

THE RETURN OF JESUS

SERIES: END TIMES | WEEK 5 | 5.9.2021

It's cool to hear everyone wishing the mothers a happy Mother's Day. Having raised our children it's sort of fun at this spot in my life to watch you mothers because I now remember what my wife went through being a wonderful mother and then watching you, and I'm just blown away by you. And just, it's just a cool moment to honor you. And I think of my own mother who made sure at a very young age I put my trust in Jesus, and I honor her for that. And my wife Ann, who made sure that both of my children knew Jesus at a very young age and put their trust in Him. And so that responsibility and opportunity of a mother is just something to be just so thankful for this morning, so happy Mother's Day.

We are in a series called END TIMES and it's been a bit heavy the last few weeks, but today it gets exciting because today we get the opportunity to talk about the return of Jesus Christ in the midst of a time where end times seems to be on our minds. And not only our minds, those of us who know what the Bible says about it or are trying to figure out what the Bible says about it, but really, much of society talks about it. It's fascinating that even they use words and language and concepts that are found in our Bible to discuss end times. You would think it would cause them to dive into their Bibles and figure it out, yet while they use some of those thoughts and some of those words, so many of them reject Jesus Christ and reject what He has said.

I'm excited this morning to remind all of us and it's the excitement of this that there is coming a day that He says He's going to wipe away every tear from our eyes. Death is going to be something that is long behind us and all the results and ramifications of death and death in our systems and death in our world are going to be gone. The tears are going to be wiped away and we're going to be with Jesus forever in eternity. And that is the reminder of this message this morning; it's a reminder of the passage that we're talking about, and when He comes and He takes us to be with Him, that will be just the beginning of all of eternity. So as dark as it's gotten, as dark and chaotic as it might get, as out of control as our world seems, we come here today to celebrate that Jesus is coming back. And in fact, every time, as Pastor John just mentioned, that we take of communion we are reminded that we do that for a very limited amount of time until Jesus returns and we're remembering Him right now.

Our understanding of Jesus coming back, our having that as a real focal point in our lives is a game changer, changes everything in our lives, and my hope is to bring that to you today. I think that oftentimes when we think of end times we think of apocalypse, we think of tribulation, we think of intense times, we think of beast and Antichrist and 666 and horsemen of the apocalypse and all of that kind of stuff, but all of that pales in insignificance to Jesus coming back and making all things right. And the Scripture continues to point our attention to the coming of Jesus Christ. I'm told, and I say that because I didn't count them, 800 times in the Old Testament this is mentioned, 300 times in the New Testament mentioned the Second Coming of Jesus, Him coming back. And so it's something that we put our eyes on, church, it's something we listen to and think about and we focus on.

Let's do a really quick review of where we've been as we've studied this END TIMES series. Jesus' disciples asked Jesus before He left this earth—when will these things be, what will be the sign of your coming, what will be the end of the age—and Jesus goes for a little walk with them and He sits down on the Mount of Olives and He has a conversation with them, and that's what we have in Matthew Chapter 24. As Jesus sits down with His disciples in Matthew 24, the section that we're going to wrap up today, He just gives them a narrative, information, and just talks through it with them the answers to

Time of Birth Pangs – Matthew 24:4-8
Tribulation – Matthew 24:9-14
Great Tribulation – Matthew 24:15-22
The Return of Jesus – Matthew 24:27-31

their questions. It's actually incredibly easy, it's not like the book of Revelation where there's lots of symbols and signs and metaphor, apocalyptic language, Jesus just very clearly walks them through what's happening. And that's what we've done for the last few

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weeks and we've broken it down into several sections right where Jesus is. He started out by talking about the birth pangs and He said the birth pangs are things like famine and pestilence, earthquakes, but He says you know what, there's going to be a lot of things going on at that point. But He says don't be led astray during that time, and He says that's not the end yet. He says don't be alarmed.

But then He moves into the next phase, He walks into a time of tribulation where He explains The Tribulation to His disciples, that gets a little more difficult, that gets a little more tough. The book of Daniel says that that begins with a peace treaty that is signed with Israel offering them peace, and during that time though it says that there's going to be a lot of martyrs, there's going to be a really difficult time of tribulation. The Scriptures tell us that's a 3½-year period of time that to the world it's going to look like there's a lot of peace because that's what the Antichrist has signed with Israel, and they're going to say, "Well, things are good," but they're going to turn against followers of Jesus Christ. As a result many followers the text told us are going to say, "Yeah, I'm out." Like, like, I didn't sign up for this. This was good as long as everything was happy, but, no thank you. I'm not going to be a part of it.

