

# 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians Ch 5 Vs 1-11

“Ready Or Not, Here I Come”

Let's catch the context here by reading from Vs 14 of ch 4 all the way thru vs 11 of ch 5.  
Vs14-11 of ch 5

We're to take comfort in the imminent return of Jesus Christ we're to be ready for His coming because it could happen at anytime, but the cry of this text as I see it; is “Ready or not, here I come.” The Lord is coming, that much is for sure, of that there is no question, the only question that confronts each of us this morning is, “Will you, will I be ready when He does come?” But ready or not He's coming.

When I was a kid one of the neighborhood games that I would engage in from time to time was the age-old game of hide and seek. and As you know the crux of that game is that everyone gets a certain amount or time, a preordained span of time that everyone is equally subject to, to prepare for the coming of the one who's seeking you out. Maybe everyone agrees that the count is to 25, or to 50, and then “Ready or not, Here I come!” and They start seeking you out, and the scramble that takes place previously is everyone trying to be prepared to hear those words and be in a place that you're free from exposure because if you're caught off guard, you're goose is cooked. You've got to have a good hiding place or else you'll suffer the penalty accordingly, but the warning goes out, they're counting out loud, you're to use that time wisely, and only you're to blame if you're not prepared.

Listen, the bible teaches that God has preordained a specified span of time for humanity, or the world as we know it to exist, and everyone is equally subject to that time. and The Word of God tends to act as the counter, it's shouting out the facts of what's happening, what's been happening, what's going to be happening. and The responsibility of man is to use this time that God has given us wisely so that we'll be prepared when Christ gives the shout and we're pulled out of our boots. God holds mankind accountable individually to find a hiding place that's adequate so that when He seeks you out, He'll never find you in your sin. and There's only one, Ps 32:7 says, “*You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.*” Ps 119:114 “*You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.*” Jesus said, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.*” John 10:7-9

But the Holy Spirit is sending out the warning in this text to make sure that you're where you need to be because the time is short and Christ is coming soon with a shout. and Those who believe in Him, who've placed their trust in Him will be caught up, will be raptured, snatched away violently to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Vs1

Jesus said, *“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”* Matt 25:13 So the day and the hour, no man knows, and it never ceases to amaze me how many gullible people there are out there who are ready to sell everything they have and move out into the forest, or in some caves somewhere because some nut ball in the name of Christianity predicts the day that Jesus is coming back. You know, “88 reasons why Jesus is coming in 88” and then the next year he realized he’d missed one and so it was “89 reasons He’s returning in 89” and people buy into this stuff. But Jesus Himself said very plainly that *no man* knows the day or the hour that He’s going to come for His bride. In Matt 24:44 we read where Jesus said, *“the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

So we need to realize that there are 2 aspects to the coming again of Jesus Christ 1 of which is for His bride, the church to receive us into glory, that day and that hour no one can know. But concerning the coming again of Jesus Christ to the earth the bible tells us exactly when that’s going to happen, when He comes for His church, He’ll meet us in the air, He won’t touch down upon the earth. But when He comes to establish His throne by which He’ll rule and reign upon the earth for a thousand years (us ruling with Him as kings and priests unto our God) the time clock starts ticking from the moment we’re called up to be with the Lord. The rapture of the church starts the final count down of 7 years, and if you were to keep a calendar (God willing you won’t be here) but when the church gets taken out, you could start counting down the days. and 7 yrs to the day Jesus will descend upon the earth, bring to a close the battle of Armageddon and restore the earth and establish His kingdom casting the Anti-Christ and the false prophet alive into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).

So we need to bear in mind that what Paul is referring to here, is the rapture of the church (taking us back to vs 17 of ch 4) this is the time that Jesus said, no one knows when this is going to happen, only the Father, not even the angels are privy to this information.

