



all. And I believe the most important aspects are highlighted in our own Statement of Faith that I shared two weeks ago.

### 9. Christ's Return

We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Isn't that so helpful? This is another reason why I so appreciate our statement of faith. They strongly affirm the most important and most clear aspects of Scripture while not being concerned about less important and less clear matters. Our text does have more detail than is contained in this statement. Nevertheless, we will not get caught up in charts and predictions. But we will and must get caught up in the expectancy of Jesus' return and how that it to impact our lives.

Let's read the passage and jump into the text.

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

First, let me remind you of the principles from the end of chapter four, because if you recall, chapter five is a single unit of thought with the end of chapter four.

1. Jesus died and rose again.
2. Jesus is coming again.
3. Jesus will resurrect all believers.
4. Deceased believers will be resurrected first.
5. The resurrection is a cause for hope in the midst of grief, not hopeless grief.

Let me make a comment about verse one first. If you recall from chapter four, this young church had some confusion about the second coming of Christ. Paul wanted to make sure they understood that deceased believers would be resurrected first. They had some confusion on that point, but Paul commended them for their depth of understanding. *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.* Paul wrote something very similar in 4:9. *Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia.* So Paul did not need to remind them about

brotherly love and he did not need to remind them about “times and seasons.” Interestingly, he does write about this in his second letter to this church. We’ll cover that in a few weeks.

## **6. The Day of the Lord will bring inescapable destruction for unbelievers.**

<sup>2</sup> *For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*<sup>3</sup> *While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

The first thing we need to understand is the meaning of the “day of the Lord.” The phrase appears 25 times in the Bible and 20 of them are in the OT. The phrase was used by eight different prophets from Isaiah (700BC) to Malachi (400BC), spanning 300 years. It is used five times in the NT, the first time in Acts 2 where Peter quoted from Joel.

Acts 2:20

*the sun shall be turned to darkness*

*and the moon to blood,*

*before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*

1 Thes 5:2—*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*

2 Thes. 2:1-2—*Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

2 Peter 3:10—*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

According to these passages, what happens at the Day of the Lord?

- Certain signs will precede the Day
- Jesus returns
- Believers are resurrected
- Unbelievers experience inescapable destruction
- Heavens and earth will pass away
- New heavens and new earth

Now understand that these things don’t all happen at once. If there is a millennium—a thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, then the new heavens and the new earth doesn’t happen for at least a thousand years. The “day of the Lord” begins the moment that Jesus returns but it is not only one day. The day of Jesus’ return begins all of these things, but they don’t necessarily happen in a single day. So in that sense, the word day functions as a single day but also a period of time.

Here’s the challenge when the Bible speaks of the last days. As I was preparing this message, more than almost any other sermon I have ever written, I kept saying to myself, “What about this

passage? What about that passage?” To crack open the nut that contains teaching on the last days would lead you down a nearly unending number of rabbit holes. To do so thoroughly, we would have to work all the way through the book of Daniel, the book of Revelation, good chunks of the gospels and some of Paul’s letters. There’s nothing wrong with that pursuit. It’s a good and necessary theological pursuit because whatever we believe, it should be backed up by all of Scripture. We can’t just take a verse here and a verse there or we will be in huge trouble.

But on the other hand, even though we should teach theology and sound doctrine in sermons, a sermon is not a theology class. Furthermore, to look so in depth at just the last days would require a long series of topical sermons. For one, it would take us at least a year of Sundays to truly flesh out this one topic. Also, I am committed to preaching exegetically—through entire books of the Bible—as opposed to sermons that are based on topics. I do occasionally preach topically but I strongly believe that the best way to teach is to preach through entire books. I talked about this in more detail a few months ago.

Therefore, what I am attempting to do is to anchor us in this text—in each text as we move through 1 Thessalonians and into 2 Thessalonians. And I literally mean anchor. Think of it like sailing on the ocean. We could sail anywhere we want in the ocean and that would be awesome. It would be very beautiful but not very purposeful. But what I am trying to do is to take us on a purposeful journey with a beginning and an end. The course we are following is 1 Thessalonians but as in all sermons, sometimes you need to anchor to the text and let yourself float a bit. So when we get to a given passage we stop and drift out to the edges of where the anchor will allow us to float. Then we pull up anchor and sail on to the next passage and repeat the process. Does that make sense?

Part of the reason I am telling you all of this is because the subject of end times and prophecy is such a huge subject and most Christians have some kind of opinion on the matter. Just as I am thinking, “Well what about this passage, what about that passage,” I am guessing many of you are doing the same thing. Some of you have very few opinions about end times and some are full of opinions. I am certain that I will not get to every question and facet of this enormous topic in the next few weeks. But here is my promise. I will do my best to be faithful to God’s word and to highlight the most important aspects for us to understand, believe and obey. Fair enough? Now with that as a foundation, let’s get back to our text.

