

# Preparing for Christ's Coming (John 14:1-7, 27 & 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)<sup>1</sup>

24-Mar-19

We're continuing our 9-part series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica - and we're looking at Part 8

## [PowerPoint 1-Letter]

There are Bibles in front of you and a sermon outline in the bulletin if you want to take notes.

Please have your Bibles turned to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5

Let me pray for God's help before we begin. Let's pray...

## Recap/Intro

As a young boy I was in the Cubs and Boy Scouts

The Motto of the Cubs and Scouts comes from the initials of its founder - Lord Baden Powell

## [PowerPoint 2-Be Prepared]

B.P. - Be Prepared

(pause)

## [PowerPoint 3-Recap]

- Last week the Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians and us that Jesus is coming back
- And we finished up last week, with Paul telling the Thessalonians to encourage each other with the truth that Jesus will return one day

## [PowerPoint 4a-Intro]

- It's one thing being encouraged and comforted with the fact that Jesus is coming back

- But it's another thing to **be prepared** for Jesus coming back
  - Whether we are among those who have died before He returns
  - Or we are among those who are still alive when He returns

[PowerPoint 4b-Intro prepared?]

- So, are we prepared?
  - Will Jesus find us ready when He comes back?
  - Will we be ready should we die before He comes back?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 5a-Day of the Lord]

- In our passage today from 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11- Paul refers to Jesus' return as the **Day of the Lord**

[PowerPoint 5b-every day]

- In one sense, every day is the day of the Lord, and Sundays are sometimes referred to as the Lord's Day

[PowerPoint 5c-specific day]

- But the Bible refers to a specific Day, the Day of the Lord, when God will intervene in History - to fulfill His plans and purposes for this World and Humankind (Isa 22; Jer 30:1-17; Joel 1-2; Amos 5; Zeph 1:14-15; Ezek 38-39)

[PowerPoint 5d-described]

- This Day of The Lord is described as the time when Jesus Christ returns to raise everyone from the dead, judge everyone, complete the salvation of all those who believe in Jesus and bring them to live with Him forever, and send unbelievers away from God's presence forever (into Hell)
- The Apostle Paul describes this day in Rom 14:10b-12

### [PowerPoint 6-Judgment]

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. (2 Cor 5:10) <sup>11</sup> It is written:

"As surely as I live,' says the Lord,  
'every knee will bow before me;  
every tongue will acknowledge God.'" (Isaiah 45:23)

<sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will **give an account of ourselves to God**.  
(Matt 12:36 and 1 Peter 4:5)

So, we know this Day of the Lord is coming how can we prepare

### 1. Be Prepared - The Day will come as a surprise (1 Thes 5:1-3)

First, we can be prepared for Christ's Coming, by knowing this Day, will come as a surprise

### [PowerPoint 7a-date]

- V1- We don't know the time and or the date - Jesus says in Acts 1:7 - "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" and in Matt 24:36 <sup>36</sup>"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
- And still in V1 - Paul is not going to waste time telling them that - they already know - no-one knows the date or time
- Many have tried to calculate the date - there were failed predictions in the year 2000, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015

### [PowerPoint 7b-thief]

- Instead in v2 - Paul says the Day will come like a thief in the night - We are not expecting a thief to come and certainly not at night - we're asleep and oblivious to it - but as Jesus Himself says in Luke 12:39 **If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.**
- This Day comes as a complete surprise
- See v3 - people will be living their lives - thinking it's all peaceful and safe - Jesus Himself says in Luke 17

### [PowerPoint 7c-days of Noah and Lot]

**<sup>26</sup>“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. <sup>27</sup>People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.**

**<sup>28</sup>“It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. <sup>29</sup>But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.**

- People in Noah's day were laughing at Noah for building an ark and thought their lives were all safe - they had no regard for God - then wham a flood came, with no escape
- People in Lot's day were living immoral lives with no regard for God - then wham destruction!
- That's what Jesus return will be like - many will be living their lives thinking everything is fine and dandy