But something happens, and this is the next section, it's what verse 21 of Chapter 24 referred to as The Great Tribulation, something happens right at the middle of this Tribulation, the Antichrist steps into the temple and does something that we discussed last week called the abomination of desolation. He goes and He makes a sacrifice on an altar there and sets up himself as an idol in that place and desolates the temple. Now fascinating little side note, those of you who see a lot of the news, you know there is not a temple in Jerusalem today. There has not been since 70 A.D. a temple in Jerusalem. So for this to happen, for the middle of the Tribulation to happen, for this abomination of desolation to happen, there has to be a temple.

There's been lots and lots of conversation about that because what we know of is that's the highest place of worship, well, actually second highest place of worship for Islam, the Mosque of Omar there, the Dome of the Rock, that gold dome thing, which we understand that's where the temple needs to go. For that to go away and a temple to get built something crazy has to happen there and we don't know what. People have speculated what may or may not happen.

Of interest, I just saw this this week. In fact, I'm gonna throw a little video up on the screen real fast and if we can pull this off and just throw it up there, we don't need to throw a sound up with it, but there are some boys on the Temple Mount, that's the Mosque of Omar, that's the Dome of the Rock, it's boys up there playing ball on the Temple Mount. The reason I mention that is that's shocking. When I was on the Temple Mount visiting it, I mean, they are just uptight and crazy about making sure that everything is kept just so up there because this is their second holiest place, and now all of a sudden you see boys kicking ball up there.

I only say this because one of the things I've really tried to avoid in this conversation is "newspaper" understanding of the text here. *Oh, my goodness! They're kicking ball on the Temple Mount. Jesus must be coming back tomorrow!* I don't want to play that game, but it is interesting. Somehow in order to get to a place where that Mosque, that Dome of the Rock comes down and a temple gets built, something has to change in their mind and there does appear from what I'm observing right now a change in their mind about some things going on up there. This is not the first experience I've seen in recent days where there seems to be some violation of their "holy" Temple Mount where they're at.

The Antichrist in this time of peace that the first 3½ years of the Tribulation will allow the Jewish people to rebuild their temple, something they have longed to do. Now, one of the things I would say is

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that could happen very fast. They are prepared, they have all the stuff to build their temple, and you and I know we live in a world where there are pre-built structures that a temple could be built overnight.

Three-and-a-half years in the Great Tribulation begins and it begins with the abomination of desolation where the Antichrist steps into the temple and he desolates that place, in the holy place. And Matthew Chapter 24 says you see that happening, you know it's go time. Big stuff is going on, halfway through The Tribulation, you're at 3½ years at this point, and it even tells people because it's gonna be a very localized event but it's going to have worldwide ramifications. So when you read about this, you're talking about the Middle East, you're talking right there around Israel, around Jerusalem, and it says if you're in Jerusalem, even if you're pregnant, get out. And there is going to be a huge humanitarian crisis at that point as they just file out of Jerusalem in fear of what is taking place.

And the text in Matthew 24 says that if Jesus didn't intervene in this period of time that is called The Great Tribulation where things just get horrific, no one would have survived. Luke 21:26 says,

LUKE 21:25-26 (ESV)

"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

describing this time, says people fainting with fear and foreboding of what is coming. It is going to be one of those times that is just overwhelming.

I'll pause for a second because if you've read the book of Revelation and you've seen some of the descriptions of this second half you may rightfully grasp this as a terrorizing scene of deeply troubling, of incredibly dark. And it may even cause us to go, "Why is that how God wraps things up?" There appears to be a situation where a just God is dealing with the issues that we are so dealing with today.

You and I know that there are things on this earth in our purview right now that have just boiled over. Let's just start personally, let's just go here where we can deal with it [GESTURES SELF] – our own sinfulness is so great. And the Scripture talks about the end times calling good evil and evil good and you see that in our times, that upside down nature of all of this. God has to deal with all of that. You think about the racism that we're dealing with, think about the sex trafficking, the amount of abuse that is constantly in the world in which we come into contact with, abortion, children without fathers, drug trafficking. We could probably go down a list that is much longer. When we talk about this dark time, this Great Tribulation, here's the good news because I think it's the thing that each of us are crying out for right now—justice is coming.

