

2 Thessalonians 2:5 Commentary

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2 Thessalonians 2:5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?: ou menmoneuete (2PPAI) hoti eti on pros humas tauta elegon (1SIAI) humin:

KJV Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

ESV Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

NET Surely you recall that I used to tell you these things while I was still with you.

NIV Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?

NJB Surely you remember my telling you about this when I was with you?

NLT Don't you remember that I told you about all this when I was with you?

NRS Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you?

YLT Do ye not remember that, being yet with you, these things I said to you?

2 Thessalonians 2:5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? :

- **Remember:** Mt 16:9 Mk 8:18 Lk 24:6,7 Ac 20:31
- **While:** 2Th 3:10 John 16:4 Gal 5:21 1Th 2:11 2Pe 1:15

A REMINDER TO REMEMBER

Do you not - Paul's question implies an affirmative answer - "Yes, we remember!" Most commentators see Paul's question as a mild rebuke or at least a hint of impatience! They should have remembered what Paul had taught about the Second Coming, the Rapture and the Day of the Lord, and if they had remembered, they would not have been so easily

shaken and disturbed by the false teaching.

Vine - A reproof, albeit of a kindly sort, and in tone different from that of Galatians 1:6; had they remembered his teaching they would not have been disturbed by these alarms.

Ellingworth - Phillips and some other translations change Paul's rhetorical question, "Do you not remember?" (RSV), into a strong positive statement (**Ed**: Phillips paraphrase = "I expect you remember now how I talked about this when I was with you."). Paul is not, in fact, asking his readers for information. He is saying that they either must or should remember (cf. Jerusalem Bible = "surely you remember ...?"; Barclay = "you cannot have forgotten ..."; New English Bible = "you cannot but remember"; BJ "you remember, don't you...?"). Don't you remember? may be rendered as an emphatic statement, for example, "I am sure you remember," or "you certainly must remember." (A Handbook on Paul's letters to the Thessalonians)

Remember (recall) ([3421](#))(**mnemoneuo** from **mimnesko** = to recall to one's mind) means to exercise memory, call something to mind, recollect, to pay attention to something and so to be warned (eg, Lk 17:32). The Analytical Lexicon has an excellent summary of the NT meanings: (1) of recollection recall, remember (Mt 16.9); (2) of solicitous concern be mindful of, think of, remember (Gal 2.10); (3) of self-reflection remember, keep in mind (Eph 2.11); (4) speak (of), (make) mention (of) (He 11.22) ([Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. Baker Academic](#))

A couple of "plugs" for remembering God's Word (which points to the Incarnate Word - Jn 1:1-note) - See discussion of **Memorizing God's Word of Truth & Life** and then put it into practice as a daily discipline (under grace, not law!) by beginning to **Memorize Verses by Topic**. You will not regret it... in the present age or the age to come (cp 1Ti 4:7, 4:8-note).

Remember as your Latin teacher used to say "**Repetitio est mater studiorum**" which translated means "**Repetition is the mother of learning.**" Is memorization a delight or a drudgery for you? A willing spirit changes a drudgery of duty into a labor of love. Ask God to give you a spirit willing to memorize His Word and He will, because that is His will! (Ps 119:9,11, 1Jn 5:14,15).

Remembering is frequently mentioned in Scripture,

Matthew 16:9 "Do you not yet understand or **remember** the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up?"

Mark 8:18 "HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not **remember**,

Luke 24:6; 7 "He is not here, but He has risen. **Remember** how He sp lly "I was telling them") ([3004](#))(**lego**) means to speak, to say, to teach, to exhort, to point out with words and in the **imperfect tense** depicts Paul as teaching these truths not just one time but over and over and over! Repetition was a well known rabbinical method of teaching. If

you are disciplining yourself for godliness by regularly memorizing God's Word, the only way to assure successful recall is by repeating the verses over and over and over and even after you have them down you regularly review them! One of the most undervalued disciplines in the Christian life is memorization. If we need to eat every day (which we do) in order to maintain our physical health, then we also need to "eat" the Word of Truth EVERY day in order to maintain our spiritual health. Jesus did not stutter when he declared the principle that "Man does not live by bread alone but on every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4). And are two men who were in great need of spiritual nourishment and fortified their spirits by eating God's Word...

Jeremiah who was not feeling spiritually upbeat nevertheless wrote "Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts." (Jer 15:16-note)

Job gives us the "secret" of his survival declaring "'I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:12-note)

I was still with you, I telling you - First use of the singular pronoun in Second Thessalonians. The point is that Paul reminds them he had given them a personal prophecy primer! He is certain of the teaching, because he himself taught it. Either they did not remember or did not believe what he taught them. The promulgators of the erroneous prophetic teachings should have been recognized because they were doing so in opposition to his personal tutoring. Paul had given them solid food.

Paul had spoken sound doctrine which was

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." (Eph 4:12-14-note)

Similarly the writer of Hebrews wrote that ...

