

1 THESSALONIANS 5.1-11

by C. C. Morris

While we are in 1 Thessalonians, let's continue from chapter 4 into chapter 5. This was Paul's letter to the church, and all letters should be read without the artificial breaks of chapter and verse divisions. Ignore the chapter division.

Paul had just been talking about both the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living saints, both to take place at Christ's second advent. This will all take place when He returns to destroy His enemies at the war of Armageddon. Paul says to comfort one another with these thoughts. He continues:

(Verse 1) But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. Why was there no need for him to write of the times and seasons revolving around Christ's second coming? Because he had told them these things while he was still in Thessalonica with them. In his second letter, which followed soon after this first letter, he said, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2:5)"

Paul had been with them about three weeks before he was run out of town—the entire account is found in Acts 17.1-14. "...they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures...." On those three sabbaths, he had not only preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ," but he had discussed Jesus Christ's second coming, relating its timing to a "falling away first" and the rise of "the man of sin, the son of perdition" who would exalt himself above all that is called God, or that

is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

This is indeed amazing! Some men preach all their lifetimes—fifty, sixty, or more years—and never mention these things, or if they do, they apply them "spiritually" to some contemporary or historical world events. Yet in the time embraced by three sabbaths, three weeks, no more than four weeks, Paul had covered not only the gospel but much, much more doctrine, including the doctrine of Christ's return, the end times of the present church age, and what will follow after that.

(Verse 2) For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. The phrase "as a thief in the night" is found twice in the Bible; here, and in 2 Peter 3.10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Peter doesn't end there; in verses 11-12 he says: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

Objection: "See? This old world is going to be destroyed and we'll live in a heaven of spirits only."

Reply: Here is where multitudes depart from the Scriptures to follow their own preconceived traditions. God says the heavens, the elements, and the earth shall pass away, melt, and be burned up. Nowhere does God remotely hint that they will go back into pre-creation non-existence and cease to be. Men pass away, butter and steel melts, sugar dissolves in coffee, and salt dissolves in water; wood and toast sometimes gets burned up; but men, salt, sugar, butter, steel, wood, and toast do not cease to

exist. They only change from one form to another.

This change is what is under consideration when "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful (Revelation 21.5)." He did not say, "I will make all things disappear." Nor did He say, "These words are made up by John Darby and C. I. Scofield." "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

Further, the objector would do well to read Peter's verses 10-12 in the context of verse 13:

"Nevertheless we, according to His PROMISE, look for new heavens and A NEW EARTH, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Remember, "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else." HE FORMED IT TO BE INHABITED, and by all that is holy and true, it will be inhabited. Some of God's people wait, as Peter said, according to His PROMISE. Our God has promised this. Some of God's children look for the fulfillment of His promise. He who calls Himself "I am the LORD; and there is none else" has set His name, seal, and signature to this unalterable fact.

As for Christ's coming as a thief, see the following verses (3-10). First, though, notice the sharp distinctions Paul makes in these verses, the distinction between the saints and the reprobates, and between light and darkness:

1. YE, WE, or US, vs. THEY and THEM
- A. YE, WE, or US
- YE have no need that I write unto YOU
- YOURSELVES know perfectly

YE, brethren, are not in darkness, that
that day should overtake YOU as a thief.
YE are all the children of light,
WE are not of the night, nor of darkness.
let US not sleep, as do others;
let US watch and be sober.
let US...of the day, be sober, etc.
God hath not appointed US to wrath,
Christ, Who died for US,
whether WE wake or sleep
WE should live together with Him.
comfort YOURSELVES together,
edify ONE ANOTHER,
even as also YE do.

B. THEY and THEM

when THEY shall say, peace and safety
sudden destruction cometh upon THEM,
THEY shall not escape.
let us not sleep, as do OTHERS
THEY that sleep sleep in the night;
THEY that be drunken... in the night.

2. DAY and LIGHT vs. NIGHT and DARK

A . DAY and LIGHT

that DAY should overtake you
Ye are all the children of LIGHT
the children of the DAY
us, who are of the DAY

B. NIGHT and DARK

as a thief in the NIGHT
ye, brethren, are not in DARKNESS we are not of the NIGHT

nor of DARKNESS
they that sleep sleep in the NIGHT
they that be drunken ...in the NIGHT

(Verse 3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

(Verse 4) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. It is evident from these verses that the coming of Christ as a thief in the night is not at all something the saints should fear. He is not coming to break in and steal anything from them. As a thief He is coming to remove something valuable, a pearl of great price, which speaks of the Gentile church.

His coming will not overtake you unawares as it will "them," "the others." "Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall (Psalm 35:8)." The wicked will be snared in the very destruction he plans for the saints!

(Verse 5) Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. The darkest part of the night is just before dawn. It is then that the morning star arises just before the new day dawns. "And I will give him the morning star (Revelation 2:28)." "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star (Revelation 22:16)." "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19)." The Morning Star and the day star are the same, and Christ Jesus is the Morning Star of His people. His appearing, at first, will not be visible to the wicked ones of the world; He will arise in the hearts of His people, giving them "advanced notice," as it were, of His coming.

The world, on the other hand, will be terrified at the cataclysms described in Revelation: "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken (Luke 21:26)." All this will be happening while God's children are prepared for Christ's return, expecting Him.

(Verse 6) Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. Notice again the difference between us and others.

(Verse 7) For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. (Verse 8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. Here, the helmet is the hope of salvation; in Ephesians 6.17 the helmet is salvation. Christ is our salvation, and He is our hope (1 Timothy 1.1); hence, our salvation and our hope of salvation is one and the same—the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Verse 9) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ: This text implies the doctrine of double predestination; to say God hath not appointed US to wrath implies God hath appointed the OTHERS to wrath.

(Verse 10) Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Again, "Who [Christ] died for us" shows the limited and effectual atonement for His people. "Whether we wake or sleep" reiterates the euphemism or simile whereby we substitute the word sleep as a less harsh picture of the death of the physical body, as mentioned in chapter 4, verses 14 and 15. (See pages 6-7 of this issue.)

(Verse 11) Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. Paul now connects what he has said in this chapter, verses 1-10, with the comfort of the saints he encouraged in chapter 4, verse 18. It is indeed comforting to know the salvation Christ has

accomplished for His people separates them from those evil ones whom He will destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2.8).

—CCM

[From *The Remnant*, January-February, 2016, Saints Rest Primitive Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, C. C. Morris, Editor and Publisher.]