

R U Ready? 1-2 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 5

“We All Will Behold Him”

Revelation 1:7

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

We all will behold Him. Believer and unbeliever alike. For those of us who believe—the children of God—the coming of Christ will be a glorious, and permanent reunion with the lover and saviour of our souls. For the unbeliever, His coming will be a very different experience.

It is essential that we look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 24—concerning the day of the Lord—and see how it aligns with Paul’s exhortation to the Thessalonians. As is a solid way to understand any passage, I will be using Scripture to verify and explain Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 5:1

*(KJV) But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.
(NIV) Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,*

Paul, when he was with the Thessalonians in person, had already instructed them not to try and set a period of time or specific date for the Lord’s return—as did the false prophets, then and now. 1 Thessalonians negates any attempts to predict that which God alone has knowledge of. The closest any of us can come to ascertaining the return of Jesus is provided by The Lord Himself in Matthew 24. Note two things in the following passage: the Lord’s warning and instructive words to us who are in the waiting; and the Lord’s harrowing and sobering words that contrast how the day of the Lord will look for the believer versus the unbeliever:

Matthew 24:36-51

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and

drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever found yourself caught up in prophetic date setting and revelations? What is it do you think that causes us to want to speed up the coming of the day of the Lord? Why is this a foolish endeavour? What is the cure to our end times curiosity?

*STUDY POINT: As a personal study project, select ten specific prophecies in Old and New Testament that have already come to fruition. Take great confidence that the Bible is the true prophetic voice of God:

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

1 Thessalonians 5:2

(KJV) For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

(NIV) for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Any of us who has been a victim of a home invasion could relate to Paul's word picture here of a thief breaking into our once secure refuge of home in the middle of the night. Three words could describe this scenario: scary, sudden, and certain. Zero time to prepare for that which is already happening. Here is the next verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:3

(KJV) 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.

(NIV) While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Paul here employs a familiar slogan known in the Roman Empire—peace and security is guaranteed and is yours under our government rule. He then contrasts this false sense of security with another word picture: that of a pregnant woman experiencing sudden birth pains, ready to deliver a baby. Those unbelievers who experience the coming of Jesus will be shocked, terrified and unable to escape the One they rejected throughout all their lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5

(KJV) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

(NIV) But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

But ye. Paul suddenly turns to encourage the saints by restating the truth of what the day of the Lord will be like for them. Because of their new status as children of light the day of the Lord will be not as a thief in the night, or the travail of a pregnant woman in labour.

So, do we as believers have any cares or concerns as we wait for Jesus to come back? Paul does, in fact, have instructions for the Thessalonians—and for us today—as to how we can prepare for that glorious day. He continues to use the word pictures of darkness and light to contrast how we are to live now that we are in the light (John 8:12) with how we see the unbelieving world lives apart from Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8

(KJV) Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

(NIV) So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Here Paul reminds the Thessalonians, and all believers, to put on the full armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-20). How imperative that we suit up in these days of evil leading up to the arrival of our Lord! Putting on the full armour of God is like putting on Jesus (Romans 13:14), Whose faith, love, and hope sustain us and keep us from sin, until the day He returns.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

(KJV) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

(NIV) For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So how did we—and indeed, how does anyone—escape the righteous wrath of God, and get transferred from the death of spiritual darkness to the kingdom of eternal light (Colossians 1:13)? This verse answers the question: by our Lord Jesus Christ!

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11

(KJV) Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

(NIV) He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

What comforting and encouraging words Paul shares with the Thessalonians who worried about the eternal plight of their deceased loved ones in the Lord. They, in turn, encouraged one another (see Hebrews 3:13). All believers, dead or alive, will be ultimately be swept up by their Saviour on that day—and will be with Him forever.

Okay, brethren, you will now notice now how Paul begins to teach, instruct, remind, and exhort his new converts in Christ in writing.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

(KJV) And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

(NIV) Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

Paul disciplined the Thessalonians by first being an example of Jesus to the flock (1 Peter 5:3), then—for the sake of peace in the community of faith—encourages them to appreciate and honour those leaders among them who also care for them as Jesus would:

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Likewise, Paul does not stray from the Jesus way as he gives specific instructions from God's Word as to how they—and we—should live in these end days.