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Hebrews 5:14-note)

MacArthur on telling - The **imperfect tense** of the Greek verb (noting repeated action in past time) translated **was telling** indicates that teaching about end-time events was a continual theme during Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. Therefore, what the apostle wrote in this section was not new to the church; he merely reiterated what he had already taught them (cf. 2Peter 1:12-15-note). That he taught prophetic truth in the few months he had with the new believers in Thessalonica shows that biblical **eschatology**, including the sequence of events, is not unimportant, as some think, but is foundational to the Christian faith. As noted above, its purpose was not sensational but practical; had the Thessalonians

remembered Paul's teaching, they would not have lost their joy and hope. The Thessalonians had forgotten that Paul told them when he was there that the Day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first. (1 & 2 Thessalonians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

J Vernon McGee - Paul hadn't hesitated to talk about these things. Some say that a preacher shouldn't dwell on these topics. Well, Paul did. Paul says, "When I was with you, I told you about him." (Thru the Bible Commentary)

I can only reiterate Dr MacArthur's point on growing tendency of younger evangelical leaders who tend to shy away from prophecy with rationalizations like "There's so much confusion in this area... No one can really understand it... How can we know who has the correct interpretation... It just results in arguments over meaning and timing and doesn't really contribute to one's sanctification... etc, etc" I think this approach is not only naive but it is even potentially dangerous because if conservative evangelicals choose to not rightly divide the Word regarding prophecy, then guess who will incorrectly divide it? The cults! The cults love prophecy and major in concocting sensationalistic, erroneous interpretations, interpretations that would easily be spotted as erroneous by those who have been schooled in eschatology. Those who have not been well grounded in prophecy, will not be able to discern truth from error when the cultists propound their false doctrine. Remember that when it was originally written, 25 percent of the Bible was prophetic and to date approximately 80 per cent has been fulfilled... and fulfilled with 100 per cent accuracy. It follows that the remaining 20 per cent will also be completely fulfilled in God's perfect timing!

The purpose of prophecy for us as saints is not to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to exert a sanctifying effect on our present (1Jn 3:3, 2Pe 3:11, 2Pe 3:14)! Beloved, you can mark it down, that for what (Whom) you are looking will (should) radically impact for what (Whom) you are living! If you doubt this principle, take some time and write down specific promises which God has given for the future, and as you write these down you can know that they will certainly be fulfilled as written. The effect of prophecy should renew our minds so that instead of being hopeless, we should be hopeful (hope filled).

Joseph Parker in a classic sermon on Acts 2:22-36 **The Effect of Pentecost Upon Peter** wrote that "The fulfillment of prophecy is not something which God has been arduously trying to do and has at last barely accomplished. The fulfillment of prophecy is not a divine effort; God is not a great giant trying to carry some infinite globe up an infinite hill, and at last just succeeding in unloading the burden. The fulfillment of prophecy is a natural process, and it comes to express a natural end. Prophecy is not to God a mere hope, it is a clear vision of what must be, and of what He Himself will bring to pass. You do not prophesy that the child will become a man; you speak of his manhood as future, but quite certain; you say what he will be, strong, wise, chivalrous, gentle, prudent, brave—and in so saying you are not expressing the result of an arduous effort on your part which you hope to bring to a successful issue, but you are taking your stand by the side of God when He created the typical Adam, and you say this is God's purpose and Adam shall come to this estate."

S Franklin Logsdon wrote that "The primary purpose of prophecy then is to comfort, to encourage, to warn." (The Holy Spirit at Work - Chapter 14 - "The Spirit Knows the Future")

H W Beecher on the **Purpose of Prophecy** - I am profoundly affected by the grandeur of prophecy. God unveils the frescoed wall of the future, not so much that we may count the figures, and measure the robes, and analyze the pigments; but that, gazing upon it, our imaginations may be enkindled, and hope be inspired, to bear us through the dismal barrenness of the present. Prophecy was not addressed to the reason, nor to the statistical faculty, but to the imagination; and I should as soon think of measuring love by the scales of commerce, or of admiring flowers by the rule of feet and inches, or of applying arithmetic to taste and enthusiasm, as calculations and figures to these grand evanishing signals which God waves in the future only to tell the world which way it is to march.

Jesus spoke of the inestimable value of prophecy:

And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe. (Jn 14:29)

From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am [He] (**see discussion of "ego eimi"**). (Jn 13:19)

Abraham Kuyper - As Christ declares, the purpose of prophecy is to predict future things so that the events predicted having come to pass, the Church may believe and confess that it was the Lord's work.

In the Old Testament Jehovah repeatedly extols the value of prophecy:-

Declare the things that are going to come afterward, That we may know that you are gods; Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together. (Isaiah 41:23)

Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you. (Isaiah 42:9)

Adrian Rogers - About the year 100 to 165 A.D., there was a brilliant philosopher whose name was Justin. He was not a believer, but he began to study Bible prophecy. And, as Justin studied Bible prophecy, this great intellect became convinced that the Bible is the inspired Word of God—so much that he died for his faith, and we now call him Justin the Martyr. What brought Justin to believe is this. And, I want to quote his words. Listen to his testimony. He said, "*To declare a thing shall come to pass long before it is in being and then bring it to pass, this or nothing is the work of God.*" What he's saying is this: that fulfilled prophecy is one of the great confirmations that there is a God and that God is the God of this book. "Things which must come to pass" (Revelation 1:1). You can bank on it—the sureness of it.

Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19)

And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none." (Isaiah 44:7, 8)

Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure. (Isaiah 46:9, 10)

In Ezekiel God gives a prophecies some **63 times** and follows with the statement that when it comes to pass "they will know that I am the LORD (Jehovah)." (e.g., Ezek 37:12, 13, Ezek 37:27, 28, etc)

And as **Warren Wiersbe** reminds us "The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a *calendar*, but to build *character*." Paul emphasized this fact in both of his Thessalonian letters, and our Lord warned us not to set dates for His coming (Mt 24:36, 42). *Date-setters* are usually *upsetters*, and that is exactly what happened in the Thessalonian assembly. Someone had deceived the believers into thinking they were already living in the Day of the Lord." (The Bible Exposition Commentary)