

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 28

The Rapture

The Rapture

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective Using 1 Thessalonians 4-5, we will teach the students about the rapture of the Church and its removal from the world before the Great Tribulation.

Key Verses

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10

Acts 1:9

1 Corinthians 15:52

Matthew 24:15-22

2 Corinthians 6:2

Memory Verse - 1 Thessalonians 5:9

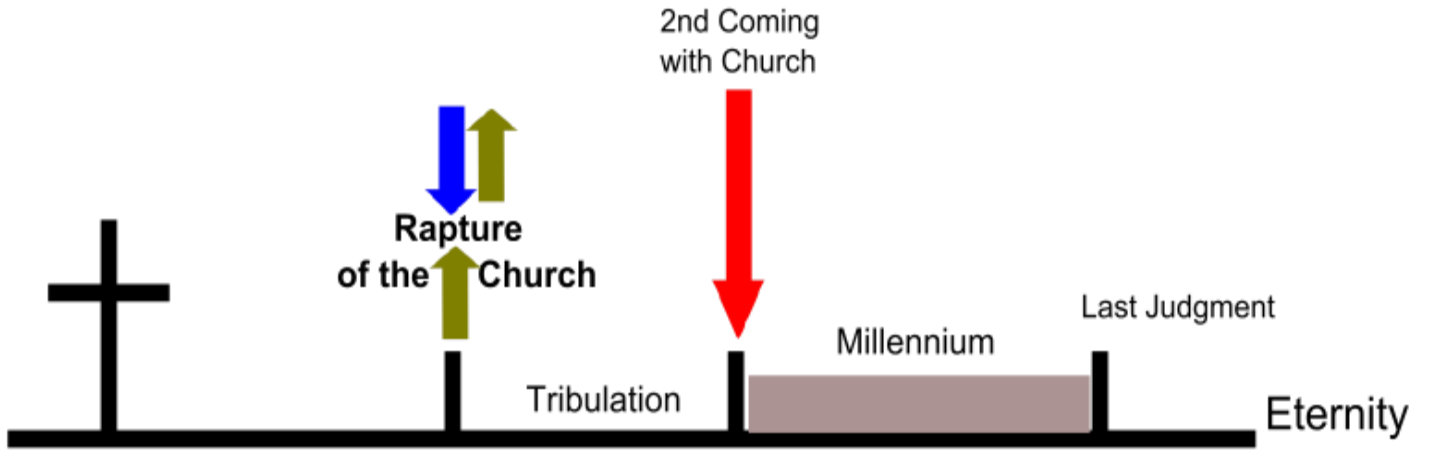
"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hook

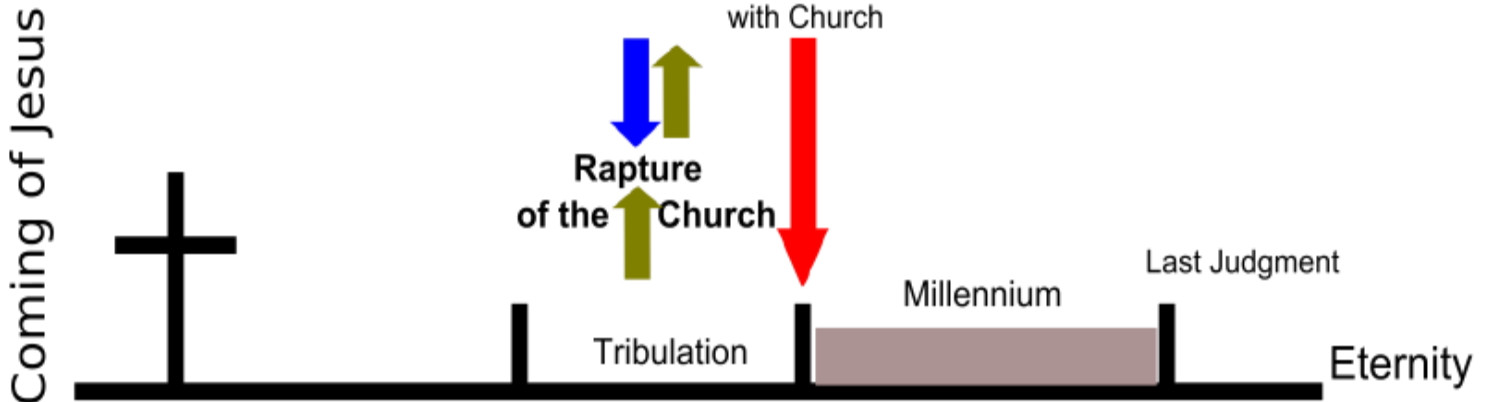
Review last week's memory verse, 2 Peter 3:14.