### [PowerPoint 7d-Like labour pains]

- Paul uses another illustration of a pregnant woman suddenly going into labor and having labour pains - to show the surprise factor of the Day of the Lord

- Two points with this a) the woman doesn't know exactly when the labour pains will start and b) these labor pains are inevitable and unavoidable

[PowerPoint 7e-No escape]

- Bottom line - there's no escape from this Day of the Lord

## 2. Be Prepared - The Day could be a Day of Destruction or a Day of Delight (v4)

Second, we can be prepared for Christ's coming by knowing *this day could be a day of destruction or a day of delight*

[PowerPoint 8a-destruction/darkness]

The Apostle Paul has just described it as a day of surprise and a day of destruction

But it's only a day of destruction for those who don't believe in Jesus

V4 - says *but you, brothers and sisters are not in darkness – so that this day should surprise you like a thief*

[PowerPoint 8b-light]

Paul's saying the Thessalonian Christians and us (as Christians) are not in the dark - away from God and away from a faith in Jesus - Christians are in the light of Jesus - because of their faith in Jesus - Jesus has taken Christians out of the darkness of their sin - and into His glorious light (Eph 5:8, Col 1:13, 1 Peter 2:9)

[PowerPoint 8c-destruction/delight]

Again, the bottom line is - Remaining in the darkness of sin - leads people to Destruction on that Day - being in the light of Jesus and having faith in Him - leads people to have delight on that Day

### 3. Be Prepared - As Children of the Light (v5-11)

Third, we can be prepared for Christ's coming, by being *Children of the Light*

[PowerPoint 9a-children of light]

So, part of being prepared for this Day is being sure we are children of light and children of the day (this day of the Lord) - see v5

What follows in verses 5 to 11 is a contrast between darkness and light

Jesus describes Himself as the Light of the World

[PowerPoint 9b-light]

His light exposes the darkness of sin and evil and rebellion against God

It's like Jesus' light is a spot light shining in the darkest corner of a room and showing up all the dirt and horrible stuff - Jesus' light exposes all our horrible sinful stuff - and He invites us to come into His light - and have our dark sin and rebellion removed and cleaned up - through forgiveness - which cost Jesus His life on a cruel cross - to wash us clean with His blood - and receive His light in our lives - through the spiritual washing of baptism - and the spiritual cleaning of the Holy Spirit - teaching, guiding and correcting us

So, if we are children of the Light...

[PowerPoint 9c-awake/not asleep]

Children of the Light - **are awake** - awake to the promise Jesus made that He is coming back

The promise He made to His disciples in our first reading from John 14:1-3

**1** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.

**2** My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

**3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am

So as children of the light, we don't need to have troubled hearts - Jesus will come back and there's plenty of room for us in Heaven

Whereas children of darkness are **asleep** to God's Word and to Jesus' life-saving gift of dying on the cross for sins to be forgiven, they're **asleep** to Jesus' rising from the dead to give eternal life, and they're asleep to the His promise that He's coming back

They're oblivious to Him coming back to judge everyone and to bring believers to Heaven

They're awake as far as their earthly life is considered - but they're asleep as far as anything to do with God, His Son and the Bible are concerned

[PowerPoint 9c-awake/sober]

So, in v6 - Paul encourages us to be **awake and sober** -

Awake here means to be **alert** to the truths and promises of God

And sober here means to be **calm and collected - serious and watchful**

Knowing this day is coming and being calm and watchful for when it comes

In contrast those who are *asleep* at night and *drunk at night* in v7 - are *oblivious* to what is happening - they've *indulged themselves* for the day - they're thoughts are only for themselves and the here and now - with no regard for God or the future He promises in eternity with the return of His Son, Jesus. They're living for the now!

Paul compares people who are sober to those who are drunk

To show the difference between:

*Being serious versus frivolous*

*Considering others versus considering only our self*

*Thinking of spiritual things versus only of worldly things*

[PowerPoint 9d-armour]

But children of light - in v8 - they soberly or calmly put on the **3 core ingredients** of being a Christian - Paul describes these 3 ingredients as an **armour of God** (see also Eph 6) - they are *faith, love* and *hope*.

