

The Day of the Lord, Part 2

1 Thessalonians 5:3

52-20

We've been for many months now studying Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian church. We find ourselves in chapter 5, and I would invite you to turn to chapter 5, and we look again at the first three verses of this chapter. First Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 1 through 3. Those of you who were here last Sunday night will remember that we spent some time in the wonderful 24th chapter of Acts. A discussion there takes place between the apostle Paul and the governor by the name of Felix. His wife is by his side, she being named Drusilla. The apostle Paul comes before the governor and his wife with the purpose of presenting to them the way of truth in Jesus Christ, or the gospel. And as he approaches them it's clearly stated in verse 25 of Acts 24 that he discussed with them three things: righteousness, self-control, and judgment. Here was the apostle Paul confronting a pagan, here was the apostle Paul confronting the man who was his captor, who really had authority over his life. Here was the apostle Paul confronting a man that he longed to bring to the knowledge of Christ. And of what did he speak? He spoke of righteousness.

What does that mean? He told Felix and Drusilla that God had a righteous standard, that God was a righteous and a holy God who could not tolerate sin. That's what the righteousness of God is all about. He told them that God demanded perfect sinlessness. Even as Jesus said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." And then, he spoke to them about self-control. That is, that not only is God perfect and demands a perfect standard, but man must also meet that standard and must exercise self-control in so doing. And then, he spoke of judgment. What did he mean by that? That man cannot meet that standard and so he is under condemnation. God is righteous and has a righteous standard. Man must control himself to live to that standard. If he fails, he is damned.

Paul taught sin. Paul taught judgment. Paul was really right on target because it says in John's gospel, chapter 16, that the Holy Spirit will come into the world to convict men of sin and righteousness and judgment. Same issues. And so, the apostle Paul, right in line with the work of the Holy Spirit, was giving to this man a message about judgment. I believe that all faithful prophets, all faithful apostles, and all faithful preachers and teachers preach judgment.

Even though the apostle Paul was only a few weeks with the Thessalonians and then had to leave and is now some months later writing this letter back, in the few weeks that he was there and was used by God to give birth to the church, he taught them about these same matters. He must have brought to them the same kind of message about God, the true God who had a righteous standard, a standard to which all men were called to live, and if they didn't were judged. And then, the rest of the story which is that God sent His Son to pay the penalty for our failure to keep the standard, to offer us forgiveness and clothe us with His own righteousness.

So, they must have known about wrath, surely they did. Go back to chapter 1 and verse 10 for a moment. As Paul writes back and describes them, he says that you really are a Second Coming

church, verse 10 of chapter 1, waiting for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. He doesn't describe what that is because, obviously, they already knew. Part of his ministry to them was to give them information about the wrath to come. In chapter 2 and verse 16 he again notes at the end of the verse, "But wrath has come upon them to the utmost." And this wrath here is undefined because, no doubt, he had already told them about it. In chapter 4 verse 6, again, he refers to the fact that the Lord is an avenger; the Lord will bring vengeance. And in the second letter that he writes them, a little later, 2 Thessalonians, would you notice chapter 1? This also builds on a previous knowledge that they had about the wrath of God. After an opening greeting and a word of thanks in verses 3 and 4 for their spiritual progress, he then in verse 5 begins to talk about God's righteous judgment. And down in verse 6 he says God is going to repay with affliction those who afflict His church. And then, in verse 7 he says the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

In these two letters then, there are a number of references to the coming judgment. References which build upon what Paul had already taught them in a presentation of the gospel. Down in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 5, while talking here about the day of the Lord, he says, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you? I was telling you these things." In any presentation of the gospel, it is mandatory that there be a discussion of judgment.

Paul taught sin. Paul taught judgment. Paul had already delineated some of that information to the Thessalonians when he was there in Thessalonica founding the church. He must have told them about the day of the Lord to some degree for in the second letter, as I read in chapter 2 verse 5, he says, "When I was with you I was telling you these things." He must have told them about the day of fury, the day of wrath, the day of vengeance, the day of judgment when God destroys the wicked and consigns them to eternal hell. Judgment was a part of his message.

And it is about that judgment that he speaks here in chapter 5, let's look at the first three verses. "Now, as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying peace and safety, then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child and they shall not escape." This reference to the day of the Lord in verse 2 keys this entire text all the way down through verse 11.