Draw the "Pre-Tribulation" diagram from the next page on the board, but leave blank spaces for all of the words. Have the students guess what the diagram might be about, filling in the blank spaces. After a student guesses, fill in one word, and allow the students to try again. Repeat this, leaving the word "Rapture" for last.

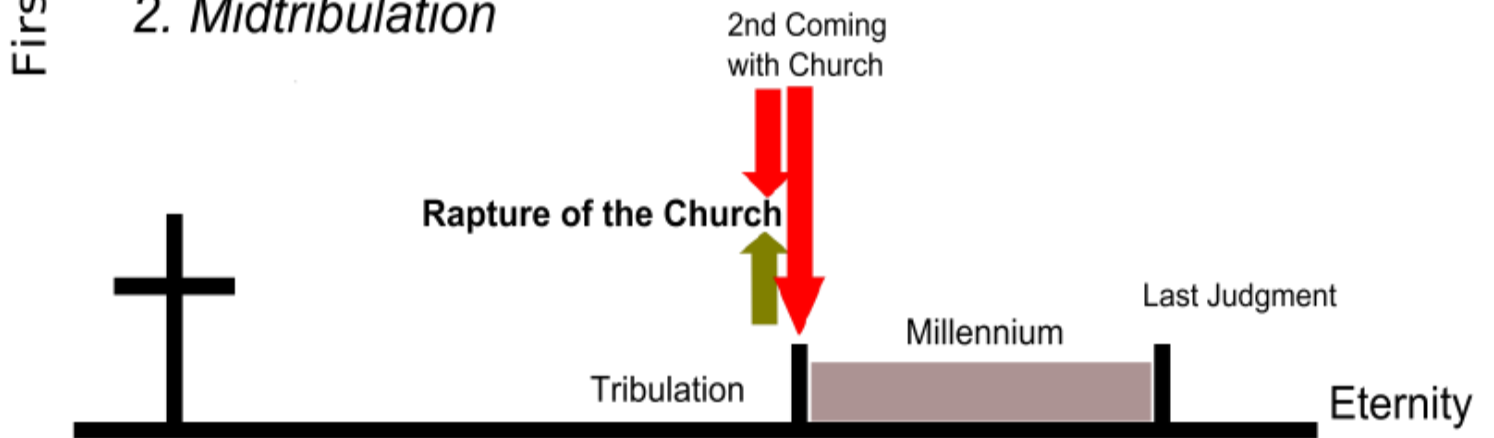
Comparison of Christian Tribulation Views