This armour consists of:

The breastplate of faith and love

Faith and love protect our hearts from much evil

Faith comes from the word of God and love comes from Him who is the Word of God (Rom 10:17 and 1 John 3:16)

The helmet is the hope of salvation

Our hope is a certain hope - because of Jesus' death and resurrection

The helmet of hope of salvation protects our minds - from fear and doubt

Hope comes from believing the Word of God (Rom 15:4)

So being prepared for the Day means having this armour on all the time - protecting our hearts and minds

And Paul encourages them and us in v9 to **wait** because as Children of the light we've been appointed salvation

God has not appointed us to wrath (His anger) - and don't think it's not coming (Rom 2:4-11)

Jesus delivers us from this wrath of God (1 Thes 1:10)

Instead as children of the light - we have been appointed **salvation (rescue from sin and death)**

How? See v10 through the blood of Jesus on the cross (Rom 5:8-10)

So, whether we're a dead Christian (asleep) or an alive Christian (awake) when Jesus returns - we will live with Jesus forever -and not suffer God's wrath

This promise of our salvation

Paul says in v11 should be of great encouragement to us - so much so - that we will encourage and build one another up with this truth!

*Encourage* here - literally means calling someone to your side - a picture of side by side spiritual coaching

*Build each other up* here - literally means building a house - so if we think of it as getting beside someone to build a spiritual house project with them - so they feel spiritually safe and spiritually strong

## Application

### [PowerPoint 10-Application]

To be prepared for the Day of the Lord - Christ's return

### [PowerPoint 10a-App1]

1. Are you a child of the light or a child of the darkness - you need to be a child of the light before it's too late! Remember we don't know when Jesus will return? If Jesus returned today, do you know if he will take you with Him? Are you going to take the risk of not believing in Jesus? And for those we know that aren't children of the light - what are we doing about it? There may not be a tomorrow!

(pause)

### [PowerPoint 10b-App2]

2. If we are a child of the light - we'll be serious about preparing for Jesus' return - we'll be serious about spending time in God's word - which will build our faith, our love and our hope - and which will encourage us and bring us comfort

### [PowerPoint 10c-App3]

3. If we are a child of the light - we'll be serious about the Church of Jesus Christ - where our faith, hope and love can be expressed amongst the

church family - and where encouragement and building up can be experienced. People in our church family (which is an ageing family) say things like this to me: *'they are lonely'* (we can visit, phone, take them out) or they say *'they're not afraid of dying but they're afraid of the dying process'* (we can encourage, pray, read the Bible with them, sing hymns).

The best thing we can give people is our time

(pause)

## Conclusion

[PowerPoint 11-Conclusion]

Jesus will return

We don't know when

But He will return

God will not delay Jesus' return indefinitely - that doesn't fit with a God who is totally good and totally perfect - and with a God who always keeps His promises

God delays Jesus' return because He does not want anyone to perish but come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

At some point that delay ends

The Early Christian Churches - like us - were also waiting for Jesus return

How did they prepare? Looking at Acts 2...

They used the power of people hearing God's Word - when Peter preached

<sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They prepared by

<sup>42</sup> ... devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer

And by

<sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

(pause)

One final thought from the late Billy Graham that is helpful – He says:

*The great Dwight L. Moody used to say, "I never preached a sermon without thinking that possibly the Lord may come before I preach another."*

*Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, the distinguished British clergy-man, said, "I never begin my work in the morning without thinking that perhaps God may interrupt my work and begin His own. I am not looking for death. I am looking for Him."*

*Billy Graham says: That is the way a Christian should live their life—in the constant anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ! If we could live every day as though it may be the very last one before the final judgment, what a difference it would make here on earth! But we don't like to think that way. We don't like to think that our carefully made plans, our long-range schemes may be interrupted by the trumpet of God. Too many people would rather say, "Oh, well, the end of the world hasn't come yet, so why think about it – it's probably a thousand years away."*

Let's pray...