

# *Paul's* Letters to the **Thessalonians**



## Lesson 6-Christ's Coming as a Thief

**Focus:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

### ➤ The Timing or seasons of the Lord's coming (v.1-4)

- *The Lord's coming will come quickly and suddenly to those who do not know God. It will come almost without warning to them! Suddenly, with great surprise, "like a thief in the night." Just like when the birth pains come upon a woman with child. She cannot expect the exact moment or time when those pains will come. She may be waiting in expectation that someday her child will come, but she has no clue about when those pains for delivery will start. She is just waiting. And then suddenly without any apparent warning, those pains will begin.*
- **Jesus tells us that no man knows the day or the hour when he will come. We cannot say exactly when Jesus will come. We don't know.** No one knows except for God the Father. (Jesus tells us these ideas and they are recorded also in Matthew 24:36-46).
- Christ's coming will come like a snare upon the whole earth. They will be going about their daily life, all things seeming pretty normal to them, and then suddenly, the Lord will come! Christ tells his people to "watch and pray" so that we too will not be overtaken by that day as if it were a Thief. (See Luke 21:34-36, on being prepared; 17:26-37, on this coming being like it was in Noah and Lot's days).
- (v.4) As God's people though, the Bible says that we "are not in darkness" that that day should overtake us as a thief. We should know better about the coming of the Lord. We are able to know and see the signs that His coming is very near. We do not have to be so surprised as are the wicked (See Luke 21:29-32). The generation who sees all the final signs occurring in quick succession shall not pass away until everything is accomplished and the Lord is come. Just like the signs of the changing seasons, we can also recognize that the coming of the Lord is near, when we see the signs happening.
- Some today hold the view that these verses of Christ "coming as a thief" will mean that Christ comes secretly and quietly, and then snatches away the Christians in what is called "the Rapture." Then they think that after another 7 years Christ will come gloriously to finally end sin. They believe that during this time, there will be an anti-Christ figure (Man of sin) who rises up in Israel and pollutes some rebuilt Jewish temple, etc. They believe that he will make some kind of covenant with people for 7 years, and that God will send the 7 last plagues of Revelation during that time. This view also proposes that during that time there will be 144,000 literal Jews who are converted to God and Christ, and that others will be converted then too.
- Let's take a look at whether the previous view holds true to the Bible or not. Please turn in your Bibles to **2 Peter 3:10**. *This Bible verse tells us that Christ will come as a "Thief." And when He does, the earth and its elements will melt by fervent heat!! The earth will and the works in it will all be burned up!! Even the heavens will disappear with a great noise! Obviously, when Christ comes "as a thief" nobody survives, except for the righteous who will spend eternity with God in the new heavens and the New Earth which Revelation 21 and 22 explain. Another verse that helps us to understand whether the previous view holds true or not is **Revelation 16:15**. Christ announces that He's coming "as a Thief" right after final plague number 6. Then comes during the time of number 7. That means that when Christ comes "as a Thief" the wicked have already*

experienced the final plagues. Therefore, the Rapture + Seven Years with Anti-Christ and Plagues+ then a Glorious Second Coming **idea** is wrong. **There is only ONE coming of Jesus Christ! It is glorious and powerful! It happens with fire! The righteous will be saved and the wicked will perish by fire. There is no second chance for the wicked**, just like there was no second chance for the wicked in the days of Noah or Lot! They were caught in the snare of judgment! Suddenly, it came upon them!

- **“But, I’m afraid of the Plagues—and how can anyone possibly survive them?”**
  - One of the first considerations we should make: There is nowhere in the Bible that ever says the Plagues will last “seven years.” We don’t know exactly the length of that period (they could happen very quickly), but most likely they will last perhaps a year or less. Some people believe that they will last a year because Revelation 18:8 says that her (Spiritual Babylon’s) plagues will come upon her in “one day.” [One prophetic day in Bible time prophecy is equal to one literal year]. The Ten Plagues of Egypt, anciently, did not seem to have covered any sort of time period greater than one year—it seems like a reasonably short time would have been covered by them.
  - With the Ten Plagues of Egypt, these were put upon the ungodly and not upon God’s people. Consider that **God put “a difference between” His people and the godless Egyptians** (Exodus 8:22,23; 11:7). **God’s people were still in Egypt at the time of the ancient plagues but they were not hurt by them**; they were protected from them. It will be the same in the last days.
  - **Read Psalm 91.** God says, “Only with your eyes will you behold and see the reward of the wicked,” but that “no plague will come near your dwelling” (Ps. 91:8,10,11).
  - **The final plague of Revelation 16:17-21 seems like such a horrific plague**, how could anyone survive? The Final plague of Revelation is the one in which mountains, islands, and all the cities of the world will crumble and fall from the worst earthquake in all of history. Huge hail stones will also be falling on the wicked. (This text also goes along with the 6<sup>th</sup> seal of Rev. 6:12-17). The good news is that we will be meeting the Lord in the air at this time as 1 Thess. 4:16,17 point out. We will not be touched or hurt by such a plague as that! The Lord will send His angels to all the corners of the earth to gather His people together! Matthew 24:29-31 explain this well; When the wicked **see him coming** and mourn; when the trumpet sounds; when the dead in Christ are rising; when the stars appear to fall; and when the wicked are crying for rocks to fall and hide them from Christ’s face, that is when Jesus and His angels are gathering the elect into the skies!! That is the very time of the great and terrible earthquake—that is the last plague. We’ll be in the air, but the wicked will be dying by the terribleness of the plague and by Christ’s fiery glory!
- **We are called to be children of the day – We are not to be of the night (v.5-11)**
  - We should be following God’s pattern of righteousness and truth! The way of light! We are not to follow the darkness and evil of this wicked world! We should put on the Christians’ armor, faith and love, and the true hope of salvation (v.9). *Paul describes these ideas also, in greater detail, in his letter to the Ephesians (ref. Ephesians 6:11-18).*
  - *God desires us to be saved! Let us look forward to this then, whether we must sleep the sleep of death, or be awake in life until His coming! (v.9-11).*

*Question (s) for the Heart:*

**Would you like to seek the Lord while He is near and be ready for His soon coming? \_\_\_\_\_**