The prophets of the Old Testament also spoke of the day of the Lord, as I pointed out in our last study. They called it the great and terrible day of the Lord. Amos, for example, is one of the prophets that writes about the day of the Lord, along with others like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah and Malachi. And Amos, for example, shows us that the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light. It will be judgment and not mercy. It will be wrath and not blessing. He shows us that the day of the Lord will bring a disruption of the physical order, a cosmic catastrophe caused by God Himself, as He overrules the natural process. Amos tells us that under the fury of divine judgment on the day of the Lord, the whole earth will be devastated and will become like a turbulent sea or like the rising and falling of the Nile River which overflows its banks for miles, drowning and submerging everything in its wake. Amos tells us that the sun will go out at noon, and cover the whole world in darkness. And then, Amos says supernatural fire will come to destroy the sea and the land.

The prophetic view of the day of the Lord is indeed frightening, frightening. And while each of those Old Testament prophets was looking at a historical event in the near future in which God would come in wrath and that was a historical day of the Lord; they also saw beyond that to a final ultimate eschatological day of the Lord when God will ultimately destroy all the wicked in the world.

In chapter 5, the apostle Paul wants to talk about this day. You say why? Because it has implications for his readers. And it has implications for you. Those implications unfold in verses 4 through 11. We'll get to those in a little while, not today. But we have to live in the light of God's eternal judgment. When we understand the fear of the Lord, that should put something into our lives that might not otherwise be there in terms of motivation and responsibility. And so, he has a message to give to these believers about living in the light of God's devastating, final and eternal judgment on the ungodly. And he'll give that message in these 11 verses.

Now, remember in chapter 4 as he ended the chapter, he gave a marvelous insight into the Rapture. That's a different event. The Rapture is the catching away of the church. That's not something to fear; that's something to comfort. In fact, in verse 18 of chapter 4 it says, "Comfort one another with these words." The Rapture describes the catching away of the church. It's a blessed event. It's a wonderful event. It's a hopeful event. It's a joyous event. It's the time of our glorification. It's the time of our reward. It's the time when we become like Jesus Christ. It's the time when we enter into His wonderful, eternal presence in the Father's house, in the room that He's been preparing for us ever since He left. But from that wonderful event, that hopeful event, he moves to that horrible event called the day of the Lord.

I told you two weeks ago the previous section on the Rapture was to comfort troubled Christians. This one is to trouble comfortable Christians. His discussion of the Rapture was not necessarily comprehensive, just enough to comfort them. And his discussion here of the day of the Lord is not comprehensive; it's just enough to motivate us. In both cases, there is a practical, applicational purpose; there is an ethical behavioral goal in mind. On the one hand, to bring us comfort; on the other hand, to bring us motivation to holy living.

So, as we come to chapter 5 and the day of the Lord, let's look at these first three verses again, continue where we left off. And remember, there are three features that come clear in these first verses: the coming of the day of the Lord, the character of the day of the Lord, and the completeness of the day of the Lord. He introduces the subject in verse 1, remember this now, we looked at it in our last message. "Now, as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you." Like many people since that time and today as well, they were curious about when Jesus was going to come. When is the Rapture? When is the day of the Lord? When are all these end time events going to take place? He says, "You have no need of anything to be written to you." Why? Because you don't need to know that. That's not something you need to know. You know what you need to know. You know the Lord Jesus is going to come back in flaming fire, and He's going to bring wrath on the ungodly. You already know that. You don't need to know when. You don't need to know the *chronos* and the *kairos*, the times and seasons, when is it going to happen, at what period of human history, you don't need to know that. Paul's response, by the way, was exactly like Jesus. Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:7, He said, "It's not for you to know the times and the seasons." It's not for you to know. He even made the amazing and astounding statement that even the Son of Man doesn't know that. But God the Father alone.

God has left us in the dark about that. Why? So, that every generation would live in the light of the

reality that it could happen in their life time, so that every generation would have to face the fact that Jesus could come in final judgment during their life time.

Now, the Lord has given us information about the Rapture, described it, told us what is going to happen: the dead in Christ rise first, the ones who are alive and remain meet them in the air, and they all go to heaven to dwell in the Father's house and to ever be with the Lord. We understand there's a trumpet and a voice of an angel. But we don't know the timing. We know a little bit about the event, but we don't know exactly when it's going to happen. There is no discussion of timing in any passage dealing with the Rapture.

