

Excursus on the Eschatological Contents of Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians

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In the study of Eschatology (end time events of the world and humanity), there exist much confusion, differences of opinions and exegeses of the Biblical teachings on this subject matter. The following exposition of this text is intended to espouse the dispensation and covenant guidelines aspect of the theme. Please note the utilization of the Modern Greek pronunciation as distinguished from erasmas as we utilize the Greek grammar as well as the historical and contextual approach in exegeting the scriptures.

The contents of I Thess. 5:1, from the KJV read, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you". The literal wording of the Greek Text (utilizing both the English equivalent letters and the Modern Greek pronunciation conversion table), reads: "**Pehree theh ton khonon keh kehron ahthehlphee, oo khreeahn ehkhehteh eemen grahphehtheh**", translated "And concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need of me writing to you".

As one notes the Greek word order, the conjunction "theh" is used. In this form, it most commonly denotes continuation and further thought development, taking its specific sense from the context. Thus the most accurate translation of this conjunctive participle is "**and**", (indicating continuation), not "**but**" (indicating contrast) as translated in the KJV.

Note also the Greek preposition "**pehpee**", rendered "concerning", which is literally translated 'around' or "on all sides". When it is used with the genitive case (as it is here), it denotes purpose, i.e. for the object or person to which an action is related.

Further note the absence of the nominative case of the four nouns and three pronouns in this verse. The nominative case identifies the subject matter. Thus when we retrogress through the previous verses, the corresponding antecedental nominative case is found in the 17thverse of the 4th chapter which phrase reads: first from the KJV "we that are alive and remain". Now literally reading from the Greek Text, "**eemees ee zondehs ee pehreepleeomehnee**", rendered "we who are still living and remaining" (on the earth). So the subject matter is those of us who are alive and remaining; waiting to be caught up or taken from the earth.

Now as we revert back to the subject verse, I Thess. 5:1, the Apostle Paul is speaking concerning the "**khonon**" and the "**kehron**". The Greek noun "**khonon**", rendered "time" denotes the marking of an event or a point available or reserved for some opportunity or occasion. The Greek noun "**kehron**", rendered "season", denotes the measuring or allotting of a certain increment or period for the enactment of an event.

Here the questions are what event, occasion or occurrence does Paul have reference to? And why does he make the statement "You have no need for me to write about it to you"?

It is at this point that one must be a strict constructionist and closely align along dispensation and covenant guidelines. Note, Paul is writing to members of the body of Christ in the grace dispensation.

Historically, this present dispensation opens with the offer of salvation to the Gentiles through the preaching of the grace gospel at Antioch (Acts 13). It closes with the taking away (rapture) of those remaining on earth at the appearing of Jesus Christ in the clouds, as specifically described in the contents of I Thess. 4:13-18. This is the ultimate event that is promised in the grace covenant. As a result of this occurrence, we shall forever be with Him. Aside from this fact, everything else is secondary to the elect of this dispensation.

In the latter part of I Thess. 5:1, note the Greek phrase "**oo khreeahn ehkhehteh eemeen graphesthee**", rendered "you have no need of my writing to you". Notice the negative particle "**oo**" is rendered "no" as indicated by its augment. Also the Greek noun "**khreeahn**", rendered "need, lack or necessary", is in the accusative case, thus it is the direct object of the nouns "time" and "seasons". Now observe that the Greek verb of being "**ehkhehteh**", rendered "you have" or "there is"; is in the indicative mood (it is factual) and the present tense. Have Paul is writing to the Thessalonians to inform them that there is no need for them to know the exact timing concerning any events, especially that for which provisions have already been made (the automatic taking away of the saints). Actually, we should look for Him each day. But we should never have reason for anxiety or concern that this occurrence will happen without us, causing negative or dire consequences. Some in Thessalonica had apparently induced alarm among God's people, as though this event had occurred without them. The fact of the matter is, no present day saint should ever have any doubt concerning being left behind.

