

# Is there Value in Studying Eschatology in Times of Crisis?

By Jay Wegter

**There is an important reason why in I and II Thessalonians the apostle Paul spelled out the sequence of events which will occur at the end of the age.** He desired to protect the Thessalonian believers from the instability, panic, and fear that can arise from rumors, counterfeit letters of communication, satanic temptation, and severe persecution. In several places in the Thessalonian correspondence Paul sets forth a clear eschatology in order to protect his converts from rash conclusions (see 1 Thess 3:3; 4:13-18; 5:1-10; 2 Thess 1:5-12; 2:1-12).

**Today in light of the virus pandemic, it is common especially for those in conservative circles to ask, “Will these rights that have been taken from us be restored in full, or, will the ‘deep state’ utilize this crisis to begin instituting a new kind of order?”** That is a legitimate question. We know from history that once governments have removed the rights of its citizens, those governments can be very reluctant to restore those freedoms.

**Even faithful, Bible-believing Christians can be subject to fears during times of national and global crisis.** In times of uncertainty true believers become increasingly alert to the importance of doctrine and are eager to treat theology with the importance and practicality it deserves in *all seasons* (2 Tim 4:2). Thus, the intent of this article is to briefly explore a few of the ‘big picture’ themes in eschatology which the Apostles have expounded in order to stabilize and prepare the saints for the consummation of the age. For, this author is convinced that God wants His people to grasp the ‘why’ behind the events which lead up to the *Day of the Lord*. For, redemptive history is about two kingdoms locked in conflict (the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness), and about two ultimate destinies (glory and damnation).

**By way of example, here is one of the puzzling ‘why’s’ in connection with the coming ‘mystery of lawlessness’ (Antichrist’s career) (2 Thess 2:7).** In the book of Revelation, the Bible indicates that God ‘put it in the hearts of national leaders’ to relinquish their countries’ sovereignty and give it to the Antichrist—an action which actually helps accomplish the Beast’s global agenda! See Revelation 17:17. God’s decision to temporarily grant a ‘long leash’ to the Antichrist bears similarities to God allowing Pharaoh to resist Moses after each of the ten plagues. “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My Name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth’” (Rom 9:17). God’s sovereignty over evil is truly a humbling doctrine. For only God is good; He sees no moral good in the creature (Rom 3:12). Apart from His distinguishing grace, we would have continued merrily along in our self-destructive paths.

**Christians rightly regard the tribulation period to be a time of unimaginable carnage and suffering (Mt 24:21; Rev 9:15).** But, what professed believers tend to consider to a lesser degree is that the tribulation period will be a time of unparalleled ‘spiritual holocaust’. In other words, the global apostasy will reach its fever pitch when the Beast demands the worship of the whole world. “He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed” (Rev 13:12).

**One of the purposes of this article is to show that the march toward this global spiritual holocaust is taking place through a long sequence of apostate actions and philosophies.** In the last half millennium of history countless unbelieving thinkers, teachers, and leaders have each contributed his or her deadly errors to the cumulative flow of apostasy. They have mixed their lies into a toxic cocktail of plausibility structures and damnable heresies that has been eagerly embraced by the West. The Bible describes this ‘last days’ promulgation of lies and departure from the truth as follows: “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron” (1 Tim 4:1, 2). The mass acceptance of this poisonous philosophic stew will prove to be the kind of preparation needed to ‘roll out the red carpet’ for the Antichrist.

**Scripture tells us in 2 Thessalonians and in the book of Revelation that the magnitude of this spiritual holocaust will be beyond the powers of our conception** (in terms of the extent of the deception, see use of ‘whole world’ ‘world’ in Revelation 12:9; 13:3, 8, 12, 14, etc.). We are told in 2 Thessalonians 2 that because men have not received the love of the truth, the gospel, so as to be saved, God will send upon them a strong delusion (a lie) so that they might be believe what is false and be judged (2 Thess 2:11-12). This present author is finding that many Christians do not realize why God would permit the powers of darkness to work through wicked political leaders to fulfill their delusion so as to install a totalitarian world order. Of course believers are hoping and praying that things will improve and eventually go well, and that in their lifetimes they will not have to see the kind of horrors which accompany the *Day of the Lord*. But, a respite may only be temporary, for the Lord tells us precisely how the end of this age will reach a climax of indescribable planetary destruction.

**What can easily escape our focus is that God fully intends to publicly demonstrate the wickedness and absurdity of the religion of man.** For, the revolt known as the Tower of Babel will be repeated in the campaign of the Beast that is to come. Man will set up his own religion of self-worship. This means that this idolatrous form of worship (of the creature and the creation—Romans 1:25) will be accompanied by calamitous consequences (see the plagues described in Revelation). Scripture is clear on this matter, God’s fury will be poured out on the nations (Zeph 1:18; 3:8). You

and I live in an apostate culture which God is going to judge—His holiness and justice require that (see the 12 uses of the word ‘vengeance’ in the book of Jeremiah alone).

