

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

“Rapture Or Wrath; Which Will It Be?”

Who here today is rapture ready!? Paul has been speaking to the Thessalonian believers in a manner that is so fantastic, so dramatic that if it weren't so painstakingly, inescapably, unavoidably clear it would be hard to believe... *That the day will come when the Lord Himself will descend from heaven w/a shout, w/the voice of an archangel, & w/the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise 1st. Then we who are alive & remain will be “caught up”, (snatched away violently, taken forcibly, suddenly we will literally fly upward into the heavens) together w/them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always, from that time forward, even forevermore, be w/the Lord...*

Jesus spoke of it in this fashion, *“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”¹* This is the exciting/encouraging context we're coming back into... & What comfort it is, to know that Jesus is coming again. To know the day is soon approaching when we will forever be w/the Lord...

But it kind of leaves us wondering... when will this happen & what happens w/those who miss the “rapture reunion”? Those who don't believe; who are left alive & remaining upon the earth after said event? Look @ Ch 5.

Vs 1-3

Again, we find ourselves fascinated by the fact that Paul was so confident in the prophetic awareness of these relatively new believers. They've known the Lord (it would seem) less than a year & he himself was only w/them for apparently less than a month! Yet the coming again of J.C. & the nuances of the world conditions that would surround it was something that Paul sought to establish & anchor every new believer *in*.

He says, “You don't have any need for me to write to you concerning the times & the seasons...” The implication being that he'd spent ample time instructing them on such matters when he was w/them.

Today, a person (depending on the fellowship they attend) could literally be meeting weekly w/the public assembly for *years* & never hear about (much less be taught on) the Lord's return. I have no doubt the Paul the apostle would be absolutely staggered at the fact of how little the attention of believers today is turned to the 2nd coming of Christ. Especially when we stop to consider how close His coming truly is!

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [In 14:2-3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We're to be watching, waiting, attentive & aware! Too often we're distracted, desensitized, not discerning the times to which we've been called... In Matt 16, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day because they'd couldn't discern the signs of the times in which *they* lived. He said, *"When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times."*² You know, "You're supposed to be all godly & up on what the scriptures say. Yet you can't see what's happening right in front of you!" I wonder what Jesus would say to *us today*? Are we aware of what the scriptures say regarding the times... & the seasons?

You might write it down so you can read it later: 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 2 Pet 3:3-9, Jude Vs 17-19. Read it & ask yourself what season we find ourselves in.

Vs 2-3

We want to take our time here & develop this so that we can dispel confusion & bring about clarity. What is Paul talking about when he makes reference to, "the day of the Lord"? He's talking *not* about a single 24 hr period (a day), but a season of time that begins w/the rapture of the church & ends after the 1,000 yr reign of Christ upon the earth.

We use phrases like, "The dawning of a new day" to speak of a new era, a change that takes place in time. We might understand it in this way; right now man is having *his* day (his way, his time) to do w/this world & the people on it what he seems best. But the time is coming when God will have *His day, His time*. Are you following me? It will be a time in which God will be at work in the world in a much more direct/dramatic fashion.

It begins in darkness (spiritually speaking) & ends in the light. There will be both judgment & blessing. Perhaps you recall when we were teaching through the book of Malachi? The 1st 2 Vs of the 4th Ch begin, *"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'That will leave them neither root nor branch. (This is how it all begins) 'But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings;'"*³ Leading into the Millennial reign of Christ."

So this will be a time whereby God is rapidly advancing His agenda to the end of the age when Jesus returns to rule & reign in righteousness.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 16:2-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mal 4:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's a time when God will judge His enemies, deliver His people & establish His kingdom. A time when God will unleash His righteous wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. Many of the O.T. prophets make reference to the "The Day of the Lord" & give explicit information, paint a clear picture of how God will be moving in this time. Isa 13:9-11, *"Behold, the day of the Lord comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."*⁴ Joel 2:30-31, *"I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord."*⁵ Zephaniah Ch 1, *The great day of the Lord is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,"*⁶ & Again, *"I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the Lord; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse.' Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the Lord's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land."*⁷

For a N.T. exposition you'll want to read the book of Rev Ch's 6-19. It's a time that we refer to as "The Great Tribulation." The reason we refer to it as the "great tribulation" is because that's how Jesus described it in Matt 24. He said, *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."*⁸ Now, for time's sake I don't want to deviate too far but sometimes people wonder who the "elect" are that Jesus is referencing if the church has been raptured.

& This is where the 70 weeks (or 70, 7 yr periods) of Daniel Ch 9 come into focus for us. Because there God shared w/him that 70, 7 yr periods of time had been determined for the nation of Israel that would essentially sum up human history as we know it before the glorious kingdom age is ushered in.