As one focuses on the event which Paul had reference to, attention is directed collectively to I Thessalonians 5:2-3, as the KJV reads: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night". 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". The literal wording of the Greek Text is "**Ahftée gar ahkreevos eethahteh otee eemehrah Keereeoos os klehp tees ehn neektee ootós ehkhehteh otahn lehgoseen Eereenee keh ahsphahleeah toteh ehphneetheos ahftees ehphestahteh olethros ospereh otheen tee ehn gahstee ehkchoose keh oo mee ehkphéegseen**". Taken collectively these verses are translated, "For yourselves have known thoroughly that day of Lord as a thief in the night does so come, for when they may say peace and security, then sudden destruction does stand by (near) them as travail (does) her who is with child, and they shall not escape".

Here, attention is drawn to two phases, namely "**otee eemehrah Keereeoos**", rendered "that day of Lord" and "**os klehptee ehn neektee ootós ehkhehteh**", rendered "as a thief in the night does so come". It is imperative that one understands that the expression "thief in the night" simply denotes the suddenness (without warning) of the event. Now it must be understood that this is characteristic of both "the day of Christ" and "the day of the Lord"; thus the expressions themselves should not be relied upon to identify the events.

What **can** be relied upon is the historical aspect of the context as well as a close examination of the grammar surrounding the phrase "**otee eemehrah Keereeoos**", again literally translated "that day of Lord". Note the Greek conjunction "**otee**", rendered "that" which is used after verbs denoting perception (**eethahteh** is translated "to know perfectly") in order to introduce what is perceived (John 4:19).

As the subject matter is again referenced, "those (believers), who are alive and waiting to be taken away, the emphasis is on "that day" when (our) Lord shall come to forcibly remove the remaining parts of His body (the Church) from the earth. The usage of the Greek conjunction "**otee**" in reference to that day, is also found in I Corinthians 3:13 and II Timothy 4:8. Here Paul speaks both of the evaluation and rewards of the works of the Saints and of His own personally, at the judgement seat of Christ. "That day" (the day of Christ) is the designated time set for this occurrence. One of the great advantages of properly distinguishing the dispensations and covenants is the proper understanding or the ability to differentiate between "the day of Christ" and "the day of the Lord".

"The Day of Christ" is exclusively the period connected with rewards and the blessings of the saints (elect of this dispensation) at the coming (appearing) of Christ for his own. The expression (the day of Christ) occurs in I Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; II Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6,10; 2:16, denoting the event when Jesus returns in the cloud to claim faithful believers and members of the body of Christ, His church, unto Himself. All references to the union of Christ and the elect of this dispensation, including corresponding rewards at the judgement seat of Christ and glorification of the Saints; are God's' exclusive dealings at the event described in the latter verses of I Thessalonians chapter four.

"The Day of the Lord" is the protracted period commencing with the second advent of Christ in glory and ending with the cleansing of the heavens and the earth by fire, prior to the new Heavens and the Earth of eternal state (Isaiah 65:17-19; 66:22; II Peter 3:13; Revelations 21:1). There are many prophetic references to this period of events in the Old Testament, and the gospels, as well as the non-Pauline Epistles. These testimonial documents are expressed in numerous terms, i.e. "the day of the Lord", (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6-9; 34:8; Ezekial 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:14), "day of visitation" (Isaiah 10:3), "day of wrath" (Ezekial 7:14), "day of God" (II Peter 3:12), and "a great day" (Jude 2:16; Revelations 6:17).

The "day of the Lord" will be a time of great darkness for all in rebellion against God, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. This day will be a time of judgement (condemnation) (Isaiah 13:6,9; Jeremiah 46:10), as well as restoration for His elect, Israel and the blessed Gentile Nations (Isaiah 14:1; Joel 2:28-32). There are many references to it in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 10:15; 24:27,30; Luke 12:18). Even the apostle Paul makes reference to it in some of his writings as a 'day of wrath" (Romans 2:5-6) and "day of judgement" (Romans 2:16).

