

MIDDLE EAST PEACE – THE FULFILLMENT OF BIBLE PROPHECY (Part 7 of 9)

As promised in last week's segment, we will consider the prophetic importance of what Paul states, rather straightforwardly in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. Its significance cannot be minimized, since it provides us with tremendous prophetic insight into God's plan and purpose in these last days, for our lost and fallen world, Christ's Church, as well as the nation of Israel. So, please carefully consider what the apostle says in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 –

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”

In each of the verses above, Paul mentions two monumentally important factors that are critical in arriving at a proper and accurate understanding of Bible prophecy. There is also a reason as to why he states them in a rather matter of fact manner. Both of these prophetic issues were previously discussed by him in his first letter to the Thessalonian church. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul speaks of the Rapture of the Church in great detail. Notice vv16-17 –

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

This description of the Rapture of the Church dovetails perfectly with Paul's reference to it in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, where he describes the Rapture as “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” His detailed mention of it in the first letter was for the purpose of comforting and encouraging those Christians because they had somehow come to believe that the dead in Christ would miss out on that blessed event. But they would not as Paul makes clear in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15. Then, in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, he mentions “to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” This fact also upset the Thessalonian believers. Why? Because the Day of the Lord and the Rapture are NOT one and the same. The Thessalonians knew this because of what Paul taught them about it in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, where we read the following –

“For you yourselves know full well that THE DAY OF THE LORD (emphasis added) will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief.”

From this teaching about the Rapture and the Day of the Lord, the Thessalonian believers understood that they would be participants in the Rapture but not in the Day of the Lord, which would bring God's judgment upon the earth. So, now we can understand why they were so upset when this deceitful letter, circulated among them, declared that the Day of the Lord had come. If that were true, they would have missed the Rapture; being left behind to face the wrath of God upon the unbelieving world. But this would have completely contradicted the assurances of Paul, given to these believers, at both the outset and conclusion of his first letter to them in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, as well as 5:9. This made his second letter an absolute necessity, in order to clarify that confusion. It has also made yet another segment in our ongoing study of this issue necessary, in order to clarify any confusion many of you may be experiencing when it comes to the Rapture, the Day of the Lord, Peace the Middle East, the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy and the role of the Antichrist in much of it. Fear not, we will clarify and harmonize all of it, next.