⁴ *The New King James Version*, (1982), [Is 13:9-11], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
⁵ *The New King James Version*, (1982), [Joel 2:30-31], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
⁶ *The New King James Version*, (1982), [Zep 1:14-15], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
⁷ *The New King James Version*, (1982), [Zep 1:17-18], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
⁸ *The New King James Version*, (1982), [Mt 24:21-22], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What you discover is that God revealed to Daniel exactly when Jesus would be revealed to the nation of Israel. It was after 69 of the 70- 7 yr periods had been fulfilled. But then Messiah would be cut off.

When Jesus was rejected by Israel that's when the prophetic time clock stopped (pertaining to the 70 weeks of Daniel). Jesus spoke (in Jn 10) of other sheep, not of the flock of Israel that He would bring into the fold. The reference was to you & me, the Gentiles. The church age began, the dispensation of the grace of God. For the law came through Moses but grace & truth came through J.C.

I say all that to say this, there remains 1, 7 yr period of time that God has determined for Israel. When the church is raptured, that's when this final 7 yr period of time (that we refer to as the great tribulation) will take place. (& I'll speak a little more on that in a bit). During that time God will turn His attention back to Israel & 3 ½ yrs into the 7 there will be a great awakening in the nation. The scales on their eyes (concerning who Jesus truly is) will be removed & they will come alive in Christ. They are the "elect" that Jesus speaks of in Matt 24. Are you with me? 😊

All of these things are summed up in what the bible refers to as "the day (or the time) of the Lord." Man has had *his* day, God is going to have *His* Day & believe me when I tell it will be a time of which the likes this world has never seen before nor will ever see again.

But Paul says, "You yourselves know perfectly that this day comes as a thief in the night." That is, though we know the seasons & the signs, we can't know the exact hour or timing of when this is going to take place. It's something that God will ensure takes place unexpectedly, yet He would have us be prepared, nonetheless.

Jesus said it like this, *"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*⁹

Vs 3

Ok. Again, keeping the context, this is post rapture happening. I mentioned a moment ago that there is 1 final 7 yr period of time known as the "Great Tribulation" that takes place at some point after the rapture of the church. BTW you might note that Paul says, "For when *they* say..." Regarding the rapture he identified w/those who would take part in that. He said, "*We* who are alive & remain..."

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 24:43-44). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But as it pertains to *this particular happening* he says, “For when they say...” He expected no part in this. But this 7 yr period of time (back to Daniel Ch 9) begins when the A.C. (whoever he may be) will sign a 7 yr peace agreement w/Israel, allowing them to rebuild their temple, sacrifices will resume, it will appear to be a grand & glorious political accomplishment.

Now I’m certain that after the rapture it will be a time of chaos & confusion. It will be the A.C. who will ascend out of all of that to bring peace & order back to the world. & By the time he signs this agreement w/Israel there will be a sense of peace/safety unparalleled to this point upon the earth. Mankind will be more or less lulled to sleep by political and prosperous economic conditions. They’ll be going about life, “Business as usual” as it was in the Days of Noah. Eating, drinking, marrying & giving in marriage, oblivious to the sudden destruction that’s to visit them (Matt 24:37-39). And like labor pangs upon a pregnant woman, they shall not escape.

3 ½ yrs into this peace agreement, the A.C. will break the agreement, go into the holy of holies, declare himself to be God, demand to be worshiped as God & that’s when the blinders come off. All hell (literally) will break loose on planet earth, & as we read here, they shall not escape. Listen, when it’s time for baby to come, there’s no avoiding its conclusion. There is an inevitable occurrence, so to w/this. When judgment begins, it will be carried through to its conclusion (ultimately the 2nd coming of J.C.)

Vs 4-5

The comparison/contrast between the believer & the unbeliever. The unbeliever is blind (in the dark) pertaining to the reality of what’s coming. You & me? We are not. You are *in* the world, but not *of* the world because Jesus has called you *out* of the world. Therefore, you’re ready for the return of Jesus!

Now I hope you’re making the distinction when I speak of the return of Jesus Vs the 2nd coming of Jesus. When I speak of the return of Jesus (w/reference to our study) I’m speaking of the rapture of the church. When I speak of the 2nd coming of Christ, I’m talking about when He returns to rule & reign upon the earth at the end of the 7 yr great tribulation. When He returns for His church, we’ll meet Him in the air. When He comes to rule & reign, He’s coming again to the earth. Are you w/me?

But if you’re “in the dark” w/regard to the day of the Lord, it’s time to give your life to Jesus. Because as a believer, you live in a different sphere altogether. You are sons of light, there’s illumination, growth, you can see what’s going on around you...

Vs 6-8

Just FYI this is a different word for sleep than what he uses w/reference to the death of the believer in Vs 13 of Ch 4. Here he's speaking of the difference between being spiritually awake, aware & alert (living & looking for the Lord's return) versus being indifferent to spiritual realities & moral laxity.