But concerning the times and seasons, we’re to be very aware of these things, Paul taught them very candidly what those times would entail, that’s why he says, “You don’t need me to tell you that, you already know it.” and The Lord expects us to be up on the study of eschatology, we’re to be familiar with prophetic events, He rebuked the people of His day for not being able to put the pieces of the puzzle together concerning *their* time, and who He was right before them, the scriptures told them when He’d be on the scene. We read in Luke 12:54-56 where He said, *“Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?”*

I think we should take heed lest we fall into the same category, not being able to discern the times and the seasons that we’re in, and we could spend considerable time here speaking of the various things that the bible informs us of concerning our times and soon the return for Jesus Christ for us is.

Daniel tells us concerning the time of the end that, “*many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*” Dan 12:4 Now whether you take that to mean knowledge of bible prophecy or knowledge in the sense of technologically, both could easily apply, there are new medical breakthroughs everyday, scientific advances are increasing at an unfathomable rate, the internet has made this great big world, incredibly small, and now you can be on the other side of the planet on any given day in a matter of hours as opposed to months at sea. People are just running around and incredibly busy, the knowledge of bible prophecy is being unveiled and we’re understanding now more than ever God’s plan for the end times.

They’re inserting microchips in Alzheimer’s patients now for various purposes, which sheds interesting light on end time events regarding the mark of the beast. (Now that’s not it, but it’s one step closer) the society is moving towards a cashless age, it just makes more sense, the bible foretold of all of these things as markers for season of the end. But probably the most profound and indisputable evidence for the day and age in which *we* live as being the last days (despite the wars and rumors of wars that Jesus said would take place as well which we’re in the throws of) is what happened in one day in May 1948, in the rebirth of the nation of Israel.

Jesus said, “*Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near -- at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*” Matt 24:32-34 What things? The things He previously mentioned as additional signs of His coming, and throughout the scriptures the fig tree stands to be an illustration of, or a type of the nation of Israel. and The bible teaches us that in the last days God would re-gather His people once again together as a nation. That they will become very fruitful agriculturally, that they would repopulate and become a problem for the world politically, a cup of trembling for the nations and today as we speak our entire global security rests upon the shoulders of the nation of Israel, and everyone is concerned with what’s going on and what moves they’re going to make. Because their decisions impact the world. and The Word of God has foretold us of all of these things, so concerning the times and seasons, there’s no need for Paul to rehash all of those things, now again the day and the hour no one knows, but concerning the seasons we’re to be very aware of what’s happening around us, all the signs pointing to the extremely soon return of Jesus Christ

Vs2

Now we just established the fact that we’re to know the times and the seasons, what does he mean the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night? Who knows when the thief is going to come? What we’re seeing here is Paul beginning to make a distinction and begin to differentiate between the believer and the unbeliever. We won’t dwell on it but as we read through these vs take note of the contrasting words that differentiate between those who follow Christ and those who don’t.

We see words like “you” and “they” words like “night” and “day” “light” and “darkness” “watch” and “sleep” “drunk” and “sober” and “wrath” and “salvation.” As the body of Christ, we’re not to be caught off guard, but the world will be caught unsuspectingly to their own demise. That’s why Jesus said, *“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.”* Luke 21:34-35

Vs3

Now this seems like a far cry from what we’re seeing in the world now, with Israel and the Palestinians, America facing the war on terrorism, India and Pakistan, things going on in South America, the on going persecutions in the Sudan and in Nigeria, not to mention the everyday violence that takes place in gang related events or murders, kidnappings and so on. This world seems about as far away from peace and safety as it could get, but when the Anti-Christ comes along he’ll seem to be Mr. Fix it. and He’ll bring about a pseudo type of peace that will scale the eyes of the world, and Paul is saying here that they’ll be crying out for peace, but they won’t get it. Why? Because there is no peace in the world, true peace is found only in Christ, Whom they have rejected, Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33 You see Jesus never promised His peace to those in the world the arena and environment of true peace isn’t in a place, it’s in a person, the person of Jesus Christ and I think the general thrust here is that people will have a false sense of security, they won’t be worrying about anything that those religious fanatics have tried to warn them about, “I mean, my grandma was saying that stuff” and again Jesus said that it would be that way, (Lets look together at Luke ch 17:26-30).