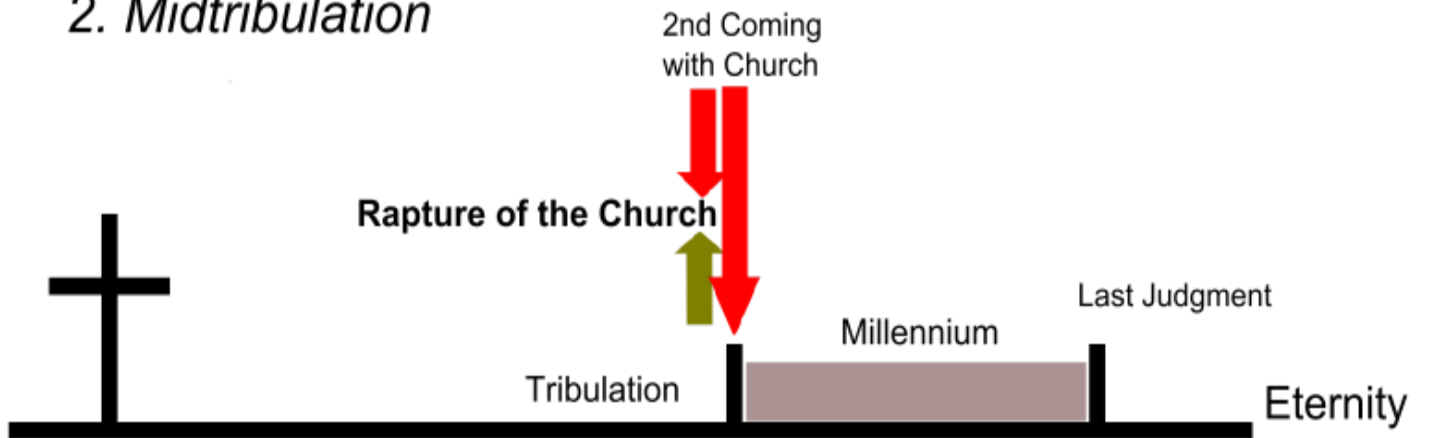
1. Pretribulation



2. Midtribulation



3. Posttribulation



I have included Mid-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation diagrams for comparison and, if time permits, for you to discuss with the class. We hold to a Pre-Tribulation position, but it should be stressed to the students that people who don't agree with us and have a different eschatology are still brothers and sisters in Christ who share 90% of the doctrine that we do.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Here in 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul is responding to a question he received from the Thessalonian Church: “If Christ is coming back, what happens to our fellow believers who have died before He returns? Do they miss out?” Paul’s answer is no, their joy is set before them in the same way it is set before us. He then, however, goes on to reveal a wondrous truth about the events surrounding Christ’s return and the Church’s place during a time referred to as the Tribulation (Revelation 7:14).

1 Thessalonians 4:16 echoes Acts 1:9, stating that in the same way that Christ ascended, He will descend from the heavens with a shout and catch up His beloved ones to be with Him in the sky. The Greek word for “caught up” (*harpazo*) is translated in the Latin Vulgate as the word “*rapturus*,” which is where the term “Rapture” originates from. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul then goes on to tell us that we are not destined for wrath, but for salvation, and in light of that we should live thoughtful, prepared, and God-honoring lives. We should be zealous about His work and upright in our actions.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

One of the biggest buzz words in Christian culture today is the word “rapture.” You read about it in Christian magazines and books and see it in Christians movies like “Left Behind.” Today we will be looking at what the Rapture is and when (in relation to Christ’s return) it is going to happen.

In 1 Thessalonians 4, we are told by Paul that Jesus Christ, who ascended up to heaven after His resurrection, is going to come back down and gather all true believers to be with Him. It says in verse 17 that we will be “caught up” and meet with Jesus in the sky. 1 Corinthians 15:52 says that this will take place “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” and, “we will all be changed.” In other words, one day, and no one knows when that day will be, we will be living our normal lives when suddenly, in a split second we will be gone. Jesus will have snatched us up out of this world and we will be with Him forever from that point forward.

So if all believers get caught up to be with Christ, what happens to everyone else? The simple answer is that they get left here on earth. The more complex answer comes from Matthew 24:15-22, which speaks about an awful period of time called “the Great Tribulation.” The great tribulation is a seven-year period that marks the time right before Jesus comes back to earth and sets up His Kingdom, reigning for a thousand years (the Millennium). It is important to note that the rapture is not Christ’s second coming. The Rapture is God’s grace and mercy, protecting

LOOK (Continued)

His people from the awful events that are foretold to occur during the Tribulation. We go up to be with Christ, then seven years later we return with Him in victory.

We have many good reasons to believe that the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation. One of the best is found in 1 Thessalonians 5, which continues Paul's thought on the rapture. It says that we are not appointed to wrath like those who are "of the night," but are appointed to salvation, as those who are "of the day." This of course agrees with the nature of God seen throughout all of Scripture. During the time of the flood, Noah and his family were taken out of the destruction and kept safe in the ark. When God declared His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, He removed all of the faithful believers from the city and did not force them to endure that punishment. During the time of the plagues in the book of Exodus, the plagues would afflict all of Egypt, but not the area of land where the Israelites lived. God has always kept His beloved ones aside when delivering His judgment to the world, and we have no reason to believe He will not do the same during the Tribulation.