There are three explicit passages in the New Testament that deal with the Rapture. They're very clear: John 14, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4. None of them tell us when. We have no knowledge of when. There are numerous passages about the day of the Lord but there is no date given. There is no specific day or hour. Now, there are some indications that the day of the Lord is near and we'll talk about those in a moment. But the specific time is not known, so that everyone lives in expectation, everyone lives in anticipation. Once the signs that precede the day of the Lord start to happen, a wise and informed person could know that it was coming soon, but not know the day or the hour. But as to when those preliminary signs will start, and what generation will be alive to experience that, we have no knowledge, none whatsoever. And anybody who sets a date is operating completely independent of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Scripture. There is an element in both the Rapture and the day of the Lord that you must recognize, and that's the element of unexpectedness, so that everyone lives in anticipation and accountability and expectation.

Now, let's review the coming in verse 2. "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." How did they know that full well? Well, Paul said I taught you many of these things, 2 Thessalonians 2:5. He also probably reiterated that Jesus said that, that the day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. He is borrowing terminology, by the way, from our Lord, who is the one who said the day of the Lord would come like a thief. Paul adds the little phrase "in the night" because that's usually when thieves came and come. But the point he makes here is, "Look, you already know because I've told you and because Jesus said it that the day of the Lord is like a thief." What does that mean? The thief doesn't announce his arrival. Your relatives tell you they're coming, you hope. Your friends tell you they're coming. Your enemies never tell you that. The thief does not announce that. His coming is unexpected, and that's the simple analogy that the apostle Paul wants to review with them. You can't know. It's unexpected.

Back in Matthew chapter 24, the Lord indicated this in numerous ways. He said, "If the householder in the house had known when the thief was coming, he would have been prepared and he wouldn't have had his house broken into." And further in that chapter He says in verse 50, "If the slave had known when the master was coming back, he would have ordered his life a little differently." But there's an unexpectedness. Chapter 25 verse 13 says, "Be on the alert, for you don't know when your master is coming." In Luke 12:39 and 40 the Lord says the same thing. So, Paul says, "Look, with regard to timing, and when it's going to happen, you don't have any need of anything to be written to you because God hasn't given us that information and you don't need it. The only thing you need to know you already know because you know full well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, in a time when you don't expect it." Timing details are not given. "No man knows the day nor the hour, not even the Son of Man but the Father only," Jesus said. So, like the Rapture we can know about the event but we can't know when it's going to happen. And so, the day of the Lord, we can know about it but we can't know when it's going to happen. Such information is not available

because the Lord has not chosen to give it.

But that introduces us, then, to that concept in verse 2 of the day of the Lord. That's a technical term. That is a technical phrase, appears numerous times in the Old and New Testament. What does it mean? The final cataclysmic judgment by God on the wicked. It refers to the time of the culmination of God's fury and wrath in final climactic judgment. The prophets spoke of it. The writers of the New Testament speak of it. And always, it refers to the unleashing of God's final fury on sinners on the earth. As I said, there was a historical day of the Lord the Old Testament writers wrote about that was only a small preview of that final eschatological day of the Lord that would come in the very end time.

In all discussions of the day of the Lord there's a sense of nearness, of expectation, an element of surprise. As I said, this is true for the Rapture and this is true for the day of the Lord. It will be sudden, unwelcomed, harmful, and unexpected.

Is there benefit in living without this information? Yes. First John 3 says that he that hath this hope in him purifies himself, speaking of the Rapture really. If you have the hope that you're going to go to be with Jesus Christ, and that could happen any moment, and you're going to be made like Him, and you're going to see Him face to face, that kind of hope should have a direct effect on the purity of your own life, right? Absolutely right. And if, that's with the Rapture, and if with the day of the Lord you realize it could happen to any generation, it ought to make you very, very concerned about the generation in which you live, having to face this eternal judgment. We don't know when that terror is going to break loose, but we're busy persuading men because we know it's coming.

Certainly, Paul felt the Rapture would come in his lifetime, followed by the day of the Lord. And when it didn't come, the Thessalonians were concerned and wanted to know when it was going to come. Paul says there's no such information.

