

Taking New Territory in Troubling Time, Pt. 9

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Today

Picking up from Chapter 4 — return of Jesus Christ

Times and Seasons — Reaction of Unbelievers — Response of the Church

A recent study from LifeWay Research of pastors of white evangelical and historically black churches found **97%** say they believe **Jesus Christ will literally and personally** return to Earth again.

89% say that communicating the **urgency of Christ's return is important**.

More than half of pastors, **56%**, expect Jesus to **return in their lifetime**.

Listen — the return of Jesus may seem as **ridiculous** to you as His **virgin birth** and His **resurrection** from the dead — but just remember — both of those things happened — and so will His return!

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Times and Seasons

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

Jesus taught extensively on all aspects of His return, so did disciples, so much so that Paul says, "I don't even need to write any more here, you know perfectly the times and seasons, like thief in the night."

Times and Seasons — **Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21** — spiritual deception, wars, rumors, nations, kingdoms, earthquakes, famines, pestilence, easily offended, hatred, betrayal, persecution (250 million Christians face high levels of persecution), arrest (9,500 church building attacked in past year), martyrdom, men's hearts failing from fear, (censorship on social media), times world has never seen!

Listen — the last 6 months have shown how close we are to all of these things! **Luke 21:19** in patience possess souls (be composed); **Luke 21:28** look up (not down) — redemption is near.

Reaction of Unbelievers

1 Thessalonians 5:3-6

For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do...

Application — *Unbelievers are clueless, in spiritual darkness, spiritually asleep!*

Matthew 24:37-39

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Application — *for 95 years, clueless, business as usual, stiff-necked, hardened hearts, rejecting the warning of Noah. There's another level of unbeliever's reaction, more hostile...*

2 Peter 3:3-6

knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

Application — *Unbelievers also scoff, mock, and ridicule, the return of Jesus. Willfully forget (conscious choice) God's past judgment, refuse to acknowledge it because it would require them to examine their own life and repent of their own sin.*

To those in clueless spiritual darkness, those sleeping and not seeing the signs, times and seasons, those scoffing and mocking while living in rebellion and sin — Jesus will come like a thief in the night and bring inescapable destruction upon them!

"The first time Christ came to slay sin in men. The second time He will come to slay men in sin."¹
~ Scholar/Author A.W. Pink

Response of the Church

— verse 6, watch, be sober...

It doesn't mean to stare at the sky in sobriety.

It does mean to watch and understand the signs, times, and seasons we're living in with seriousness.

"Bible in one hand, newspaper in other"²
~ Karl Barth, 20th Century Scholar

¹ Pink, A.W., *The Sovereignty of God* (Gideon House Books, 2016)

² Sproul, R.C., *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Baker Books, 1998) p.26

WARNING —

- **your watching** and understanding better be deeper than an occasional headline
- **your watching** better be beyond your personal bubble
- **your watching** needs to be community-wide, state-wide, national and global
- **pay attention** to what's going on
- **see it** in the scriptures

Suggested reading: Andy Anderson's book, *How Do You Kill 11 Million People*, (Thomas Nelson, 2020).

Mark 13:32-27

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

Be Ready —

He says WATCH Four Times!!! Be ready in reality, not merely appearance; Parable 10 Virgins, have your own lamp AND oil!

Back to 1 Thessalonians — *How else shall the church respond to the message of Jesus return? Are you making a difference?*

1 Thessalonians 5:8,11

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Question — *Why would Paul mention faith, love and hope with the military imagery of a breastplate and a helmet?*

Answer — Because our faith, love, and hope are both our **defense** from the enemy, **and** they are **under attack** by the enemy!

- faith is our victory, **1 John 5:4**
- love never fails, **1 Corinthians 13:8**
- hope doesn't disappoint, **Romans 5:5**
- will I find faith when I return, **Luke 18:8**
- will your love grow cold due to lawlessness abounding, **Matthew 24:12**
- will you lose hope by losing sight of our blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **Titus 2:13**
- comfort and edify one another — speak gospel truth to one another that brings comfort and builds up — quit tearing down

GREAT NEWS

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What times and seasons of Jesus' return are you particularly aware of?
2. How does this awareness affect your daily life?
3. Do you know any unbelievers who are making the *conscious decision to reject Jesus*?
4. Does this message today embolden you share the truth with them?
5. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8,11, why would Paul mention faith, love, and hope with the military imagery of a breastplate and a helmet?

NOTES