Lastly, we of course need to remember that God repeatedly says that He loves us, that we are His sons and daughters. The idea of the Church having to endure the tribulation goes against the Fatherly, protective love that we see God having toward us. So for all believers, the reality of the return of Christ is that we could instantly be taken up to be with Him any second. Are you ready for that to happen? Or do you know, deep down inside, that if all true believers were taken out of the world in the next instant, you would be left behind? If you don't know what would happen to you when you die, or if the Rapture took place today, talk to your teacher about it at the end of class and make the right. The Bible says that today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

Present an opportunity for the students to respond to the Gospel.

Pray: Thank the Lord for His guaranteed return. Ask for the patience and strength to wait upon Him, and for the ability to speak to others about Him. Praise Him for His grace in keeping us from the time of trials.

Parent Question: What is going to happen during the Great Tribulation?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:10 by David Guzik

3. (15-16) Those asleep in Jesus are not at a disadvantage.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

a. **By the word of the Lord:** Paul emphasized that this was an authoritative command, though we do not know whether Paul received it by direct revelation or if it was an unrecorded saying of Jesus. One way or another, this came from Jesus and did not originate with Paul.

i. "In no place does the apostle speak more confidently and positively of his *inspiration* than here; and we should prepare ourselves to receive some momentous and interesting truth." (Clarke)

b. **We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep:** Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that **those who are asleep** - Christians who have died before Jesus returns - **will by no means** be at a disadvantage. Those who are **alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede them**. God will allow **those who are asleep** to share in the glory of **the coming of the Lord**.

i. "The living will have no advantage over those fallen asleep; they will not meet the returning Christ ahead of the dead, nor will they have any precedence in the blessedness at His coming." (Hiebert)

ii. **We who are alive** means that Paul himself shared in this expectancy. It wasn't because Paul had an erroneous promise of the return of Jesus in his lifetime. "More feasible is the solution that sees Paul setting an example of expectancy for the church of all ages. Proper Christian anticipation includes the imminent return of Christ." (Thomas)

c. **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout:** When Jesus comes, He will come *personally*. **The Lord Himself will descend**, and come **with a shout**. The ancient Greek word for **shout** here is the same word used for the commands that a ship captain makes to his rowers, or a commander speaking to his soldiers. "Always there is the ring of authority and the note of urgency." (Morris)

i. Apparently, there will be some audible signal that prompts this remarkable event. It may be that all three descriptions (**shout**, **voice**, and **trumpet**) refer to the same sound; or there may be three distinct sounds. The rapture will not be silent or secret, though the vast majority of people may not understand the sound or its meaning.

ii. When Paul heard the heavenly voice on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:7; 22:9), his companions heard the sound of a voice, but they did not hear articulate words. They heard a sound but did not understand its meaning. It may well be that the shout/voice/trumpet sound that accompanies the rapture will have the

same effect. The entire world may hear this heavenly sound but have no idea what its meaning is.

d. **With the voice of an archangel:** This doesn't mean that the **Lord Himself** is an **archangel**. The only one described as an **archangel** in the Bible is Michael (Jude 1:9). Paul means that when Jesus comes, He will come in the company of prominent angels.

i. **With the voice of an archangel** means that Paul clearly did not designate a *specific archangel*. "It is even possible that he does not mean that an archangel will actually say something, but simply that the voice that will be uttered will be a very great voice, an archangel type of voice." (Morris)

e. **With the trumpet of God:** Believers are gathered **with the trumpet of God**. In the Old Testament, trumpets sounded the alarm for war and threw the enemy into a panic, in the sense of the seven trumpets described in Numbers 10:9 and Revelation 8 and 9. Trumpets also sounded an assembly of God's people, as in Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 10:2. Here, **the trumpet of God** gathers together God's people.

i. "It was by the *sound of the trumpet* that the solemn assemblies, under the law, were convoked; and to such convocations there appears to be here an allusion." (Clarke)

ii. There are three other associations of trumpets and end-times events. One is the *last trump* of 1 Corinthians 15:52, which seems clearly to be connected with this same trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4. The others are the seven trumpets which culminate at Revelation 11:15, and the trumpet gathering the elect of Israel at the end of the age in Matthew 24:31.

iii. Hiebert compares this trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4 and the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15: "The subjects are different: here it is the church; there a wicked world. The results are different: here it is the glorious catching up of the church to be with the Lord; there it is further judgment upon a godless world. Here 'the last trump' signals the close of the life the church on earth; there the 'seventh' trumpet marks a climax in a progressive series of apocalyptic judgments upon the living on earth."

