
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 5:1-3

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After clarifications about the return of our Lord (I Thessalonians 4:13-18), this was written to the church of the Thessalonians: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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”* (I Thessalonians 5:1-3).

In connection to the previous chapter, the “times” and the “seasons” is relative to Christ returning. They, like we are today, were in the last days (Hebrews 1:1-2). Like them then, we do not know when that day will be. In fact, Jesus said: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father”* (Mark 13:31-32). Apparently, they understood this as they did not have a need for it being written.

The saints in Thessalonica knew “perfectly” that the Lord was going to come as a thief in the night. The Greek term “ἀκριβῶς” that is translated “perfectly” is defined like this: “exactly, accurately, diligently” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon; Strong’s # 199). In other passages of Scripture we find this term translated in the KJV as: “diligently” (Matthew 2:8 and Acts 18:25), “perfect” (Luke 1:3), and “circumspectly” (Ephesians 5:15). So, this information is not new to them. It is not clarification as was given in the previous chapter.

They get it. Teaching someone about something they already get has multiple reasons behind it. For one, it is good to be reminded of things we know (II Peter 1:12-13 and II Peter 3:1-2). Secondly, teaching is also about building upon knowledge (Hebrews 6:1-3). What we will see as this context continues is that they are going to be taught from what they already know to be prepared for Christ returning (I Thessalonians 5:6ff.). Knowing Jesus is surely coming back at an unknown time and being ready for Him to come back are two different subjects, even though they are certainly closely related.

As they knew and we who are in Christ should know, the return of Christ is likened to a thief coming in the night. Notice what Jesus said to His disciples: *“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe*

entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:37-51).

Like Jesus said, there will be those when He returns that think they are safe when they are not safe at all. By implication, those under discussion as being unprepared are those that will be damned. That matters. Christians are to live prepared for the return of Christ as we will discuss more in a future article about things written later in this context. The unbelievers however, they have a surprise coming when Jesus returns. It is an unfortunate and sad truth. In the second epistle to the saints in Thessalonica, this was written: *“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (II Thessalonians 1:4-10).*

Travail upon a woman with child should be an obvious illustration. It is about a woman in childbirth and the pain associated with childbirth. This illustration is used throughout the Scriptures in various contexts (Psalms 48:6, Isaiah 21:1-3, Jeremiah 4:27-31, Jeremiah 6:16-24, Hosea 13:9-13, etc.). The illustration is to bring upon the understanding of “sudden.” Then, there is the fact that the sudden destruction will be inescapable. There is no person that will be able to escape the judgment of our Lord (Romans 2:1-3). That is why one must give the more earnest heed to the hearing and obeying of the truth (Hebrews 2:1-4). These thought provoking truths need to be on all of our minds. As we will study going forward, be ready always and don’t lose the urgency for obedience (Matthew 25:1-13).