

Awake and Sober

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1 Thessalonians 5:1-8

My mom who lived in Aleppo used to visit us in Beirut stay with us for a while. We lived on a crowded and noisy street in the Nor Amanos region. One hot afternoon, as she was taking a nap, a bus passed by honking loudly over and over. Mom woke up suddenly, ran to the living room and said to Sevan, “I think Jesus is coming. I heard the sound of the trumpet.”

Three weeks ago I said we are living in a time zone called “**End Times.**” Since Jesus’ ascension and until He returns, we have been living in the end times, waiting for His Second Coming, the Day of the Lord. Some people like to predict when this will happen.

If you remember a few years ago in Oakland CA, a pastor decided the date of Jesus’ second coming. “**Harold Camping** predicted that Jesus Christ would return to Earth on May 21, 2011, whereupon the saved would be taken up to heaven in the rapture, and that there would follow five months of fire, brimstone and plagues on Earth, with millions of people dying each day, culminating on October 21, 2011, with the final destruction of the world. He had previously predicted that Judgment Day would occur on or about September 6, 1994.”¹

When things did not happen as he thought, he predicted new date: October 21, 2011. How far will people go to do this kind of nonsense?

As I said before, I will repeat the most important fact. Jesus will return. We live in the end times with the anticipation of that coming. When? Anytime. Nothing makes sense if Jesus wasn’t coming back. His return is very important. The whole creation is waiting to be freed from the bondage of sin. A new order is coming with his return. How can I not anticipate and wait for His return?

1. Concerning the times and the seasons

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. (1 Thessalonians 5:1 ESV)

The words “times and seasons” appear once more in Acts chapter 1. Jesus was ascending to heaven. The disciples wanted to know when Jesus would establish His kingdom. Jesus said: **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.** (Acts 1:7 ESV)

2. The Day of the Lord

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2 ESV)

The phrase the ***Day of the Lord*** appears in the Old Testament (Isaiah 22:5; 13:9; Zephaniah 1:14-1; Amos 5:18; Jeremiah 30:7; Malachi 4:1; Joel 2:31). In summary, it says:

“1. It would come suddenly and unexpectedly. 2. It would involve a cosmic upheaval in which the universe was shaken to its very foundations. 3. It would be a time of judgment.”²

In the New Testament, the Day of the Lord identifies with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Sometimes is called **“the day of the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:2); sometimes **“the day of the Lord Jesus,”** (2 Corinthians 1:14), and sometimes just **“the day”** (Romans 2:5; 1 Corinthians 3:13; Ephesians 4:30)

Everyone likes to know when this will happen, what will happen. Jesus himself and bluntly said that no man knew when that day and hour would come:

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mark 13:32 ESV) (Matthew 24:36)

Once a famous preacher was asked, “What would you do today if you knew that tomorrow Jesus was going to come again?”

The famous teacher answered, "I'll do exactly what I did yesterday. I will use every minute for God's glory. I will not waste time. I will continue my life for glorifying His name."

Awake and sober is my sermon's title concerning the Second Coming of Christ.

3. The "Like a Thief" Metaphor

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2 ESV)

Paul's idea is based on what Jesus said in Matthew 24:

Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
(Matthew 24:42-44 ESV)

I don't like the metaphor of the thief. Thieves are bad. They disturb your life. They don't tell you when they are coming. Yet, the picture of a thief is used not to scare us, but to wake us up. When we moved into our house, we found out the previous resident had an alarm system to protect from the thieves. It is a reminder to watch out. "Sleeping" and not being ready for the possible coming of a thief is dangerous, not recommended by Jesus and by Paul. We will discuss later what it means to be Awake and Sober.

4. The False Hope of "Peace and Security"

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. (1 Thessalonians 5:3 ESV)

Paul is warning about the Roman Empire's false sense of peace and security. Let me remind you that the Romans were extremely proud that they provided peace (called *Pax Romana*) and security for long time (260 years from 27 BC to 180 AD).³

-Illustration: I am reminded of Syria. Who would predict that Syria would fall in this war? If I told anyone from Syria that this was coming, they would ridicule me. The picture of a thief at night is the same. When you think you are most secure, suddenly things can turn upside down. Paul is warning: What is "peace and security?" So this morning, I will ask you, where is the place one can call peaceful and secure?

There is nothing wrong to pray for peace and security in this fallen world. In fact, if we can be instruments of bringing peace and security, as Christ asked us to be, why not?

The point is this: **where is your trust for deliverance?** If you think the "Romans" (put the name of your security) can bring that peace, you are going to be disappointed. Do you remember what happened in 2008? How many people lost their jobs, their investments, their homes...?

The second part of this passage is how to live our lives:

5. Children of Light

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 ESV)

I love how Paul says it: But YOU... you and I, **we who believe in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, are not in the darkness.** We are in the LIGHT. We are children of day and light. The thief will come at night. We don't have the fear of the night. We are in the light. We are waiting also for the DAY of the LORD. The metaphor of light is so helpful to me. I hated darkness when I was child. I was afraid of darkness. In fact, many dirty businesses are done in darkness. To be reminded again and again that we are children of light is extremely important for us as a community of believers.

So then what shall we do?

6. Awake and Sober

We will discuss next week.

Meanwhile, be awake and open to God and see how you can be children of light loving and caring and spreading His message to all over.

The Lord is coming! And with eager eyes
We watch to see the Morning Star arise!
The Lord is coming! Let our hearts rejoice,
We soon shall hear the accents of His voice! (Anon.)

Amen

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Camping

2 William Barclay *The Daily Study Bible Thessalonians* P 205

3. **Pax Romana** (Latin for "Roman Peace") was the long period of relative peacefulness and minimal expansion by the Roman military force experienced by the Roman Empire after the end of the Final War of the Roman Republic and before the beginning of the Crisis of the Third Century. Since it was established by Augustus, it is sometimes called Pax Augusta. Its span was approximately 206 years (27 BC to 180 AD) according to Encyclopedia Britannica. The peace was actually broken by several wars in Judaea and Parthia. (Source from Wikipedia)