iv. As to the trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4 and the one mentioned in Matthew 24:31, we can also observe:

- The *subjects* are different: Matthew refers to Jewish believers during the great tribulation; Thessalonians refers to the church.
- The *circumstances* are different: Matthew refers to a gathering of the elect scattered over the earth, with no mention of resurrection; Thessalonians refers to the raising of the believing dead.
- The *results* are different: Matthew refers to living believers gathered from all over the earth at the command of their Lord who has returned to earth in open glory; Thessalonians refers to the uniting of the raised dead with the living believers to meet the Lord in the air.

f. **And the dead in Christ will rise first:** Paul's point to the Thessalonians is clear. The prior dead in Christ will not be left out of either the resurrection or the return of Jesus. In fact, they will experience it **first**.

i. "It is only after the faithful departed have taken their place with the Lord that the saints on earth are caught up to be with Him, or more strictly, to be with them and meet Him." (Morris)

ii. " 'The order of the resurrection,' he says, 'will begin with them. We therefore shall not rise without them.' " (Calvin)

g. **Will rise first:** Many wonder how **the dead in Christ** are raised **first**. Some believe that they now have temporary bodies and await this resurrection. Others believe that they are now disembodied spirits who wait for resurrection. Still others conjecture that the **dead in Christ** experience their resurrection immediately.

i. There will come a day, when in God's eternal plan, **the dead in Christ** will receive their resurrection bodies. Yet until that day, we are confident that the dead in Christ are not in some kind of soul sleep or suspended animation. Paul made it clear that to be *absent from the body* means *to be present with the Lord*. (2 Corinthians 5:8) Either the present dead in Christ are with the Lord in a spiritual body, awaiting their final resurrection body; or, because of the nature of timeless eternity, they have received their resurrection bodies already because they live in the eternal *now*.

ii. However God will do it, we are confident that His promise is true. "Though the bones be scattered to the four winds of heaven, yet, at the call of the Lord God, they shall come together again, bone to his bone . . . We doubt not that God will guard the dust of the precious sons and daughters of Zion." (Spurgeon)

4. (17) Jesus comes to meet His Church.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

a. **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them:** Those alive and remaining until this coming of Jesus are **caught up** to meet Jesus in the air, together with the dead in Jesus who have already risen.

i. The verb translated **caught up** here means to seize, or to carry off by force. "There is often the notion of a sudden swoop, and usually that of a force which cannot be resisted" (Morris). In the ancient Greek, the phrase **to meet** was used as a technical term to describe the official welcoming of honored guests.

ii. This passage is the basis for the New Testament doctrine of the *rapture*, the catching away of believers to be with Jesus. The word *rapture* is not in the ancient Greek text, but comes from the Latin Vulgate, which translates the phrase **caught up** with *rapturus*, from which we get our English word *rapture*.

iii. Paul's statement, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is both dramatic and fantastic. He speaks of Christians flying upward, **caught up . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. We wouldn't believe this unless the Bible told us it were so, not any more than we would believe that God became a baby, that He did miracles, that He died on a cross and that He lives in us.

iv. Paul's language here is so straightforward and free from figurative speech that there is no missing his intent. "The Apostle's declarations here are made in the practical tone of strict matter of fact, and are given as literal details . . . Never was a place where the analogy of symbolical apocalyptic language was less applicable. Either these details must be received by us as matter of practical expectation, or we must set aside the Apostle as one divinely empowered to teach the Church." (Alford)

b. **Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air:** Paul's plain language leaves no doubt regarding the certainty of this event. Yet the timing of this event in the chronology of God's prophetic plan is a matter of significant debate among Christians.

i. Many - though certainly not all - Christians believe the Bible teaches that there will be an important seven-year period of history before the Battle of Armageddon and triumphant return of Jesus. The debate about this *catching away* centers on where it fits in with this final seven-year period, popularly known as the Great Tribulation, with reference to Matthew 24:21.

- The *pre-tribulation* rapture position believes believers are **caught up** before this final seven-year period.
- The *mid-tribulation* rapture position believes believers are **caught up** in the midst of this final seven-year period.
- The *pre-wrath* rapture position believes believers are **caught up** at some time in the second half of this

final seven-year period.