There's coming a moment when God *is* going to intervene and take care of it. And isn't that what we say right now? "God, why don't You step down and stop this?" There is coming that moment. Be sure that justice will come at the hand of the just One who's going to make all things that are not right in this current age, He's going to make them right. And King Jesus is ultimately going to come in great power and great glory and He will reign and rule for a thousand years here on earth.

Okay, so we talked about birth pangs, Tribulation, Great Tribulation, today what I really want to get to is the return of Jesus. So in Chapter 24 of Matthew just right after He announces the Great Tribulation I want to just read a few verses there to get us to the point of the return of Jesus. I just want to read these lead up verses, we didn't really get to them last week, I just want to read them and say a couple little things about them. So if you have your Bibles open to Matthew Chapter 24, I want you to look at verse 21.

21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."

– MATTHEW 24:21-28 (ESV)

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While you're turning there let me just say this, one of the things that I really, really, really hope for in this time is that you'll understand the structure of what Jesus tells us here; that as things begin to happen on the earth you will know what to look for and you'll know where to look. And so you'll keep going back to this and trying to understand this more and more what Jesus is saying so that we will know what to do. Let me – you'll see why I say that right now, verse 22 of Matthew 24:

22 "And if those days had not been cut short,

— this Great Tribulation —

no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

— listen to these next words because these are the kind of instructions that I'm talking about:

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.

— you capture that? There's gonna be people saying, "There He is, Jesus has come back" – don't believe it. There's gonna be false christs out there, listen to this, verse 24:

24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

– MATTHEW 24:22-24 (ESV)

So we're talking about false miracles, false signs being done by the power of Satan by people claiming to be Christ. This time gets extremely confusing so if it's not enough that this Great Tribulation and the events are going on, it's gonna be one of those times that truth is really hard to put your finger on. In fact, I just remind you that all the way through this passage that's one of the key phrases or recurring themes that Jesus mentions over and over. He started out even in the whole birth pangs, don't let anyone lead you astray. Here He's telling you that there's gonna be false Christs coming, over and over this keeps on being stated.

I mention that because I believe we need to hear that. It's why we need to be a people of this Book, that's why every week we just come here and teach the Bible. Not trying to teach pop psychology, not trying to tell you five better ways to make your life just a little bit better. We want to get to the Bible because there's so many things that are gonna be meant to pull you aside, and this is gonna be the only anchor to really be able to lock down on that and make sure we're getting the truth. So, there's gonna be a lot of false signs going on.

Verse 25 Jesus says:

25 "See, I have told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms, do not believe it.

— evidently there's gonna be all sorts of conversation that Jesus has come. The book of 2nd Thessalonians says this very thing. This theme gets repeated—He's come, He's here, He's there, He's out there, we saw this happen—don't believe this, don't be led astray. And then in verse 27 He gives almost a prelude to about what we're about ready to read, He says:

27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

– MATTHEW 24:25-28 (ESV)

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Capture this! There is this picture of lightning from east to west of Jesus coming in a huge light show.



You remember when He arrived the only light show that takes place is out in the middle of a field where the shepherds are. It's rather quiet and they see these angels singing in the sky light up. Here no one's going to miss it and He wants you to know that so that when they start telling you He's out there, we hear He's in the desert, hey, we saw these signs – going no, listen to the Bible, listen to Jesus. Jesus says this is going to happen, and Jesus says when I come this time you're not going to miss it, you're going to see it. So let's get right to it, verse 29:

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days

— so this is something happens, something changes here immediately after that Great Tribulation, so we're right at that seven-year period of time. It says this:

the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

— Oh, my! The world goes dark. When you read a lot about this time in your Bible you see that at this point all eyes go to the sky. You know, a lot of stuff was going on on planet earth before, but now everything in the sky starts going crazy and the world goes dark. I don't know about you but can you imagine in the middle of the day if that all of a sudden starts happening? And you see the things described here – stars falling from the heaven, powers of the heavens shaken. But here, listen, verse 30:

30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man,

— now, let me go back to the beginning here, remember the disciples' questions? What will be the sign of your coming? Here Jesus answers that question, "***then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man.***" Well, what's the sign of the Son of Man? Well, they will:

and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven

— how will we know what the sign is? You'll see Him! You'll see Him coming on the clouds of the heavens.

with power and great glory.