There is continuously much confusion regarding the two events, mainly because there is much confusion regarding the occurrences as they relate to dispensation and covenant arrangements. "The day of the Lord", as a visible manifestation of Christ upon the earth, is to be distinguished from "the day of Christ", which is connected with the glorification of the Saints and their rewards in Heaven (in Him); **prior** to their return **with** Him to inaugurate 'the day of the Lord'. Thus historically, it is **impossible** for "the day of the Lord" which occurs a full seven years or so after the day of Christ "to overcome", "overtake" or come suddenly upon those who are members of the body of Christ, and thus already with (in) Him, when He comes to earth to execute judgement and establish His Kingdom

So the context rather than the terminology should define the event. When one fails to follow this rule, he will always be left in doubt as to what occurrence is being referenced. An example of this is found in I Corinthians 5:5. The KJV reads: "in the day of the Lord Jesus". The actual Greek text reading of the ending phrase of this verse is "ehn tee eemehrah too Keereeo", literally translated, "in the day of the Lord". Yet the majority of the translations have contextually rendered it "day of Lord Jesus", which obviously identifies the "day of Christ", based on the context. Here Paul speaks of the wayward young man's spirit being saved, which is consistent with the status of those unfaithful Saints at the judgement seat of Christ, whose works are burned up but they, themselves (their spirits) shall be saved (I Corinthians 3:15).

In II Thessalonians 2:2, the emphasis of the error caused by not following the rule of contextually is also highlighted. Note the KJV and Young's literal translation both read, "The day of Christ is at hand (has arrived)". Yet the American Standard Version and Bible in Basic English both read, "the day of the Lord is just at hand (is now even come)". The Greek text wording is "os otee ehnehsteekahn eeeemehrah too Keereeo", which is literally translated "that the day of the Lord has come". Here again we must rely upon the context to determine which is correct. In reading the entire verse, we glean from it that some of the Thessalonians were deeply concerned because of probably a rumor that certain events had already occurred. Now prophetically, accordingly to God's timetable, "the day of Christ", "Tees ehpeephahneeahs" (the appearing in the clouds); must proceed "the day of the Lord", "tee ahftoo pahrooseeah" (His actual coming to earth), by a period of seven years.

Thus, It must have been a very frightening prospect to them because of the implications involved. First of all the thought of being left behind or left out of the event (the Rapture) which Paul had described in his previous Epistle; must have been terrifying as it would have rendered them severed from the body of Christ.

Secondly, the apocalyptic Judgments (Revelations 4:1-19:6) precede and introduce "the day of the Lord". Thirdly, "the day of the Lord", comprehends the closing phase of the tribulation and extends through the Millennial Kingdom to the final judgment and destruction of all that is evil.

Here note in II Thessalonians 2:2 that the Greek verb "ehnehsteekahn", is in the perfect tense, which denotes an action that has been completed in the past with the results continuing until the present. Thus it is literally translated "has and is come", "has and is happening" or "has arrived and is present". In chapter one of

II Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul gives reassurance that in spite of the fact that they were suffering and enduring hardship; the Church of God (II Thessalonians

1:4-7) had not realized or received the essence of its calling (verse 11), and they were yet to be glorified according to His grace. In II Thessalonians 2:1, the Greek noun "pahrooseeahs", translated "advent, coming or arrival", (of our Lord Jesus Christ); is contextualized by the phrase "and our gathering together unto Him", which clearly describes "the day of Jesus Christ". Accordingly, from the context "pahrooseeah", should be rendered, "presence".

Thus, "the day" (of Christ) had **not** come and gone, with the resulting tribulation period present, in spite of the fact that they were enduring trials and afflictions. Paul reasoned with them not to be troubled by nugatory talk even if they "supposedly" received it from him. It simply wasn't true or factual. In II Thessalonians 2:3, Paul gives the timetable of the events surrounding that day. First, there will be extreme "ahpostahseeah", rendered "apostasy" (a falling away), as he also describes elsewhere in this Epistle. Then when "the day of Christ", has passed, "o yeos tees ahpoleeahs", rendered "the son of destruction", "ahpokahleephthee", rendered "may be revealed" or uncovered or disclosed. This is indicated by the subjunctive mood and aorist tense, denoting a predetermined occurrence. In II Thessalonians 2:5-6, Paul reminds them of what he had conveyed concerning the account of the man of sin, when he was with them. Here he states that it is the presence of Christ in His body, the Church that restrains or holds back this manifestation, signaling the beginning of the tribulation period.

Now as attention is refocused on the subject scripture, I Thessalonians 5:1-2, it is very important to point out the fact that if the contextual aspect of translating this scripture is considered, the term "that day of Lord" could be rendered 'that day of our Lord Jesus" or "the day of Christ". Note in I Thessalonians 5:3, it depicts the description of the beginning (not the ending) of the tribulation period. Men will be promising peace and security. This could not possibly be the case during the tribulation.

This will be the deceptive scheme of the evil one to seize power and take control of the economic, political and military thrones of the world, as the controlling nations (10 league confederacy) will gladly relinquish all to him. Then the enactment of this terrible period will be signaled by sudden destruction, brought about by the breaking of the seal by the Lamb of God and subsequent blowing of the trumpets and pouring out of the vials by the assigned seven Angels. Note none of them (the earth inhabitants) of that day shall escape the afflictions that will surely come.

In I Thessalonians 5:4, Paul states that we are not in darkness, (according to the context), "eenah ee eemahrah eemahs os KlehpteesKahtahlahvee", should read "that the day" (of our Lord Jesus Christ) may overtake you as a thief". Here again we note that the Greek verb "katahlahvee", in the subjunctive mood and aorist tense, is rendered, "may comprehend" or "overpower" you as a thief. In Thessalonians 5:5 the Greek noun "skotoos", rendered "darkness", is in the genitive case, showing possession, it speaks of those who are "owned by" or "possessed of" darkness, i.e., those who are

under the domain and authority of the principalities and powers of darkness (the devil and demons); the realm of the evil world (Ephesians 3:10; 6:12). These are to be distinguished from the recipients of God's grace, specially the elect of this age. Thus we (members of His body, the Church) are no longer categorized in that group (Ephesians 5:8,11), and it is not possible for that day to overtake, catch or be deleterious to us. This is not possible because of the two-fold provisions that are the main characteristics of the event of "the day of Christ". They are:

1. The eternal security and felicity of forever being in Christ.
2. Salvation and deliverance from the wicked one and our own sinful nature.

Paul certifies this status of escape by stating in I Thessalonians 5:8-9, that we clothe ourselves with "a breastplate of faith and love and an helmet, the hope of salvation because He has not "appointed us to His wrath", which He will dispatch to all (elect and non-elect) who are on the earth after "that day" (of Christ). Note, He will deliver the remaining elect on earth (Israel and blessed Gentile Nations) in "the day of the Lord" which begins **after** (at the close of) the tribulation. In II Thessalonians 5:10, Paul expresses the principal benefits of all those who are assigned (elected) as benefactors of the day of Christ. Here he reverts back to the description of the events in II Thessalonians 4:13-17, as he reiterates in I Thessalonians 5:11, what he forestated in I Thessalonians 4:18, which reads, "comfort and edify one another" with this information.

The distinction between the two events is best illustrated by the outline of the chart below:

Dispensation	Enactment of Covenants	Event
Grace of Christ	Grace	Day
Kingdom Millennial/and Palestinian, Davidic, New and End Time		Day of the Lord

All of Paul's Epistles are especially suffused with the longing for the "**eepeephahneeahs**", (Christ's appearing in the clouds to receive His Church), which is designated as "the day of Christ" and the ultimate "**pahrooseeah**", (the second Advent and corresponding events leading to the culmination of time and commencing of eternity), which is designated as "the day of the Lord".

The entire conception of both of these events, centers therefore in Christ and points first to the essence of the Church (His greatest work) and then to the everlasting establishment of the Kingdom of Heavens and Earth, from which sin will be forever eliminated, and in which the antithesis between nature and grace will be changed into an everlasting synthesis.