

## Getting Ready for the Gathering

### 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

**"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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;"**

Have you ever been troubled by talk of the end-times or doomsday prophecies? Just about every week, there are new "prophetic" pronouncements from false prophets. They point to "blood moons," solar eclipses, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires and floods to persuade others to trust their prophecies.

Recently the International Business Times investigated David Meade. This is the man that prophesied that a secret "Planet X" named "Nibiru" would collide with the Earth last month. Meade "argued the recent environment catastrophes, like the earthquakes in Mexico and hurricanes in Caribbean, are related to the metaphorical end of the world as people know it today. He identified the solar eclipse last month as the start to all the natural disasters."<sup>i</sup>

On October 12, Asteroid 2012 TC4 passed the Earth at a distance of 31,000 miles. A prophetic group declared this to be the beginning of the Apocalypse. The group says "that October 12, when the asteroid passes, holds special significance as it is exactly 100 years since the alleged Miracle of the Sun of Fatima – where over 70,000 people in Portugal claimed to see the sun "zig zag" across the sky and emit radiant colours." They conclude "Considering that 'It is about that time' already and considering its perfect symbolism...." "If it were our decision, we would choose the asteroid 2012 TC4 to be the Apocalyptic one." <sup>ii</sup> These stories illustrate that things haven't changed very much since Biblical times, have they?

### THE ATTACK

The problem in 2 Thessalonians was that an erroneous message about Biblical prophecy had been sent to persecuted believers. You can see it in verses 2-3: **"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. Let no man deceive you by any means:"** The words "at hand" translate a perfect, active indicative verb meaning "had come."

- **The Error:** This error was spread by means of a "spirit" (meaning a prophetic revelation), "word" (meaning regular teaching), and "letter."
- **The Effect:** The twin dangers were that the believers would be distraught ("**shaken in mind or troubled**") (v.2) and deceived (v.3). They were quickly shaken in their minds and alarmed by this prophetic teaching. As one author wrote, "'it is amazing how gullible some believers can be when a new prophetic fad appears!' The antidote to such deception is a thorough grounding in the truth as revealed in the inspired Scriptures. Paul at once provided the needed corrective."<sup>iii</sup>

Put yourself in Thessalonian sandals, to try to feel what they were feeling. They were under intense persecution (1:4). In the midst of this, false prophets taught them that the reason for this persecution was because the Day of the Lord had begun. Just try to imagine their anxiety!

In his book, "End Time Visions," Richard Abanes writes, "To many Christians, it is unthinkable that a radio Bible teacher, pastor or televangelist would lie, since lying is clearly condemned in the Bible (Lev.

19:11; Col. 3:9). Nevertheless, a number of end-time speakers, be they Christian or non-Christian, have resorted to spreading “facts” that seem less than 100% accurate.” [Abanes lists three well-known prophecy teachers in our day and points at that] “each has resorted to telling fanciful tales that portray them as authorities on world events, and how those events relate to the end-times.”<sup>iv</sup>

Recently, a false prophet in Zimbabwe predicted that President Robert Mugabe would die on October 17 (Tuesday of this week). Mugabe is still alive. An editorial about this false prophet commented, “It is quite shocking that these tricksters, con-artists, magicians or illusionists have the audacity to play God, attributing to Him things that He never said to them.”<sup>v</sup>

Richard Abanes observed that “Most people are simply too busy to verify all of the information they hear relating to increased earthquake activity, Bible prophecies, or secret legislation designed to enslave humanity to one world government. Moreover, few persons have the researching skills necessary to investigate the data they are given. They must accept what they hear by default. Their only alternative is to remain in a psychological state that offers them no answers for why the world is in such bad shape, and gives them no hope of imminent deliverance.”<sup>vi</sup> While we disagree with Abanes’ concluding sentence, we certainly understand his sentiment. As we shall see, the right alternative is a correct understanding of what the Bible actually teaches about the end times.

## THE APPEAL

The answer to this attack is a correct understanding of the events involved in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul stressed two important points: 1. The Day of the Lord had not begun and 2. That the believers would be gathered to Him and glorified with Him when He comes. Paul explained the Revelation of Christ, and emphasized their relationship with Christ.

**Their Relationship with Christ:** Paul capitalized on the believers’ personal relationship with the Lord: **“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,”** Note the words “beseech” (not a command, but an appeal), “brethren,” the two uses of the word “our” and “gathering.” The noun translated “gathering” is translated in Hebrews 10:25 as the “assembling” or ourselves together. But in this case it is **“our gathering together unto Him!”**

**The Revelation of Christ:** Paul’s explained the correct teaching about **“the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him.”** In this case, “the Coming of Christ” is an umbrella expression that covers a span of time that includes the rapture and the Second Coming of Christ. (In the original language, the one definite article “the” encompasses both events.) Paul had explained the rapture (or the gathering) of the believers in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. To allay the fears of the Thessalonians, he emphasized their “gathering” to their precious Lord.