— and then it says:

31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

– MATTHEW 24:29-31 (ESV)

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Now, before I talk about that, let me go back to this Him coming thing because Revelation does this amazing job, you know, in the Revelation Jesus is giving a picture to John who is exiled on the island of Patmos. It's like he's sitting in front of this big, huge drive-in movie theater screen or maybe in one of these, you know, full-on all-around you experience movie screens before such a thing could have ever existed, and he's getting a full-on video of what's coming ahead and he's trying to write it down to the best of his understanding in the book of Revelation. That's why it's sort of hard, he's trying to write down things that he hadn't seen yet, trying to put them in words that he would know. But in this case he says this in Revelation, Chapter 19, verse 11—so this is about what we just studied, you know, the earth just goes dark and it says Jesus comes in the clouds with glory—in Revelation Chapter 19, this is what he says. He says:

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven,

— these are the believers of all ages —

arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

— Whoa! Think about this for a moment. So this moment that's being described as the return of Jesus, somehow here He is on a white horse coming in the clouds and all of the believers of all ages coming in the clouds behind Him. That could be us. If you know Jesus today, if you're on His side, if you're with Him, what a sight! Could it be that we are part of this moment where justice is finally meted out here on planet earth because we put our eyes and our attention on Jesus Christ and we believed in His Gospel and we trusted in Jesus alone, could it be that in that moment we get to in full HD color get to see justice exacted? Because listen to what it says happens next:

¹⁵ From his mouth

— Jesus —

comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations,

— He is coming at this point in the clouds in judgment. It says:

and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

– REVELATION 19:11-16 (ESV)

At the end of the book of Revelation, every Bible I have I write the words "we win," [APPLAUSE] you know, so the darkness that I started out with, the sins in our own lives, the sins that we are seeing in society that have us really frustrated and upset here as a church, are dealt with here. And this is why I'm always mentioning in relationship to all of those sins, whether that's abortion or racism or calling good evil/evil good, the sexual orientation at this time, I mean, you can just keep on going. It's why I'm always mentioning, I mean, people want us to get up here and think maybe we can fix it. The reality is the only thing that's going to fix these things is Jesus and that's why we're saying I want you to put your trust in Jesus and know Him. It's going to change your heart towards people, it's going to change your heart towards sin, it's going to cause you to hate sin and know that your sin is forgiven. And someday you will get the opportunity to see justice meted out on those things and those things wiped out and dealt

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with forever. This Jesus who's coming to rule them with a rod of iron is not going to allow those things to happen. Those things will be stopped.

So I read to you a verse because I got a little excited and got ahead of myself, it's the last verse of this, verse 31:

31 "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

– MATTHEW 24:31 (ESV)

So He comes back. He's coming back with a sword. He's coming back to exact judgment on the face of the earth. Revelation gives a lot more information on what happens at that moment, we'll stop there because you know the facts of what's taking place now, Jesus said it, we just read it from Revelation when Jesus Revealed Himself in the book of Revelation, but what about the Christians, what about the followers of Jesus Christ? So I have been asked this question over and over for the last couple weeks everyone started like sending me emails going, *Wait a minute, when do we get taken out? How do we end up out of here? Are we gonna have to go through all of this? What is our place in this?*

You may remember at the beginning of this series if you were here I mentioned we're gonna be really, really careful to just listen to Jesus and not spend a lot of our time working within the systems that we tend to come up with. Because what happens when we create these systems we create these little theological boxes where this is my opinion and as a result of my opinion we actually assign orthodoxy to that. Like, I'm right, if I'm right on this and I figured this out then someone who believes this, they're really wrong. And what my goal was at the beginning of this was just to walk you through what Jesus said. So rather than trying to find some old dead guy's opinion of what right is and run up against that, my goal is let's just try to understand what Jesus said and try to come to some conclusions based on that.

Now the hard part of those conclusions is we have to look at this ourselves rather than trying to find out what these people think, but I just throw this out to you, if you don't even know what I'm talking about right now, there are those who really believe that before the Tribulation ever occurs we as the church, we as believers, will be pulled out of this earth. Actually, that's been my historical belief, that we will leave before the Tribulation. There are others who believe right there at that middle point, when that Great Tribulation takes place, that we will be pulled out at that time. And some of the reasons for that is the Scripture says is that there will be a revealing of the Antichrist and everything is sort of on hold until that point. So a lot of people feel like at that point when the Antichrist is revealed then the church will be removed from the earth. And there are yet others who believe right here at this very end when Jesus is coming back in the clouds with the armies of heaven coming to reign and rule and coming with a sword that somehow at that point they'll be removed.