& This is why it's good for us to gather together collectively, it's hard (not impossible) to go it alone, to live a solid Christian life in isolation. We're more likely to grow spiritually drowsy. Good, godly company keeps you refreshed spiritually, encouraged to keep fighting the good fight of faith.

One who's asleep spiritually is inactive, insensible, imperceptible. Like people are dying of disease & the Dr who has the cure in his pocket is sleeping. The ship w/thousands of passengers careening out of control due to a storm, it's destined to crash on the rocks & kill everyone on board, but the captain's asleep. The prisoner on death row being led to his execution, but the man who has a letter of pardon for him is asleep in a different room.

This shouldn't characterize our lives as believers. We should be sober (awake & alert) to what's happening around us, the sense of urgency to get the gospel to those who are otherwise perishing. Drunkenness is self-indulgence, w/out self-control, distracted & desensitized to reality. We're to be sober, stable, mentally/spiritually sharp.

Putting on the breastplate of faith & love, & as a helmet the hope of salvation. Faith, hope & love. Faith guards you inwardly, love for others protects outwardly. If you believe in God you'll love others, they go together. They equip you to stand ready for the rapture. The helmet of salvation guards your mind (hope meaning guaranteed certainty, a concrete expectancy). So the idea at hand is that we're to guard our hearts/minds in Christ Jesus.

Vs 9-10

Family; I hope you can see it now. If there was confusion before, I pray there's clarity now. We spent significant time developing the "day of the Lord". The fact that it's the wrath of God poured out upon a Christ rejecting world. We noted that Paul differentiated himself w/words like "we" w/regard to the rapture & "they" w/regard to the "day of the Lord". & This is one more reason why we hold to a "pre-tribulation" rapture position. Because, "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (deliverance) through our Lord J.C." God has appointed the ungodly to wrath, He's appointed *you* to the rapture (deliverance from His righteous wrath, salvation) through our Lord J.C.

Time forbids, but study the book of Rev. Ch's 2-3, they're all about the church. Ch 4 Vs 1, *"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'"*¹⁰ Immediately John was in the Spirit & in the presence of God. From that point forward the church is never alluded to again until Ch 19 at the 2nd coming of Christ.

& There is so much more we could look at & consider. Remember when God was going to destroy Sodom & Ab was interceding? He was like, "Would you destroy the righteous w/the wicked, what if there's 50 righteous people down there? Would not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It's not right to subject the righteous to the same wrath as the wicked... God said I'll spare for 50... for 40... for 30... all the way down to 10. What happened? He destroyed the city (there wasn't even 10), but before He did He removed Lot & his family (the righteous)... Peter picked up on this & wrote, *"...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,"*¹¹

You see, your place (& mine) isn't to be subjected to God's wrath (Jesus bore that for us), our place is to live together w/Jesus who has loved us & given Himself for us...

Let's remember that the Thessalonians were worried that those who'd died might miss out on the return of Jesus. If we were to go through this Great Tribulation, Paul would've said, "They haven't missed out, they're better off! You've got wrath to look forward to, they're w/Jesus!" Where's the hope in that!? God hasn't appointed you to wrath, but to be delivered from His wrath, through our Lord J.C.

Vs 11

Don't "take" comfort (that's good & well) but "give" comfort. Encourage, edify (build up) one another. Family the picture here is of a church full of active participants, not passive spectators.

I'm just telling you there should be a waiting list to serve in the C.M. or nursery. The ushers & greeters should be overstaffed. There should be servants welcoming people in the parking lot. There should never be an unmanned area in the media team or grounds crew & cleaning ministry (you get the idea). & It's not that I believe that a church building is the only place you can serve God...

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Re 4:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Pe 2:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But if there's anywhere we should *desire* to serve, it seems to be it should begin w/the body of Christ & what better opportunity than when we gather collectively. Write it down & consider it carefully, 1 Pet 4:10-11, Eph 4:11-16, Jn 13:13-15

Serve one another, bless one another, pray for/minister from the scriptures to one another, be ready for the return of Jesus. I can't tell you when that will be, but I can tell you that it's nearer now than when we 1st believed...

Prayer Points:

Father may we be found ready, awake, aware, alert & prepared. Give us hearts to build up & edify one another. None of us on the sidelines, every one of us in the game. We thank You God for the glorious hope that You have not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord J.C.

We're to be rapture ready. Ready to meet the Lord in the air... if that's not you than this moment is for you. For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Saved from sin, saved from hell, saved from the righteous wrath of God that we so deserve but Jesus bore on our behalf. & He's prepared to forgive you, to receive you unto Himself. Turn from your sin, trust in Him.