People will just be going about life, business as usual and it’ll happen so fast they won’t even know what hit them until after it’s too late, and even as labor pains upon a pregnant woman are inescapable there’ll be no escaping the judgment of God; they won’t escape, but you will, we’ll talk more on that in a minute.

Vs 4

You see the world is in darkness, they’re in the dark about this whole thing, can’t see it coming, but that’s not to be the case with you, this Day of the Lord by which the wrath of God will be poured out upon the world won’t catch you off guard. Why, because you’ve got a good hiding place, and you’ll escape the penalty.

Vs5-6

The point being if you’re a son of light, having believed upon the Light of the world, lead your life accordingly, don’t be apart of the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather let your light so shine so that as people see your good works they’ll glorify your Father in Heaven. Eph 5:8 says, *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”*

John gives us a wonderful promise regarding walking in the light. *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* 1 John 1:7

There’s just a continual cleansing that takes place in our lives as we abide in Christ and fellowship with Him, as we abide in His Word allowing it to wash over us and cleanse us from the filth and the dirt of the world. The psalmist said, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”* Ps 119:105 and Again, *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”* Ps 119:9

It’s staggering the amount of believers that struggle with issues of sin and can’t seem to get victory over certain sin situations in their lives and yet they completely neglect or spend very little time in the Word of God. But how can you heed the Word of God, if you don’t know it? If you’re not allowing it to sink in and convict your life fresh everyday?

Paul says here, *“Let us not sleep as others do”* Don’t be lulled to sleep, don’t grow spiritually lethargic and apathetic, wake up. Now he’s talking to you believer, he’s talking to me, according to Jesus; potentially ½ of the church world will be caught sleeping and unprepared when He returns. Look at Matt 25 (Vs 1-13)

Paul is saying here in 1<sup>st</sup> Thess we don’t want to be numbered among that group, the group that wasn’t prepared when the bridegroom came, but rather we want to have our wicks trimmed and plenty of oil in our lamps or our vessels, the work of the Holy Spirit still fresh in our lives. We want to be watching and ready.

Vs7-8

Here we see this trinity of graces again that’s becoming so familiar to us, faith, hope and love, and what I’d have you notice here is that these articles of armor that Paul likens these attributes to are those portions that guard the vital organs. What is it that’s to guard your heart? Faith, and love, that is that agape’ love of God that has compassion on others and is eager to forgive, it esteems others as better than oneself and seeks to give and not take.

and The hope of salvation is what’s to guard your mind, that hope again being the assured expectation, and guaranteed certainty of salvation. The security and assurance of salvation that you have in Christ, because our minds are a battleground, everything seems to be constantly vying for the time and attention of our minds, the enemy wants to distract us with temporal concerns, the cares of this world and so on, but God would have us be mindful of the eternal. The fact that our salvation is nearer now than when we 1<sup>st</sup> believed (Romans tells us). *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”* Rom 13:12

Vs9

You guys don’t tune out here, this is so important for you to understand, as believers we know that we have an appointment with afflictions.

We went over that in ch 3, Jesus said that in this world we'd have tribulation, but don't allow that to confuse you, those things are stimulated by the world towards the believer, by Satan towards the child of God. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, but persecution *from the world* is completely different from the wrath of *God* being poured out *upon* the world. One comes from the world toward the godly; the other comes from God upon the worldly. Nor do I want you to confuse the chastening hand of God with God's hand of wrath; one is towards His children for instructive purposes. The other is towards His enemies for destructive or judgmental purposes, them receiving their just reward having rejected Jesus Christ

So though you may have an appointment with tribulation as a believer, you don't have an appointment with wrath, you're appointment that's God ordained is unto salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ and The bible illustrates this over and over again and we see picture of it all throughout the OT in type beginning even in the book of Genesis. and Often times people will mistakenly point to Noah as a picture of the Church and say, "There, you see" the believer will have to go through the Great Tribulation, but Noah isn't a picture of the church, he's a picture of the Jews. You find a picture of the church 2 chapters earlier before the flood came in Gen ch 5 where we read, "*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*" Gen 5:24 God snatched him up, and then the floods came, judgment came.