Let me say before we read these verses that there are passages of Scripture that require a deeper read and prayer to comprehend—maybe when a commentary, dictionary, or interlinear resource is helpful—but I feel in my heart that we should spiritually discern and understand what Paul is teaching us here, straight from the text. I will read these verses in a simpler translation to help us along. First, let me encourage you to pray over these verses, that the Holy Ghost would illuminate them and sow them deeply in your hearts.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

(NirV) Brothers and sisters, we are asking you to warn those who don't want to work. Cheer up those who are shy. Help those who are weak. Put up with everyone.

Strange as it may sound to us, there were those among the Thessalonian believers who obsessed about Christ's return and quit their jobs to wait upon His supposedly imminent return. Paul is addressing those people here in the first sentence. Different people in different places in their lives—the shy, the weak, the difficult—require from us different ministry attitudes, so that we never become ineffective, miserable comforters (see Job 16:2).

1 Thessalonians 5:15

(NirV) Make sure that nobody pays back one wrong act with another. Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth (Leviticus 24:20) is not a New Testament principle, but love and forgiveness certainly fit with the character of Jesus Christ in the new age of grace. Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that they must live out the Christ-like character now living within them.

1 Thessalonians 5:16

(NirV) Always be joyful.

Lest we interpret this verse to mean “constantly happy,” Paul is referring instead to the depth and richness of Holy Spirit-generated joy, which is experienced as we delight in and obey God’s Word. This joy is also our source of strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

1 Thessalonians 5:17

(NirV) Never stop praying.

For the born-again Christian, prayer is like breathing. Prayer need not be limited to only church time, meal time, devotional time, or times of trouble. This verse encourages us to pray anytime and all the time—in other words, make it top priority. When we pray less, we care less—and sin more!

1 Thessalonians 5:18

(NirV) Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not saying here to celebrate hard times, but rather to understand that, for the believer, all seasons of life—good and bad—have eternal purpose because God, through Jesus Christ, is sovereign over them all. Praise God!

1 Thessalonians 5:19

(NirV) Don't put out the Holy Spirit's fire.

As Ephesians 4:30 makes clear, the reason we don’t intentionally grieve the Person of the Holy Spirit is that we don’t want to grieve God Himself, the One who has sealed us for the day of the Lord and for all eternity.

1 Thessalonians 5:20

(NirV) Don't treat prophecies as if they amount to nothing.

If someone has something to share from God’s Word, we need not immediately reject it as a lie. Paul is encouraging the believers in Thessalonica to exercise grace, kindness, and discernment in each case of prophetic utterance.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

(NirV) Put everything to the test. Hold on to what is good.

For years, I have been in the practice of drawing out what truth from God’s Word I can from any preacher’s pulpit. 1 John 4:1 exhorts us to “test the spirits” against Holy Scripture. We are to be as the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11) in this regard. “Keep the meat and discard the fat” would be a culinary way to describe this process of discernment!

1 Thessalonians 5:22

(NirV) Stay away from every kind of evil.

The Thessalonians and all of us who now follow Jesus have been separated off from the sin nature and the wickedness in the world, and so we are to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16):

2Corinthians 6:14-18

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

After you've had some days to pray and meditate through 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22, you may look at the print study of this lesson more closely to give more detail to Paul's words.

Now, the blessing from Paul to his precious people in Christ:

1 Thessalonians 5:23

(KJV) And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(NIV) May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse really describes the ultimate purpose of Paul's words of instruction—and, indeed, the gospel itself—to prepare God's children for eternity with their holy Father in heaven. Hallelujah!

And, oh dear brethren, if you are worried that you can't be and do all that God requires, hear this:

1 Thessalonians 5:24

(KJV) Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

(NIV) The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Woe to us if we ever try and live out God's will for us in our own strength. No, rather He will do it. Trust in Him!

We conclude with some familiar closing housekeeping from Paul:

1 Thessalonians 5:25-28

(KJV) Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ be with you. Amen. The first epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens. (NIV) Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Let me conclude with one of the most triumphant, glorious passages in all of Scripture:

Matthew 24:29-31

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Rejoice!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland