"The Day of the Lord - Peter & Paul, Different Messengers for Different Times"

<u>Review: Further Contrasts Abound: Under Grace, Watchings and Praying Are Not the Order of Our Day!</u>

- The differences between the Tribulation Law and Grace today are many, and we have looked at them carefully here in our recent fellowships. Primarily in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, the apostle of the Gentiles details those vivid contrasts. As we finish our series today on the revelation of God concerning the coming Tribulation period and then the return of the Lord, it will again be evident that the Rapture, or catching up of the Church, the Body of Christ, into heaven's glory, is in scripture entirely separate from the Second Coming of Christ to this earth to finalize his preparations for the Kingdom. The goals of those "comings" are different, and their circumstances are in nearly all respects different. As we have commented before, the reasons for this have to do specifically with the very different purposes and work of God, dispensationally considered.

- A few key distinctions were noted in our last fellowship:

    - During the Dispensation of the Grace of God: There are no signs and no wonders here to expectantly await. Although God is always a miracle-working God, today he is not working in the ways described in great detail for those living in the Tribulation period. Our times are so different. Today grace is abounding! We are asked to rest in its sufficiency. We are not appointed to wrath but to salvation BEFORE the Tribulation begins. Otherwise grace would necessarily be mixed with a legal rule of God as in the Tribulation where the required works are specified. Therefore, we are to comfort ourselves in thanksgiving to Almighty God as we take this teaching to heart. Notice that the spiritual dynamic here is entirely distinct from what we have seen to be operating during the Tribulation Period. Here, under grace, we are expected to take by faith what the Lord has already accomplished for us.

    - During the Tribulation Period: Satan, through signs, wonders, and miracles offered as proofs of his great powers, is through them counterfeiting the work of God. Much discernment is therefore needed by believers to distinguish the working of God from Satan and specifically, to take note of the signs of his soon coming. Absolute obedience to God's word is required during this period. Finally, the wrath of God will be poured out on this earth, and the trials of the Tribulation will bring judgment on unbelievers and believers alike. But out of it all, an elect nation will be saved when the Lord returns.

    - And then today, the mystery of lawlessness is a reality, with Satan working a restrained form of his Tribulation miracles intended to promote blindness to spiritual truth. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 brings this teaching, as we have seen in our previous studies.

- Today, for completeness, we will look again at all of that again, and firstly, summarize the differences dispensationally, and also see what the apostle Peter's and the apostle John's taught in Peter's second letter and in John's Book of the Revelation. As we shall see, the contrasts with Paul's teaching could not be clearer. The Lord's coming for the church, which is his body, is entirely distinct from his "second" coming.

Our Outline Today: Our Lord's Comings — The Differences Shall Be Great Indeed

- ***According to the Lord: Tribulation Shall Come First, But Salvation As Well***
- ***According to Paul: God's Comfort Is Always Offered by His Grace***

NEXT TIME:

- ***According to Peter & John: God's Judgment Is Promised with Deliverance for the Obedient Elect***
- ***What Did Peter Really Believe Regarding Paul's Ministry and Message?***

I. According to the Lord: Tribulation Shall Come First, But Salvation As Well:

[READ] 1 Thess. 5:1-5
1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.
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.
5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
. . .
[READ] 1 Thess. 5:9-11
9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.
11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

- Take note here of the “they’s” in contrast with the “we’s”. Paul is referring to two entirely different groups. The one group is those living in the Tribulation period, while the other is those living under the workings of grace.

- Take note here also of the reference to “thief in the night”. This was the language of the Lord in his earthly ministry as he was teaching concerning preparations for the coming Tribulation. Remember that he taught by parables much concerning preparations and the signs that will on that day indicate that his return is near.

- A proper recognition of the “signs of the times” was needed, since otherwise they could not endure to the end and flee into the wilderness where they would be protected in a special place:

  [READ] Matt. 24:13-15
  13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
  14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
  15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

  [READ] Matt. 24:16-22
  16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:
  17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
  18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.
  19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
  20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:
  21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
  22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

- We have already looked carefully at this passage and also the corresponding Daniel 9 section. Missing the signs of the end times scenario (beginning at the mid-point of the 7 year Tribulation period) and the return of the Lord would be devastating. In fact, it will result in their condemnation according to Matthew’s gospel account.