**The term, the *Day of the Lord* refers to decisive judgment from God that is concentrated in a series of destructive climactic events.** Because fallen man is in league with the devil, there must be a very public crushing of the kingdom of darkness before God’s everlasting kingdom is installed (Zech 14:1-21). God is justly filled with vengeance at the pride and arrogance of the nations. The Lord is going to avenge His trampled honor. The destruction of ‘political/economic’ and ‘religious’ Babylon is described in Revelation as a very visible event which will affect the whole world (see Revelation chapter 18).

**‘Babel’ and ‘Babylon’ are fitting terms to depict man’s rebellion.** Consider for a moment what took place at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:3-6). In terms of the defiant motive which occurred there, the spirit of Babel has taken place throughout human history—men have rejected God’s transcendent rule and in its place have desired a perfect state (or utopian society). Is it any wonder that God allows these utopian dreams to backfire? When their plans appear to gain traction, these arrogant social engineers imagine that they are getting their own way and are therefore reaching their sought after goals of governance. But, God is setting them up for destruction. (Our Lord warned that humanly devised attempts to curb evil will ultimately fail because they do not deal with the root problem of the heart, “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ‘For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man’”—Matthew 15:18-20).

**We could refer to this self-willed, self-deception as the *Armageddon paradigm*.** In that mindset of self-delusion, nations imagine that through their wisdom and the strength, they will finally be able to usher in a utopian existence. Or, closely related, as our term suggests, they imagine that through their military might they will be able to exterminate Israel (as in the Battle of Armageddon). But, Scripture tells us that the very idea they have hatched to invade and destroy Israel was actually fostered or assisted by God Himself (see Ezekiel 38:4, 8, 10-12, 16). God removes all restraint in terms of their plan to destroy Israel. But, the arrival of their armies in Israel actually initiates their own slaughter. Micah states this perfectly:

And now many nations have been assembled against you  
Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,  
And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’  
“But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD,  
And they do not understand His purpose;  
For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.

“Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion,  
For your horn I will make iron  
And your hoofs I will make bronze,  
That you may pulverize many peoples,  
That you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain  
And their wealth to the Lord of all the earth (Mic 4:11-13).

**This *Armageddon paradigm* is repeated over and over again in redemptive history.** We even see this paradigm in Romans chapter one in which the judgment God sends comes through the vehicle of self-willed men being allowed to have their own way (“God gave them over” Romans 1:24, 26, 28). This is a dominant theme throughout the Scriptures that God sets traps for the proud. He turns the tables on them and they fall into the very pit that they have dug (Ps 7:15).

**Government was originally appointed by God to ‘punish evil doers’.** “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, **or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right**” (1 Pet 2:13, 14). But, in the last days, government and religion, the institutions appointed by God to ensure a just society will become engines of persecution and bloodshed. At the end of the age, government, in tandem with the great whore, under the influence of Satan will have morphed into a monstrous, rapacious, bloodthirsty beast who ‘has poured out the blood of saints and prophets’ (Rev 16:6) and who is ‘drunk with the blood of the saints’ (Rev 17:6). This mass martyrdom of the faithful is attributed to the whore (false religion, ‘religious Babylon’, 17:6) and to the Antichrist and his forces: “And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him” (Rev 13:6, 7).

**During the tribulation, it will become evident that the nations will have taken their stand against the Lord and His Anointed (Ps 2:2; Rev 17:14).** Their enmity toward the Lord, which was by comparison covert shall be utterly overt at the end of the age. For, reprobate mankind in league with the devil belong to the kingdom of darkness, a temporary kingdom built upon human and angelic rebellion. But God is going to place that rebellion, arrogance, deception, and folly on display. For the at the end of the age man’s imperfect number ‘6’ will be up, it will have ‘expired’.

**God is going to exhibit man’s folly as an object lesson to the watching universe (the holy angels).** Man’s attempt at forming a new global ‘Tower of Babel’ will be exposed as a demonic, counterfeit religion, based upon an unholy ‘trinity’ of Satan, the Beast, and the False prophet. Man’s lust for a self-made, godless utopia will be given a few dozen months to express itself during the tyrannous reign of the Beast

(Rev 13:5). But God has an infinitely larger purpose in permitting this final display of idiocy and insolence. In the destruction of the Beast and his followers, man's attempt at an atheistic, idolatrous form of government will be publicly 'hung on the gallows of God's judgment'. It will be displayed to the myriads of holy angels as the epitome of foolishness and evil, and as the target of God's endless wrath.