- The *post-tribulation* rapture position believes believers are **caught up** at the end of this final seven-year period.

ii. The adherents of these different positions each believe their position is Biblical, and these differences of understanding should not make dividing lines of Christian fellowship. Nevertheless, this author's opinion is that the *pre-tribulation* rapture position is Biblically correct. Even other references to the return of Jesus within 1-2 Thessalonians support this understanding:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 shows believers waiting for the return of Jesus. The clear implication is that they had hope of His imminent return, not the expectation of an imminent great tribulation.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 assures us that those believers who died would share equally with the living in the events of the rapture and the resurrection, answering their fear that somehow the dead in Christ were at a disadvantage. But if Paul believed Christians would go through the great tribulation, he would count the dead in Christ as *more fortunate* than those living Christians who might very well have to endure the great tribulation. It would have been logical for Paul to comfort the Thessalonians with the idea that the dead in Jesus were better off because they won't have to experience the Great Tribulation.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 comforts Christians enduring hardship, promising them a coming *rest*, while their persecutors will face certain judgment. But if Paul knew that the church was destined to pass through the Great Tribulation, it would have been more appropriate for him to warn these Christians about worse trials and suffering ahead, rather than hold the promise of a coming *rest*.

c. **And thus we shall always be with the Lord:** The *manner* in which Jesus will gather us to Himself is impressive. But the main point is that whatever the state of the Christians (dead or alive) at the Lord's coming, they will **always be with the Lord**. This is the great reward of heaven - to be with Jesus. Death can't break our unity with Jesus or with other Christians.

i. **We shall always be with the Lord** is an important truth with many implications.

- It implies *continuation* because it assumes you are already **with the Lord**.
- It implies *hope for the dying* because in death we shall still be **with the Lord**.
- It implies *future confidence* because after death we are **with the Lord**.
- It implies *advancement* because we will one day **always** be with the Lord.

ii. "We shall be so with him as to have no sin to becloud our view of him: the understanding will be delivered from all the injury which sin has wrought in it, and we shall know him even as we are known." (Spurgeon)

5. (18) The exhortation: comfort one another.

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

a. **Therefore comfort one another:** Paul did not tell them to *take* comfort, but to *give* comfort. In the way God works, we always *receive* comfort as we *give* it.

i. "Paul does not himself seek to comfort or encourage his readers but rather bids them actively to comfort or encourage 'one another.' The present imperative places upon them the continuing duty to do so, both in private conversation and in the public services." (Hiebert)

b. **With these words:** The truth of the return of Jesus for His people, and the eternal union of Jesus and His people is to be a source of **comfort** for Christians.

i. This concluding statement of Paul only makes sense if the catching away of the previous verses actually de-

livers Christians from an impending danger. If the catching away only brings humanity to God for judgment, there is little comfort in these words.

ii. **This was understood by Adam Clarke: "Strange saying! Comfort a man with the information that he is going to appear before the judgment-seat of God! Who can feel comfort from these words?"**

1 Thess 5

1. (1-3) The suddenness of Jesus' coming.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

a. **Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you:** The Thessalonians were well taught about the return of Jesus and other prophetic matters. Paul taught them about **the times and the seasons** regarding the return of Jesus. They had an idea of the prophetic **times** they lived in, and they could discern the **seasons** of the present culture.

i. Again, we are impressed that Paul was with the Thessalonians only for a few weeks (Acts 17:2). In that time, he taught them about the prophetic **times and seasons** regarding the return of Jesus. Paul would be surprised that some people today consider the return of Jesus an unimportant teaching.

ii. Jesus criticized the religious leaders of His day because they could not *discern the signs of the times* (Matthew 16:1-3). We should also study the Scriptures, and look to the world around us, so we can be aware of the **times and the seasons**.

iii. Hiebert on **times** and **seasons**: "The first designates time in its duration, whether a longer or shorter period; the second draws attention to the characteristics of the period. The first deals with the measurement of time, the second with the suitable or critical nature of the time."

b. **The day of the Lord so comes:** With this phrase, Paul quoted a familiar Old Testament idea. The idea behind the phrase **the day of the Lord** is that this is *Gods'* time. Man has his "day," and the Lord has His **day**. In the ultimate sense, **the day of the Lord** is fulfilled with Jesus judging the earth and returning in glory.