Now, let me go on and give you some insights that you need to have. No passage dealing with the Rapture gives any preliminary signs that the Rapture is about to happen. John 14, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4 are the Rapture texts of the New Testament. None of them gives us any preliminary sign. No passages talk about precursors, preliminary events, nothing like that.

On the other hand, follow my thinking, on the other hand, passages dealing with the day of the Lord do mention precursors, preliminary events, signs, signals, so that a person should have some general idea that it's near. You say, "Well, what are these preliminary events?" There are none given in the Rapture passages.

There are numerous ones given in the day of the Lord passages, let me give you a sampling. In Malachi 4:5, don't turn to it, but in Malachi 4:5, Malachi says, "That before the day of the Lord can come an Elijah-like forerunner must come first," like John the Baptist came before the coming of Christ, a forerunner. Malachi 4:5 says the day of the Lord cannot occur until this Elijah-like, this prophetic person, this sort of John the Baptist type comes to announce the coming of the Messiah. So, God is actually going to send a forerunner before the day of the Lord to announce His coming, Malachi 4:5. So, if the forerunner isn't here yet making that announcement, then the day of the Lord isn't near yet. Secondly, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 3 the apostle Paul says the day of the Lord will not occur until the apostasy, which is a world-wide rebellion against God, and Christ,

and Scripture. There will be a world-wide rebellion against God first, then comes the day of the Lord. Second Thessalonians 2:3 and 4 also says, "The day of the Lord will not come until the man of sin be revealed," the Antichrist. "And until he set himself up in the temple," which means that he goes into the temple in Jerusalem, abominates the temple, called the abomination of desolation, then sets himself up as the authority, as the one to be worshiped.

Now, Daniel tells us about it. And Jesus reiterates it in Matthew 24 and says that in the middle of a seven-year period called the Tribulation, in the middle of that 70th week, that seven-year period, Antichrist will rise, desecrate the temple, set himself up as God in the temple. That's at the mid-point. The day of the Lord will happen toward the end of that Tribulation, some time toward the end of that last three and a half years. So, when the abomination of desolation takes place by the Antichrist in Jerusalem, you know the day of the Lord is not far away. And then, sometime in that same period, the great apostasy will take place, the rebellion against God, orchestrated, no doubt, and led by Antichrist. And then will appear an Elijah-like John the Baptist proclaimer announcing the coming of the Lord. And then, another event will begin to take place as an indication that the day of the Lord is about to come, and that is in Joel 3:9, it says, "The nations will begin to be assembled in the valley of decision." The nations of the world will move toward the valley of decision in what we know as the ultimate Armageddon will eventually take place as the nations of the world begin to move in to Megiddo in the Middle East. You don't have to be too bright to know that the focus of the whole wide world is on the Middle East. But all of that is going to happen in the last three and a half years of the Tribulation time, just prior to the day of the Lord which comes toward the end of that time.

So, the day of the Lord can't come until an Elijah-like forerunner comes, a great world apostasy against God comes, the Antichrist abominates the temple and sets himself up, the nations begin to move and migrate into the valley of decision, as it's called, when God is going to decide what to do with them. And then, right immediately, we don't know whether it's hours or days or even weeks, before the day of the Lord comes, listen to what else is going to happen. "The sun will be turned into darkness," Joel 2:31, "the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes." So, just before that day of the Lord comes, the sun and the moon go out. Joel 3:15 says this, "The sun and moon grow dark, the stars lose their brightness," the stars go out. Isaiah 13:10 describes it, "The stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light, the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light." Matthew 24:29 says, "Immediately after the Tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, the powers of heavens will be shaken." Mark 13:24, "In those days after that Tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light." Luke 21:25, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars and on the earth dismay among nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves." How did the sea get into it? Put out the sun and you put out the moon, put out the moon and you send the tides of the world into absolute chaos.

And so, you have these precursors, these events before the day of the Lord hits. Unbelievably, absolutely incomprehensibly, the people in the world at that time are going to have an inexplicable response on the surface. Look at verse 3, an inexplicable response, verse 3, "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety,' then destruction will come." Stop at that point. You say, "What? They're saying what?" They're saying "Peace and safety." You say, "Now, wait a minute. The Bible says you can't know the day or the hour." That's right. "But you can know the general time frame for the day of the Lord." That's correct, not the specific day, not the hour but the general time frame. Yes. Why? Because the abomination of desolation has happened, because somebody is announcing the coming of Christ, because of a world-wide apostasy, because of the nations going into the valley of

decision, and certainly because everything goes black.

