response however does not quite fit that scenario. It’s very possible that they thought that their present tribulations were part of the 7 year tribulation period, and that it had already begun; but stating that they thought they had missed the rapture, does not fit the answer Paul gave.

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

-If they thought they had missed the rapture, why would Paul tell them not to believe word, or spirit, or letters from even himself that the Day of Christ (the rapture) is “at hand”(imminent)?

-If they thought that they had already missed the rapture, then how would they believe a letter from Paul or the other apostles stating that it was “at hand” or even past? Did they believe that Paul also missed the rapture? (because he would not be here to write a letter unless he missed it as well). If he had been so wrong about that, then why would they believe anything else he had to say?

Stating that they thought they had missed the rapture is the result of interpreting this passage through the Pre-tribulation rapture perspective, NOT through sound exegesis. It would actually make much more sense to assume that they *expected* to endure part of the tribulation period BEFORE the rapture, and that was why they thought it was “at hand”.

The suggestion is usually made that the phrase “at hand” means, to be present or already happening, or that the Day of Christ actually means the Day of the Lord, and not the rapture. Without a clear understanding of what Paul is saying, it is impossible to get the big picture. So we must clarify our terminology, 2 phrases in particular demand definition: 1. At Hand, 2. Day of Christ,

What does “at hand” mean? Many define it as “present”, or already here; but what does it actually mean? and more importantly how does the bible define it?

Dictionary

AT HAND (adjective) at hand - close in space at hand - close in space; within reach; "the town is close at hand" close at hand close - at or within a short distance in space or time or having elements near each other; "close to noon"; "how close are we to town?"; "a close formation of ships" imminent, impendent, impending, close at hand

at hand - close in time at hand - close in time; about to occur; "retribution is at hand"; "some people believe the day of judgment is close at hand"; "in imminent danger"; "his impending retirement"

within reach; nearby; close by.

near in time; soon.

ready for use: We keep a supply of canned goods at hand

Comparing scripture with scripture, we see the bible use of this phrase always conveys the meaning of impending, imminent, near, about to happen, approaching, or within reach.

Genesis 27:41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Deuteronomy 15:9 Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

See also: 1 Samuel 9:8, Isaiah 13:6, Jeremiah 23:23, Ezekiel 12:23, Ezekiel 36:8, Joel 1:15, Joel 2:1, Zephaniah 1:7

Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Mark 14:42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

See also: Luke 21:30, Luke 21:31, John 2:13, John 7:2, John 11:55, John 19:42, Romans 13:12, Philippians 4:5, 2 Timothy 4:6, 1 Peter 4:7, Revelation 1:3, Revelation 22:10

Never does the phrase "at hand" convey a meaning of already past or present. How is it then that it would be interpreted as present?

Strong's concordance

At hand: (enistēmi) verb From ἐν (G1722) and ἵστημι (G2476) which means: 1. to place in or among, to put in 2. to be upon, impend, threaten 3. close at hand 4. Present

The original Greek word translated "at hand" here can also be translated present, but in this case it was clearly translated "at hand" (impend, or threaten- close at hand). It was not translated as present, past, or already here. Why? It was obviously because the translators understood the context to demand such an interpretation.

If we are going to believe that the bible is true and inerrant, then we must also accept that this was translated correctly. It is funny though, that even the most Fundamental, KJV only'ers suddenly become Textual Critics when it comes to this word, substituting an alternate definition than the one used. Rejecting the clear meaning of a word and substituting an alternate meaning is certainly not sound exegesis in anyone's book. We must accept that "at hand" simply means "at hand" (imminent).

2. Day of Christ: Some try to suggest that Paul is talking about the Day of the Lord, (by that most Pre-tribulation rapturists are referring to the entire 70th week). They insist that Paul is referring to the Day of the Lord when he says "that day". No matter how you define the time period of the Day of the Lord, this is not what Paul was referring to.

Any time the phrase Day of Christ is used in scripture it is referring to the deliverance of the Church at the rapture, not the Day of the Lord's wrath.

1 Corinthians 1:8 "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"

Philippians 1:10 "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;"

Philippians 2:16 "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

While the Day of the Lord is: for rejecters of Christ, a day of judgment. *Isaiah 2:12, 13:6, 13:9; 34:8; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 5:20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7,1: 14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Matthew 24:1-51; Acts 2:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2Peter 3:10*

What day was Paul talking about? Clearly he was referring to the rapture. For someone to suggest that the rapture is "at hand", or about to happen fits the context perfectly. To say however, that the day of Christ is present would not even make sense. Present does not fit a twinkling of an eye moment. It would have to have been either past or future, not an enduring tribulation. That is why the attempt is made to interpret the Day of Christ as the Day of the Lord (a 7 year period of time).