Here's what I wanted to throw out at you today and I'm going to do it fairly quickly, but I would love for you to drill down on this yourselves and I would like you to really think this through and pray this through. There are four Scriptures in your Bible that talk about this moment. So I told you the Second Coming – 800 Old Testament, 300 New Testament – but four that really give us a little bit of information along these lines.

"Gather His elect" – Matthew 24:31

"Caught up" – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

"Being gathered together to Him" – 2 Thessalonians 2:1

"The dead will be raised imperishable" – 1 Corinthians 15:50-52

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So let me go back to Matthew 24 again, this is the first one, verse 31:

³¹ "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call,

— by the way, if you hear a loud trumpet call that's interesting, because in each of these verses a trumpet call is in them. And then it says this:

and they will gather his elect

— and so this word *gather* is important. So somehow there will be a gathering together of the elect:

from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

– MATTHEW 24:31 (ESV)

So there's going to be a gathering of the elect. Again, does that happen before the Tribulation? Does it happen at the middle of the Tribulation or some other time? Does it happen at the end of the Tribulation? With a trumpet call they are angels and they're going to be gathering. Let me just take you to a couple other verses and I'm going to, I think it's out of order on my slides or I've made these out of order, I'm going to go to 1st Corinthians Chapter 15. First Corinthians Chapter 15, verse 50, this is the second verse that talks about this gathering:

⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you

— listen to this word:

a mystery.

— so if I know everything in my little box, it's not a mystery. I figured it out. Maybe you have, but I want to tell you a mystery, so this is something we're going to understand sometime —

We shall not all sleep,

— Scripture refers to death as sleeping —

but we shall all be

— and this is the word I circled in my Bible, remember a minute ago I said in Matthew it says we'll be gathered, here it says we shall all be:

changed,

— 1 Corinthians, Chapter 15, and this is verse 51, "*we shall all be changed,*" this is cool:

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

— there's a trumpet again, and it says this:

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable,

— here's this word again:

and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

— and then it goes into this where it says:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

– 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-53, 54b-55

I just love it!

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So Matthew Chapter 24 He describes it and says we're going to be gathered together; 1st Corinthians Chapter 15 says we're going to be changed, both places a trumpet, and in a twinkling of an eye. Now I'm going to take you to 1st Thessalonians, I'm sort of going in order through these verses, so 1st Thessalonians Chapter 4, this is, I don't know, to me this is one of the highlight verses of us being taken to be with Jesus. Verse 13 of 1st Thessalonians 4:

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep,

— there's our word again, those who have died, what's going to happen:

that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again,

— that's the Gospel; those who have died in Jesus, those who have put their trust in Him, those who have believed that He died and rose again, made Him their Savior. That's what we're constantly telling you, believe the Gospel, let Jesus deal with that sin problem in your own life, that's going to make the biggest difference than anything you could do —

even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

— so that's those who are dead —

15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord,

— that's what we're talking about today —

will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

— okay, listen:

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet

— just keeps saying it, so I mean, some things to be keeping our eyes open for —

of God. And the dead in Christ

— those who are buried will rise first. Old preacher joke is you know why they rise first? They have six feet further to go —

will rise first.

— that is a really old preacher joke, I can tell you haven't been in a church a long time or you would have known that and just put out by that, I'm put out by it, irritated I said it —

17 Then we who are alive, who are left,

— here's our word:

will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

— wow, gathered together, caught up, and then it says this:

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

— 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18 (ESV)

And we're going to put these four together in just a second, but just let me just say this. Throughout all of history when Christians have gone through intense persecution and tribulation evidently it wasn't the

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Great Tribulation or Jesus would have come back, these are words that they have used to encourage each other. The words we're going to be caught up, we're going to be gathered together, we are going to be raised – Jesus is coming back. These words are meant to encourage us. I think we spend a lot of time going, "Oh, no! Will I be in the Tribulation?" "Oh, no! Are those bad things going to happen to me?" And He says here I want you to encourage each other. Jesus is coming back and He's going to take you out. Evidently when He comes back we're not going to be sitting there staring at that sword coming at us. Somehow whether it's at that moment or before that or seven years before that or who knows even before that, we are going to be removed, we're going to be caught up, we're going to be gathered together and taken out of this world and we're going to be with Jesus forever. And He says comfort each other with these words.