But, in spite of this, and mark this, even before the mid-point of the seven years there will be other things to indicate the end, and we'll see those next Sunday. There will be other evidences listed in the first five seals of Revelation that will show that we're moving toward the end. In spite of that, in spite of the Antichrist, in spite of all of those preliminaries, in spite of all of it, the response of people is peace and safety. What does that mean? Everything will be fine. We're headed for a time of peace. We're headed for a time of safety. You say, "That's absolutely ludicrous. That's absolutely ridiculous. Who in the world would ever come up with that kind of a response?" Pretty simple, if you think about it. They're being convinced by a special group. A special group of people are working real hard to convince them that peace and safety is coming. Take a wild guess and imagine who that group represents? It wouldn't be God, would it? It must be the enemy. Peace and safety, peace and safety. Everything is going to be fine; we're moving toward a wonderful time, all this is going to be over. This is the beginning of, I can hear it now, this is the beginning of the new age; the old one is falling apart. It's all disintegrating, and all of the Christians who have been raptured were the problem. We got rid of them and the whole thing is now being reshuffled, and we're going to come in to the dawning of a new age.

You say, "Who is going to be preaching that?" It doesn't take much imagination to answer the question. Let me give you an illustration of how it works. If you go back into Jeremiah's prophecy with me, let's go back to chapter 6. Jeremiah prophesied about the day of the Lord. Jeremiah warned Judah, the southern kingdom, of judgment. And Jeremiah was talking about a historical day of the Lord in which God would come and use another nation to be His judge and executioner. Many of them would be massacred, and the rest would be deported off into Babylon. So, Jeremiah saw a near historical day of the Lord in anticipation of that ultimate final day of the Lord. But notice what he had to contend with, right? He was predicting that this army was going to come in and wipe out Judah, and dispossesses them from their land, and haul them off into captivity and all of this. This was Jeremiah's message.

But would you please notice chapter 6 verse 1? He tells them that there are some present signs to indicate what he says is true. By the way, he's crying, he's using object lessons, he was the weeping prophet. He's preaching in the streets. He's warning, and warning, and warning that God's judgment is coming. And here he says, "Look, flee for safety, O sons of Benjamin, run from the midst of Jerusalem, blow a trumpet in Tekoa and raise a signal over Beth-haccerem." Why? "Already look at the north, evil looks down from the north and a great destruction." Look, the army is camped on the northern border. Can't you see the sign? Can't you see the signal? Run, flee, get your life right.

But he had some other people to contend with. Chapter 6 verse 13, he says in the middle of the verse, "And from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely and they have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, 'Peace, peace.' But there is no peace." What are the false prophets saying? Oh, don't worry about that army up there, nothing. We'll just head it in to a new era of peace, this is the dawning of a new time of peace, everything is going to be wonderful.

Where do you think they were getting their message? From Satan himself and his demons who always do everything they can to lie and deceive the people of God. And so, these false demon-inspired prophets were running around saying, "Peace, peace. We're coming to a time of peace. We're coming to a time of peace." Chapter 8 verse 11 says essentially the same thing. "They heal the brokenness of the daughter of my people superficially." These prophets can't heal anybody.

These prophets can't make people spiritually whole. Theirs is a superficial ministry because it's filled with lies. They say peace, peace, but there's no peace. It isn't going to be peace. Chapter 14, two verses, verses 13 and 14, "But, ah Lord God, I said, Look, the prophets are telling them you will not see the sword, nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place." That's what they're telling the people, lasting peace, no sword, no famine. Ah, Lord God, he says, I've got so much competition, giving people the wrong information.

Listen, believe it, folks, in the latter times before the final holocaust of the day of the Lord, the world will literally be crawling with demonically inspired false prophets lying about what is going on. And that is why they'll be saying peace and safety, peace and safety. In verse 14, the Lord says the prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spoken to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds. Lamentations 2:14 also written by Jeremiah says the same thing, "Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions and they have not exposed your iniquity so as to restore you from captivity, but they have seen for you false and misleading oracles."