Now that we have defined these key phrases, we can better understand what Paul is saying is,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the rapture is imminent. In other words, don't be afraid and upset by any spirit, or preacher, or letter as if it were from us saying that the rapture is imminent.

Why would they be shaken by this teaching? If they understood that they would have to endure the great tribulation before they were raptured, knowing that it would continue to get worse until then

would certainly cause them to be troubled, and distracted from what they should be doing. This would make sense with what Paul admonishes them to do:

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Paul goes on to tell them that there are two things that must happen prior to the Day of Christ (the rapture)

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” **A falling away & that man of Sin Revealed**

Paul told them that there were things that would have to happen before the rapture occurred. For believers to benefit from his words, these would have to be observable events that would let them know that it was near, as when the fig tree shoots forth its branches. They would see the apostasy, and the Antichrist and know that it was nigh. He had already told them in his previous letter that they would see the signs and not be overtaken as a thief like unbelievers would.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

This is just as Christ described as well.

Matthew 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

A falling away or Apostasy In the book of Matthew we read about a time of apostasy directly related to this time.

Matthew 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

2 Timothy gives a description of the last days leading up to the tribulation period.

2 Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

- 2 *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
- 3 *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
- 4 *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
- 5 *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

These who are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God would surely be primed for the apostasy described in Matthew. Some suggest that *this* is the apostasy referred to in 2Thessalonians. We cannot be sure. However, even if it is just such a general apostasy as we see even today, the man of sin is still yet to be revealed.

Man of sin be revealed

Dictionary:

Reveal re·veal transitive verb \ri-'vĕl\ to make (something) known
to show or prove that (someone) is a particular type of person
to show (something) plainly or clearly : to make (something that was hidden) able to be seen

Synonyms

bare, disclose, discover, divulge, expose, let on (about), spill, tell, unbosom, uncloak, uncover, unmask, unveil, bring to light, go public (with), let the cat out of the bag (about), spill the beans (about)

Antonyms

cloak, conceal, cover (up), enshroud, hide, mask, shroud, veil

Full Definition of REVEAL

- 1 to make known through divine inspiration
- 2 to make (something secret or hidden) publicly or generally known <reveal a secret>
- 3 to open up to view : display <the uncurtained window revealed a cluttered room>

Strong's Concordance:

Revealed: apokalypsis From ἀποκαλύπτω (G601)

laying bare, making naked, a disclosure of truth, instruction concerning things before unknown used of events by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all manifestation, appearance

The Pre-tribulation rapture suggests that the “revealing of the Man of sin occurs prior to the start of the 70th week, when he arrives on the scene. They would argue that “revealed” here actually means his “appearance” or arrival on the scene but, even allowing for this interpretation of the word does not change the fact that he would have to be recognizable. The problem is that he will not be known to anyone *as* the Man of Sin at that time. As a matter of fact, he will deceive everyone, especially the Jews who will unknowingly enter into a covenant with him. His identity will NOT be revealed to them at this time.

They will not recognize him until he breaks his covenant with them at midpoint, ends the temple sacrifices, and sets himself up to be worshipped as God. Then and only then will they know his true identity. This is why Paul goes on to tell them how they will know him.

2Thessalonians 2: 3 "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

Putting aside the deceived Jews for now, and looking at this from the believers' perspective, they too would have to be able to identify the man of sin. Speculations have been made for ages as to the identity of the Antichrist, but none have ever proven to be true. How do we know this? Although many have fit the description and fulfilled some qualifications of the Antichrist, none have ever signed a 7 year covenant with Israel. This is the only proof anyone will have that this is indeed the awaited Antichrist. No matter what suspicions may continue to arise, the very 1st revelation of the Antichrist's identity can only be the signing of the covenant.

Once the covenant is signed however, the 70th week has begun. So if the man of sin must be revealed prior to the Day of Christ (rapture), and his revealing begins the 70th week, that places the rapture *within* the 70th week, not *prior* to it. This destroys the idea that the church age must be over and cannot enter into the tribulation period.

This leads to yet another problem with the Pre-tribulation rapture theory. Paul goes on in verse 6 "*ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time...*" Pre-tribulation Rapture defines "what withholdeth" as the Holy Spirit within the Church. They Claim that it is the Holy Spirit holding back the revealing of the Antichrist. This is why, according to their beliefs, the Church must be removed (raptured) prior to the 70th week.

But Paul just told them that the Antichrist must be revealed BEFORE the rapture. So which is first? The revealing or the rapture? According to scripture, it is the revealing. If the Holy Spirit, within the Church is holding back the Antichrist and must be removed prior to the seventieth week, how will they see him revealed, (appear on the scene, in a recognizable way)? before the rapture? Paul is clear that they would see these things come to pass before the rapture. If the church must be gone before the 70th week begins, then he cannot sign the covenant and would not be identified with any certainty.