**Thus, the greatest 'pride trap' ever set in all of redemptive history is going to be sprung during the Tribulation period.** For the delusion that God will send will trap billions, not just millions. This fills believers with mixed emotion; we long for the coming Kingdom of Christ, but we know that it will be immediately preceded by the awful *Day of the Lord* in which God will vindicate His Name over the destruction of countless people (Is 24:1-23; Rev 16; 14; 19).

**Many Christians seem to have little interest in this big picture theme of Eschatology—of God vindicating His great Name in the judgment of the nations at the *Day of the Lord*.** And, I must personally admit that like many of my brethren, I find myself focused more upon the welfare of my brethren, upon my immediate wellbeing; upon the freedoms and health I still enjoy, and upon the hope of tranquility in the near future. Yet, I cannot escape the big picture truth concerning the *Armageddon paradigm*. If I am to live in light of the eschaton and the coming Kingdom of God, then certain edifying behaviors are required of me in view of the suddenness of the *Day of the Lord*.

**Is our main focus as Christians the building up of one another unto endurance and perseverance?** "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13). Are we prepared at all to step into local leadership if our neighborhoods and communities become characterized by chaos and anarchy? Or, have we placed all of our eggs in the Rapture basket, as if no preparation for opposition is needed? Godly fathers who have habitually been leading spiritually will continue to lead faithfully even in apostate times of judgment.

**When I study Scripture, these are the kind of verbs I see which describe what believers will have to endure.** They will be: *worn down, arrested, flogged, killed, betrayed, taken before magistrates, assaulted with falsehood, imprisoned, falsely accused, abandoned by brethren, refined, and purified* (see Mt 10; Mk 13; Lu 17; 21; Jn 16 etc.). I am convinced that Christian ministry must become a more intense form of preparation for battle readiness. We are not really helping our brethren if our gatherings have merely socializing and friendship as the bottom line. A sweet little Bible study with three points, a poem, and a song will not do. We need utter deliberateness in preparing our brethren for what is to come.

As the perilous times spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:1ff. arrive, the pressure to compromise in order to have 'security' will be overwhelming. The strength to stand for gospel truth when the majority is ridiculing you must come from very intentional

preparation—from daily loyalty to Christ, the Lord, and from faithful equipping from the spiritually mature (1 Thess 2:1-13).

**Lest we forget, one of the reasons Jeremiah’s ministry was so bitterly hated was because he dared to preach that the nation’s ‘status quo’ ‘normal’ behaviors would result in God sending the sword to slay Jerusalem’s inhabitants** (see Jeremiah 15). Our hearts can so easily fall into truancy. One may accurately say that the affections of the heart truly comprise ‘disputed territory’. In other words, the loyalties of the heart are frequently tried and tested under affliction. Therefore, the spiritually mature must major in cultivating ‘spiritual sight’ among Christian listeners and disciples. For, no man will suffer for what he cannot ‘see’—he will not endure hardship and sacrifice for what he does not behold enough to treasure and desire.

**Our Savior warned that right up to the day of Noah’s flood, and right up to the day of the burning destruction of Sodom, society was characterized by ‘normalcy’ and routine:**

And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed (Lu 17:26-30).

**Our functional loyalties in tranquil times shall be revealed in trying times.**

This principle is graphically illustrated by one of the shortest verses in the Bible, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Lu 17:32) (who was turned into a pillar of salt at the destruction of Sodom). This tragic event of the death of Lot’s wife is a powerful ‘exclamation point’ in pressing home the truth that in times of intense judgment, we will act upon our heart affections and loyalties. Consider that the irreconcilable distance between the two kingdoms is also illustrated by the chasm between believer and unbeliever—it is a distance more vast than we can imagine (2 Cor 6:14-18). For, only a person who has been regenerated can perceive the glory of Christ and His coming Kingdom (2 Cor 4:6). And, only a person who has been born again is able to hear and heed the words of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:4, 16, 27).

**Paul the apostle seamlessly joins the eschatological, or ‘end time’ promises made to believers with the godly behaviors that are to characterize those who walk in fellowship with God:**

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord 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; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as <sup>b</sup>others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing (1 Thess 5:1-11).

**Our training and equipping of believers must incorporate the same eschatological dimensions exemplified by the apostles and by our Lord if we are to be faithful to the whole counsel of God.** We must steady the saints who are falling apart due to the pandemic news, who have ‘overdosed’ on CNN. We must urge our brethren to ‘settle these things ahead of time’, before opposition hits the world of believers with a vengeance. We must implore our brothers and sisters to ‘ditch your idols now’ before affliction increases exponentially.

**Christian leaders can agree on this, that troubled times comprise a powerful message to the church to purify itself and to get its house in order.** For, these *last days* announcements in Scripture do not tend to move us much in times of ease and prosperity, but now these prophetic words have our ears, we are listening more attentively. The apostle Peter warns, “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?” (1 Pet 4:17, 18).