**The Events leading up to the Coming of Christ:** Paul assured the believers that their persecution was not evidence that the Day of the Lord had begun. **“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;”** He did so by emphasizing the events that would lead up to the coming Day of the Lord. Correct Biblical doctrine will keep us from being blown around by false prophets “wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). So, Paul stress the timetable or prophetic calendar to set aside their fears. Understanding the Biblical doctrine behind these prophecies will give us stability today as well.

- **The Falling Away (or Great Apostasy):** Before the Second Coming of Christ, there will be a great apostasy or falling away from the Christian faith. “The conditions will be ripe for people, especially those who call themselves Christians but are not really such, to turn their backs on God in what they do as well as in what they already have in thought . . . this worldwide anti-God movement will be so universal as to earn for itself a special designation: ‘the apostasy’ – i.e. the climax of the increasing apostate tendencies evident before the rapture of the church.”<sup>vii</sup>
- **The Revelation of the Anti-Christ:** In the next message in this series, we will carefully examine what this text teaches about the coming Anti-Christ. But for today’s message, it is enough to emphasize the main point of this text: do not be alarmed, for the Day of the Lord has not begun.

## THE APPLICATIONS

How should we apply this text to give us stability in these troubled times?

1. **Get ready for our gathering!** The Lord Jesus who came as the Savior of the world will return as the Judge of the world. Are you ready to meet Him? By His dying on the cross for your sin and rising again, He offered Himself as your Savior. Will you deny Him and disregard His loving sacrifice for you? My friend, flee from the wrath to come, and run to the embrace of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Each and every Lord’s Day, “assemble!” Be part of “**our gathering**” and let each Lord’s Day be a little taste of heaven. Make each Sunday a day to remember that Day and “**our gathering unto Him.**”
2. **Do not be easily shaken or alarmed by prophetic teaching.** It certainly appears that the persecution of Christians will continue and increase. Be prepared for this, and for the doubts that will be raised by false teachers. Don’t let disasters, persecutions or false prophets cause you to be fearful or alarmed.
3. **Do not be deceived by so called “revelations,” false teachers or letters claiming to be authoritative.** Instead, “study to show yourself approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). You can pre-plan your thinking to maintain your stability in troubled times.
4. **Like Paul, appeal to your brothers and sisters in Christ to think upon “our gathering unto Him.”** Paul emphasized the relational aspect of this great revelation. We must do the same. If we truly understand Biblical prophecy, we will apply this in personal relationships. In Hebrews 10:25, we are reminded, “**Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**” Let this day be a day when we focus on That Day; let us encourage each other as we get ready for The Gathering!

## A Brief Analysis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Doctrine: Based on the Coming of *our* Lord Jesus Christ

- {Including} *our* gathering to Him

>> {Appeal} We beseech you

- Do not be quickly shaken in your minds
- Do not be troubled
  - >> {Deceitful Attack} by spirit [prophetic revelation], teaching, or false letter stating that the Day of the Lord had already come
  - >> {Doctrinal defense} That Day shall not come unless first
    - Comes the apostasy “the falling away”
    - Comes the man of sin (“lawlessness”)
    - (These two are amplified in verses 4-11 and applied in verse 12)

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<sup>i</sup> Maria Vultaggio, “Nibiru Conspiracy Theorist David Meade Actually Doesn’t Know When the World Will End,”

<sup>ii</sup> Sean Martin, “End of the World Warning: Tonight’s Asteroid 2012 TC4 is ‘Sign of the Apocalypse’” Express, October 12, 2017, accessed at <http://www.express.co.uk/news/weird/865530/end-of-the-world-2017-apocalypse-asteroid-2012-tc4-miracle-of-fatima>

<sup>iii</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, “1 & 2 Thessalonians,” Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1992, p. 330 (quoting Charles M. Horne)

<sup>iv</sup> Richard Abanes, “End-Time Visions: the Road to Armageddon?” New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998. p. 317.

<sup>v</sup> “Beware of false prophets!” Newsday (AMH, Zimbabwe), October 17, 2017. Accessed <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/10/beware-false-prophets/>

<sup>vi</sup> Abanes, p. 317

<sup>vii</sup> Hiebert, p. 332, quoting Robert L. Thomas, “2 Thessalonians” in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, 1978