I want to take you to one more passage, right the next book 2nd Thessalonians, these are the only four passages that talk about this gathering together, this catching up. Second Thessalonians 2:

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

— same subject, coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and here's the phrase:

and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way.

— that's what Jesus warned about, isn't that interesting? Remember Jesus said hey, you know there's gonna be signs, if they say He's out in the wilderness don't listen to them, if they say He's in the inner room, don't listen to them. Paul's saying here in 2nd Thessalonians regarding the day of the Lord if someone writes you a letter and says He's come... you know how that... um, can you imagine the stuff on Facebook? Ah, He's already come, you missed it. He says don't be shaken. And listen to these next words, this is what I was talking about a moment ago:

For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first,

– 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-3A (ESV)

And then he goes in and talks about the Antichrist is seated on the throne in the temple and the abomination of desolation. So he's saying this coming isn't going to happen until that is shown. We know that that is 3½ years into the Tribulation.

Let me wrap up here and just say this one last thing. Chapter 5 of 1st Thessalonians, I'm just going right back to 1st Thessalonians, it's a lot of words here but it says this and I would encourage you to in your thinking about this passage today go back to this and study this. It says:

² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

— that whole thing when Jesus comes back with the sword – okay? – that's going come as a thief in the night. These people aren't expecting it. Jesus is going to come in that moment, you don't expect when a thief is going to show up. He says:

³ 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 5:1-3 (ESV)

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But then he says to those of you who believe the Gospel, those of you who have trusted in Jesus Christ, I'm in 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5, verse 4:

⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

— listen, we don't want to be in the darkness, we have to be in the light of the cross, in the light of Jesus. You are not in the darkness, so then here's our instructions today. It's what I'd like us to leave with today:

⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath,

— we're not going to spend eternity in Hell —

but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

— and we keep on coming back to that, put our eyes on Jesus —

¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

— 1 THESSALONIANS 5:4, 6, 8-10 (ESV)

Jesus says if I go, I will prepare a place for you and I'll come back and I'm going to take you to be where I am.¹ He's coming again. He's looking for a prepared people to go to a place that He's prepared. A prepared people for a prepared place, and that's really where we land at this point. Yes, He's coming back. We put our eyes on Him. We take those words of 1st Thessalonians 5 and say listen, let's be a people who are sober, who are focusing in on Jesus, who are people of faith who are really, really trying to make the most of this day. Jesus is coming again. And Titus Chapter 1, verse 13², says that is our blessed hope. That's what we put our eyes on. And 1st Thessalonians 4:18 says encourage each other as long as it's today.

You're going through some hard stuff, you're going through some tribulation, you're being beat up for your faith, you're standing for Jesus and it's going tough – encourage each other. Use those words, cry those words out to encourage each other to get through this time. And as believers, keep your eyes on Jesus. Remember the words at the end of the book of Revelation, "behold, I come quickly."³ He's coming back soon. This is what all of creation has been waiting for when everything is made right and He's going to make it right. He's coming soon. I believe, Christians, this should be and must be our great hope, the great thing in our eyesight, the thing that should be overcoming all the tribulation and tough stuff, looking forward to the coming of Jesus.

¹ See John Chapter 14:1-4

² Transcriber edit/correction: In the video Titus 1, verse 3, is cited. The correct reference is Titus 1:13, "**waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**, (ESV)

³ Transcriber note: "behold, I come quickly" is Revelation 22:12 in the following nine translations: KJV, KJ21, ASV, BRG, DARBY, DRA, JUB, AKJV, WEB. In the ESV it states, "Behold, I am coming soon."

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Lord Jesus,

We do look forward to your coming and we celebrate it today. We don't know when, You said we won't, Matthew 24, but we put our eyes at attention on You and we can't wait to see You in all of your glory. I pray that You will find us faithful. I pray that we would endure. Lord, I pray that we would keep Jesus at the center. I pray that we remain as people of the truth, alert and awake during this time, sober, keeping our eyes on You, Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. It's in your name we pray. Amen.



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