i. It does not refer to a single day, but to a season when God rapidly advances His agenda to the end of the age. **The day of the Lord** "Is a familiar Old Testament expression. It denotes the day when God intervenes in history to judge His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His kingdom." (Hiebert)

c. **For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night:** The Thessalonians knew, and had been taught, that they couldn't know the day of Jesus' return. That day would remain unknown, and come as a surprise, **as a thief in the night**. A **thief** does not announce the exact time of his arrival.

i. Some take the idea that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night** to mean that nothing can or should be known about God's prophetic plan for the future. Yet Paul indicated that they *definitely* knew that the time could not be definitely known.

ii. Paul certainly was not one to set dates in regard to prophecy, and Jesus forbade setting dates when He said *of that day and hour no one knows* (Matthew 24:36). God *wants* this day to be unexpected, but He wants

His people to be prepared for the unexpected.

d. **For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them:** The unexpected nature of that day will be a tragedy for the unbeliever. They will be lulled to sleep by political and economic conditions, but they will be rudely awakened. They will hear the frightening verdict "**they shall not escape.**"

i. *When "all's well" and "all is safe" are on the lips of men.* (Moffatt)

ii. This **sudden** coming, in a time when many say "**Peace and safety!**" must be distinct from the coming of Jesus described in Matthew 24:15-35. The coming of Jesus described in Matthew 24:15-35 happens at a time of great global catastrophe, when no one could possibly say "**peace and safety!**" Comparing passages like this shows us that there must be, in some way, *two aspects* to Jesus' Second Coming.

- One aspect of His coming is at an unexpected hour, the other is positively predicted.
- One coming is to a "business as usual" world, the other to a world in cataclysm.
- One coming is meeting Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), the other is Him coming with the saints (Zechariah 14:5).

e. **As labor pains upon a pregnant woman:** The phrase **labor pains** suggest both *inevitability* and *unexpectedness*. Jesus used the same idea in Matthew 24:8, when He spoke of calamities preceding the end times as *the beginning of sorrows*, which is literally *the beginning of labor pains*. The idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities.

i. Trapp on **as labor pains upon a pregnant woman:** "1. Certainly; 2. Suddenly; 3. Irresistibly, inevitably."

2. (4-5) The basis for Paul's exhortations.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

a. **But you, brethren, are not in darkness:** In addressing their behavior, Paul first simply told the Thessalonian Christians that they should *be* who they *are*. God has made us **sons of the light and sons of the day**. The time when we were **of the night** or **of the darkness** is in the past. So now we simply have to live up to what God has made us.

i. "In the Semitic languages generally to be a 'son' of something means to be characterized by that thing." (Morris)

b. **That this Day should overtake you as a thief:** Paul means that this should *not* happen for the believer who lives according to their nature as a son of **light** and son of the **day**. They will be ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

i. "Paul is led from a consideration of the day of the Lord to the thought that the Thessalonians have nothing to fear from the coming of that Day. This leads to the further thought that their lives should be in harmony with all that that day stands for." (Morris)

ii. In some respect, the coming of Jesus will be a surprise for *everybody*, because no one knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36). But for Christians who know the *times and the seasons*, it will not be a complete surprise. No one knows the exact hour a thief will come, but some live in a general preparation against thieves. Those who **are not in darkness**, who live as they **are all sons of light and sons of the day**, these are ready for the return of Jesus.

iii. But if we *are in darkness* - perhaps caught up in some of the sin Paul warned against previously in this letter - then we are *not* ready, and need to make ourselves ready for the return of Jesus.

3. (6-8) Paul's exhortations: be awake, sober, and watchful.

Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

a. **Therefore let us not sleep:** Because we do not belong to the *night nor of darkness* (1 Thessalonians 5:5), our spiritual condition should never be marked by **sleep**. Spiritually speaking, we need to be active and aware, to **watch and be sober**.

i. **Not sleep:** Paul used a different word here than for the sleep of death mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. "The word *sleep* is here used metaphorically to denote indifference to spiritual realities on the part of believers. It is a different word than that in 4:13-15 for the sleep of death. It covers all sorts of moral and spiritual laxity or insensibility." (Hiebert)

ii. **Sleep** speaks of so much that belongs to the world (the **others**), but should not belong to Christians:

- Sleep speaks of *ignorance*
- Sleep speaks of *insensibility*
- Sleep speaks of *no defense*
- Sleep speaks of *inactivity*

iii. In a sermon on this text titled, *Awake! Awake!* Spurgeon showed the folly and tragedy of the sleeping Christian with three powerful pictures:

- A city suffers under the plague, with an official walking the streets crying out, "Bring out the dead! Bring out the dead!" All the while, a doctor with the cure in his pockets *sleeps*.
- A passenger ship reels under a storm and is about to crash on the rocks, bringing near-certain death to the hundreds of passengers - all the while, the captain *sleeps*.
- A prisoner in his cell is about ready to be led to execution; his heart is terrified at the thought of hanging from his neck, terrified of death, and of what awaits him after death. All the while, a man with a letter of pardon for the condemned man sits in another room - and *sleeps*.

iv. **Sober** doesn't mean humorless. It has in mind someone who *knows the proper value of things*, and therefore doesn't get too excited about the things of this world. The person who lives his or her life for fun and entertainment isn't **sober**.

v. In commanding sobriety, Paul didn't have in mind the sort of people who stamp down all enthusiasm and excitement for Jesus, promoting what they think is a more balanced way to live. Paul himself was an enthusiastic follower of Jesus, and accused of religious fanaticism. The Roman official Festus thought Paul was mad (Acts 26:24), and the Corinthians thought he was beside himself (2 Corinthians 5:13).

b. **For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night:** The opposite of spiritual *watchfulness* is spiritual **sleep**. The opposite of spiritual *sobriety* is to be *spiritually drunk*. As Christians we are **of the day**, and so we must **watch and be sober**.

c. **Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation:** Paul used the images of a soldier's armor to illustrate the idea of *watchfulness*. A soldier is a good example of someone who must **watch and be sober**, and he is *equipped* to do that with his armor.

i. When one compares this description of spiritual armor with that found in Ephesians 6, there is not an exact correlation. This indicates that Paul saw the idea of spiritual armor as a helpful picture, not something rigid in its particular details.

ii. **Faith and love** are represented by **the breastplate** because the **breastplate** covers the vital organs. No soldier would ever go to battle without his **breastplate**, and no Christian is equipped to live the Christian life without **faith and love**.

iii. **The hope of salvation** is represented **as a helmet**, because the **helmet** protects the head, which is just as essential as the **breastplate**. **Hope** isn't used in the sense of wishful thinking, but in the sense of a confident expectation of God's hand in the future.

4. (9-10) The security of our future.

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

a. **For God did not appoint us to wrath**: Before we had *the hope of salvation* (1 Thessalonians 5:8), we had an appointment **to wrath**. We no longer have an appointment **to wrath**, but now **to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ**.

i. **Wrath**: It is important to understand that Paul means the **wrath of God**. We are saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But first and foremost, we are rescued from the **wrath** of God, the **wrath** that *we deserve*. Paul's whole context here is the believer's rescue from the **wrath** of God.

ii. Our appointment **to wrath** was appointed in two ways. First, because of what Adam did to us and the whole human race, we are appointed **to wrath** (Romans 5:14-19). Second, because of our own sin, we are appointed to wrath. When Jesus died on the cross, He stood in our place in our appointment **to wrath**, and reschedules us with an appointment **to obtain salvation**. As believers, when we think we are appointed **to wrath**, we show up for an appointment that was cancelled by Jesus.

iii. **Who died for us**: The idea is that *Jesus died in our place*. Not simply that Jesus died for us in the sense as a favor for us; but that He **died** as a *substitute* for us.

b. **For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation**: Paul put two interested ideas side-by-side here. **Appoint** emphasizes God's sovereignty, but **obtain** is a word that emphasizes human effort. Together, they show that the full scope of salvation involves both divine initiative and human effort.

c. **Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him**: Having obtained **salvation through our Lord Jesus**, we will always **live together with Him**. The promise of unity with Jesus can't be broken; no matter if we live or die (**wake or sleep**), we will always be **with Him**.

i. **He died for us . . . whether we wake or sleep**: Jesus' death isn't softened by calling it *sleep*, but our death can be called **sleep**. His death was *death*, so that ours would only be **sleep**.