Later on we find Ab talking with God over the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah in ch 18 and God wants to destroy the city and Ab begins to intercede and say, "Would you destroy the righteous along with the wicked?" "Far be it from you to do such a thing, shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" It's a rhetorical question, the answer is of course He will, and God had placed it with in Ab's heart to intercede for them. and You know the event, God eventually said that He'd spare the whole city, preserving even the lives of the wicked for the sake of even 10 righteous, but He didn't even find 10, how many did He find? One, and even then God didn't destroy the city until Lot was taken out, when He was removed from harms way (concerning the wrath of God) God poured out His wrath in fire and brimstone and the cities were wiped out. and Peter makes the point that God is able to deliver the righteous and preserve the wicked for judgment in 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet ch 2.

"Well, what about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego?" You might say, "They sure went through the fire didn't they?" Yeah, they sure did, but once again they're not a picture of the church, they're another picture of the Jews, in that particular scenario, it's Daniel who serves as a picture of the church who was no where to be found during that period of Great Tribulation, the Lord had delivered him from it.

The NT teaches it explicitly, and by the time you get to the book of Rev you find the church or churches mentioned some 25 or so times in the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 ch and then when John is called up, or raptured up into heaven at the beginning of ch 4, you see the Heavenly scene in ch's 4-5. and Then beginning in ch 6 going through ch 18 we see the wrath of God being poured out upon the earth (Rev 6:16 refers to it as the wrath of the Lamb) and in those ch the church is never mentioned one time, why, it's not there, it's been taken out. and It's not until ch 19 that you see the bride again and we're in heaven at that, having been prepared for the bridegroom and then coming back with the Lord to the earth in ch 19:14 and the last time the church is mentioned is in vs 16 of ch 22 regarding the testimony of that book and the evangelical call of the bride in vs 17 beckoning all who thirst to come and drink freely of the water of life.

You see we're not appointed to God's wrath, why? Because we're so cool, or because we're somehow special, no, I deserve the wrath of God and so much more upon my life, but I'm not appointed to that because Jesus took that appointment for me upon the cross. The wrath of God was poured out upon Jesus Christ in full strength upon the cross as He paid in full the penalty of my sin debt. Because He absorbed God's wrath on my behalf, I don't have to, now I don't have an appointment with wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ

Vs10

This is what Jesus was saying when He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."* John 11:25-26 Whether I'm in this body or not, I'll be living together with Him.

Vs11

Paul tells us in Romans to, *"Pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."* Rom 14:19 These people who teach that the church will have to endure the Tribulation, I don't know what they do with this. "Hey, hope you survive the martyrdoms, and the famines, and the wars, and plagues and pestilences, along with the earthquakes, fires and 60 lb hail storms during the tribulation. Be comforted." What kind of hope is that, "Searing heat, most of the earth's water poisoned and 2/3s of the earth's population being wiped out, take heart, take comfort, be edified and built up." There's no comfort in those words. But there's great comfort in the fact that even though in this world we'll experience tribulation, even though the days will grow worse and worse, plummeting deeper and deeper into darkness, the day is coming soon when, "Ready or not" Jesus is coming and we will be caught up to be with the Lord to fulfill our appointment with salvation and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

and If you're here and you want to make an appointment to ever be with the Lord, then today is your day, Jesus Christ loves you so much that He absorbed the wrath of God on your behalf,

and if you'll only believe in Him and call upon His name you'll be saved from the penalty of your sin, and spared the wrath of God, and obtain salvation. But it only comes through Jesus Christ who laid down His life on the altar of the cross for your sin, and was raised on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day for your justification; I encourage you to place your faith in Jesus Christ today.