So we know that the day of the Lord is the day of Christ’s return and that it will extend beyond just that day. Jesus’ coming will inaugurate all that follows—all the way up to the last verse of the book of Revelation. And this day will come like a thief in the night. Last Sunday I emphasized verse five. *For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.* Remember that the main purpose for Paul writing about Jesus’ return was to encourage the church. He wrote that twice—at the end of chapter four and the end of this passage.

4:18—Therefore **encourage one another** with these words.

5:11—Therefore **encourage one another** and build one another up, just as you are doing.

His chief goal was that the church would be encouraged. He was not trying to frighten genuine believers into obedience or cause them worry or concern. We must not lose sight of this main purpose and rightly understood, this will be incredibly encouraging to us.

However, neither should we diminish the truly frightening warning contained in verse three. *While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.* The world around them was proclaiming "peace and security."

Don't worry, be happy. Is that what it means to proclaim "peace and security," that you can just have a carefree attitude about life and should not have any worries? There is no way that this can be the case because all you have to know otherwise is to turn on the evening news or log onto social media. Facebook isn't too horrible but Twitter is one daily battleground of hate and fear. If you are tuned into the politicians, the talking heads and the insane news cycle—and this week was a barn burner for sure—you would never get the idea that the world is declaring a message of "peace and security." Just the opposite, in fact.

On this past Thursday, Nancy Pelosi announced her Select Committee on the Climate Crisis with these words. "The American people have spoken and demanded bold action to take on the climate crisis, which is the existential threat of our time."<sup>1</sup> She is claiming that the number one crisis to our very existence is climate change. Believe what you will about climate change, this is good old-fashioned fear-mongering, and both sides do it. Fear is the key to getting elected.

So the evidence would suggest that the world's message is not peace and security. However, when you dig a little deeper, this is exactly the case. And to show you how this is true in 2019, we have to go back 2600 years to the prophet Jeremiah.

Let me set this up first. This word from the Lord through Jeremiah was given in 588 BC. That is important because it was two years before fall of Jerusalem and the deportation to Babylon. The Lord had warned about this fate for decades.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you'" (Jeremiah 23:16-17)<sup>2</sup>

There it is. No disaster shall come upon you. Ezekiel recorded the same thing four years earlier. "Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace."

They were preaching peace and security to the masses, but it was a particular kind of security. They were claiming that they were secure from God's wrath and punishment. They were claiming security due to their moral innocence. How could God punish them? How could God grant them anything but peace and security? Surely they were safe and secure, right? Listen to God's response to their misplaced confidence.

For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord  
to see and to hear his word,  
or who has paid attention to his word and listened?  
Behold, the storm of the Lord!  
Wrath has gone forth,  
a whirling tempest;  
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.  
The anger of the Lord will not turn back  
until he has executed and accomplished  
the intents of his heart.  
In the latter days you will understand it clearly. (Jeremiah 23:18-20)

There was no peace and security for those who rejected God. Amazingly, the false prophets continued to preach peace and security after they were deported to Babylon. This is what Paul meant in verse three. *While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

The world has always believed it was free from God, that God was essentially irrelevant to their lives. They preach peace and security, yet inescapable destruction is hanging over their heads. Do you want to know the true existential threat? Our greatest concern is not climate change or the border crisis. Mankind's true existential threat is rebellion against God. This is the unhappy part of Jesus' return and it's a message that must be preached to the masses.

If you have not trusted in Christ alone for your salvation, the day of Jesus' return—or the day of your death—will result in sudden destruction that is inescapable. But the words of the song we sang are so true.

The vilest offender who truly believes  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Today could be the day of your salvation. The solution is simple—turn from your sins and bow your heart to Christ alone. This is what happened to the people in Thessalonica. A few years before this letter was written to them, every last one of them were pagans. But they were radically saved.

For the rest of us, this is supposed to bring us encouragement. As our statement of faith says. It should motivate the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

**Rich Maurer**  
**February 10, 2019**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/pelosi-names-climate-change-panel-ocasio-cortez-not-among-members-n968896>

<sup>2</sup> Also Jeremiah 6:14-15 (627 BC-41 years before the deportation to Babylon)  
They have healed the wound of my people lightly,  
saying, 'Peace, peace,'

---

when there is no peace.

Were they ashamed when they committed abomination?

No, they were not at all ashamed;

they did not know how to blush.