Look at Ezekiel, Ezekiel had the same problem. Ezekiel chapter 13. Most fascinating. This is a graphic illustration. In verse 10, "God says," God is speaking here, starts speaking in verse 8, but down in verse 10, "It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying peace when there is no peace." And Ezekiel was having to compete with the same kind of thing during the time of his prophecy. And so, what he does is, God makes an analogy, God uses an illustration. "And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash." And this is His analogy, "So, tell those who plaster it over with whitewash," that is the false prophets, "that it will fall." They put up their prophetic office, they parade themselves as if they are the wall of protection for God's people, they cover themselves with whitewash to make them look holy and good, "You tell them for me that wall is going to fall, that false protection, a flooding rain will come and, ye, O hailstones will fall and a violent wind will break out. Behold, when the wall is fallen, will you not be asked: where is the plaster with which you plastered it?" In other words, wait a minute, what were all those words you said to us that were supposed to protect us? "Therefore, thus says the Lord God, I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath, there will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones that consume it in wrath, I'll tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground so that its foundation is laid bare," that is you'll see that these false, these prophets were false, "and when it falls you will be consumed in its midst, you will be unprotected and judged, you will know that I am the Lord, thus I'll spend My wrath on the wall and on those who plastered it with whitewash and I shall say to you, the wall is gone and its plasterers are gone, along with the prophets of Israel who prophesied of Jerusalem and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace."

Micah said the same thing. Micah looked at the day of the Lord, chapter 3 verse 5, he says, "They cry peace, there's no peace." Look with me at Matthew chapter 24 again for a brief, brief moment. In Matthew chapter 24, you have a description of the events prior to the day of the Lord. And I want you to notice this; we'll see more about this next time. But in Matthew 24, he's describing the Tribulation. He describes here the abomination of desolation in verse 15, where the Antichrist desecrates the temple in Jerusalem. And then, the persecution that comes as a result of that. But notice verse 24, he writes, "At that time, false Christs, false prophets will arise, will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if it were possible," and it isn't, "even the elect." What makes these false prophets believable? Why is the world that has just seen, mark this, wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, massacres, abomination of desolation, arrival of a forerunner, world-wide apostasy, gathering of nations in to the valley of decision.

Why, an unimaginable thought, will the world believe false prophets who say this is just the dawning of a wonderful new time of peace? I'll tell you why, because those false prophets will do great what? Signs and wonders, great signs and wonders. Whatever capability hell has to put on a show, it will put it on then. And even with all that's happening, the witless world will buy the Satanic lies, and go like sheep to a slaughter, even though they've been warned, and warned, and warned, and warned.

I believe that it's my responsibility as a servant of God to warn this generation, and so next Lord's day I want to take you through all of the preliminary events to the day of the Lord so that you'll know what is coming. You say, "Will we be there at the day of the Lord?" No. We'll be taken out before the day of the Lord. Now, as you know through all the years, it has been my conviction to teach you that we are taken out before that final 70th week, that final seven-year period begins. The great promise is that we have not been appointed unto wrath. We have been appointed unto glory. If you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, the future you look for is all glorious. If you don't know Him, the future you look forward to is all terrifying. It is no insignificant thing that the whole world has its eyes on the Middle East. That's where all the consummation of God's history will take place. It could be in this generation; it could be soon. We must be ready. If you know Christ, you'll be taken before it hits. If you don't, you'll be destroyed when it comes. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we remember that Paul reasoned with Felix and Drusilla about judgment. He would be a faithless preacher, an unfaithful steward who did not so warn people. So, Lord, for those who do not know Christ, who have no blessed hope. We would pray, O God, that in mighty grace You would sweep over them through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, and the belief of the truth that they might come to salvation and to hope. For those of us who are Christians, though we will not experience the day of the Lord, we know people who will, and may we do all we can to persuade them to be reconciled to God and Christ. Further, Lord, because of what characterizes the people of the darkness, may we not live like they live. We're not of the night. We're not of the darkness. We're not of the day of the Lord. May we not live like those people live, but may this insight into what God will do to people who live like that be a reminder that we are not to live like that. Lord, how could we conduct ourselves in a way that will result in the damnation of other souls? How could we want to identify with their life patterns, and so abuse Your forgiving grace? So Father, teach us how to apply these things in our own lives, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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