- But Paul repeats several times that the Thessalonian believers were not in darkness nor in those times (1 Thess. 5:4-5). This is clearly not about moral issues. It is about the dispensational working of God.

Yes, the watching and waiting are appropriate and required for those believers living in the Tribulation. But they are not for us. Period. Why? Because the work of the Lord in the lives of believers living in the current dispensation of the grace of God is very different from the work of the Lord in the coming dispensation. Paul's conclusion summarizing this with the repeated use of the word "comfort" in strict contrast to the "wrath" and "tribulation" must be noted, or we risk confusion regarding the most important issues of our day. Not recognizing the working of God through his abundant grace today is, by comparison, critical indeed, just as not recognizing the signs of the times will be for those living in the tribulation. Amen.

- We would all do well to consider the practical implications of these dispensational differences …
  - For those living in those days of the coming Tribulation …
    - The promises … salvation for those enduring the trials to come and not otherwise - remember Matt. 24:24! "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
      - But the Lord has given his word:

      Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

      Matthew 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

      Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
      - There are many promises here for those living in those days:

      Matthew 24:7-9
      7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
      8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

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.

Luke 21:22-23
22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.
23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

Matthew 24:21-22
21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

- The mind-set… readiness, alertness, no "sleeping", just waiting with the watch set always, no resting allowed … [analogy with our school days]
    - The hope and expectation (based on the promises, of course) … trials, tribulations, martyrdom for many … after enduring it all, the return of the Lord and his kingdom - only the elect "remnant" will be saved.
- The bottom line: This will be the "time of Jacob's trouble" — "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jeremiah 30:7
- So for this elect nation to be created, the work of the Lord both before those final days of the Tribulation must be great indeed in preparing these who will be saved. It will be a miraculous work indeed.

II. Our Lord's Return According to Paul: God's Comfort Is Always Offered by His Grace:

- But, for us under grace, it shall be far different. Paul writes of this in detail in his first letter:

[READ] 1 Thess. 4:13-18
13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.
14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.
15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.
16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

- The differences under the dispensational plan of grace are many:
  - The promises (there are so many to choose from — what are your favorites)

    1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
    16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
    17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

    1 Thess. 5:9-10
    9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
    10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.
    11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

    Ephesians 1:3-7
    3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:
    4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
    5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.
7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

(And so very much more, every page of Paul's letters …)

- The mind-set …
    - Be alert, be aware, rest in his truths of his grace for each day and hour.

Philippians 2:5
Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. …

Philippians 3:10-14
10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. [no signs to look for, just confidence in Him and his work]

Colossians 3:1-4
1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

- Know - Reckon - Yield

Romans 6:7-11
7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.
8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Those first verses in the sixth chapter of the Romans, especially verses 7-10, declare most authoritatively that our risen Lord Jesus is no longer focused on our sin and sins. It is not even on his mind, since he knows that he has fully paid the price for them all! On this basis, our apostle here in verse 11 graciously exhorts us to reckon upon that truth, since we are risen with him and are therefore able to enjoy those blessings just as he is. The knowing is the same knowing Christ has. The reckoning is simply taking that truth to heart. Then the yielding or presenting of the following verses is the natural expectation considering what has already been revealed here.

  There is nothing here about a legal form of morality that our Lord God demands. No, this is all about the fruit of the Spirit as Galatians 5 describes so well.

■ The hope and expectation …

1 Thess. 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Romans 8:16-19
16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.
18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Colossians 2:1-3
1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and *for* them at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;
2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the

acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- **The bottom line:**

  1 Thess. 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

  Yes, the times will often be difficult. We shall suffer persecution if we live a godly life and have a witness for the Lord, but we are to be encouraged nevertheless:

  2 Corinthians 1:3-4
  3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
  4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

  Romans 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

  Philippians 4:4-7
  4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.
  5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.
  6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
  7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

<u>Conclusions & Application:</u>

- What a difference: For all of this to be accomplished, the gracious work of the Lord will be so magnificent indeed. Praise his holy name. That we have been included in such a magnificent plan of glory, together with Christ Jesus, is such a transforming thought that it should make a difference always. Amen and amen.

  [READ] Romans 8:35-39
  35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.