

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Thessalonians 5:1-11**.
- B. False teachers have led many astray with their claims of knowing when Jesus was to return.
 - 1. (1844). "The Great Disappointment" of the **Millerite movement**. A Baptist preacher named William Miller had attracted as many as 100,000 followers in NY and MA. Miller boldly predicted that X would return and engulf the world in fire some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When that didn't happen, he changed the date to October 22. Many followers left him after that spectacular failure, but enough stayed to form the **7th Day Adventist** movement.
 - 2. (1859). A British minister named **John Nelson Darby** created an ingenious theology known as **premillennial dispensationalism**, which remains the dominant eschatological system in Christianity today. "Dispensationalism" refers to Darby's belief that human history can be divided into a series of epochs, or dispensations, in which God has dealt with humanity in different ways. **Darby** teaches that biblical prophecy refers to the past and future periods, but is silent on the present "Church Age," which began with X's crucifixion. By asserting that God's prophetic clock had temporarily stopped ticking, this "Great Parenthesis" ingeniously preserves prophecy while avoiding the risks of date-setting.

One of the most enduring elements of Darby's system is the **Rapture**, in which true believers in Christ would travel instantly to heaven, where they would watch the terrible seven-year **Tribulation** unfold on earth, killing all but a righteous few. His emphasis on the Jews' return to Palestine and his strong reliance on Scripture over church authority have also won favor with fundamentalists.
 - 3. (1970). **Hal Lindsey** publishes Late Great Planet Earth, which becomes so popular the New York Times has called him the bestselling author of the 1970s. Espousing a basic pre-millennialism vision, the former Campus Crusade for Christ recruiter pitches his argument to young people, cleverly demonstrating how current events could best be viewed in light of prophecy. In 1977, Orson Welles would narrate a movie version of Late Great Planet Earth. Lindsey's success spawns a host of imitators, whose books, films, videos, web sites and other products are a multi-million dollar business today.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE.

- A. Scripture text: 1Th. 5:1-2.

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. **2** For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.
- B. The very thought of discussing the time of the Lord's return was a mute subject. They "knew full well" that the coming of Christ would be an unexpected coming.
- C. When Jesus spoke of the heavens and the earth passing away, He said that God alone knew of that day and time (Mt. 24:35-36).

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. **36** "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."
- D. The knowledge that we are supposed to have about the coming of X is that we don't know when it will be, it cannot be calculated, and will arrive in stealth as does a thief in the night.

II. EXPECTANCY AND SURPRISE.

- A. Scripture text: 1Th. 5:3-5.

While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. **4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; **5** for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

- B. Jeremiah warned the sinful nation of Judah that judgment was coming. Yet the priests of the day were telling of peace and safety (Jer. 6:13-16). This will be true again at the end of time. While others say that our days will never end, the end will come.
 “For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely. **14** “And they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace. **15** “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,” says the LORD. **16** Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it*.’”
- C. As Xians, however, we are not so fooled. We have been told that a day is coming when Jesus will return in judgment of the world. We must take a different view of life (Eph. 5:15-16).
 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, **16** making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
- D. Again, Jesus said that He will return at a time when we think He will not (Mt. 24:43-44).
 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. **44** “For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.”

III. SOBERNESS AND DRUNKENNESS.

- A. Scripture text: 1Th. 5:6-8.
 ...so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. **7** For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. **8** But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.
- B. Paul says it's time to wake up, clean up, and dress up.
- C. Christians are not to be asleep the things of God, but rather alert, sane, and sober-minded.
- D. Paul calls those who are ready for the coming of the Lord as those who are of the day, and those who are not preparing themselves for the second advent as those who are of the night (Rom. 13:12-13).
 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. **13** Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.
- E. Also mentioned in 5:8 is the great trio of faith, hope, and love. The “hope of salvation” is not a hope that one will be saved on the final day, but that one is already saving and expects to be going to heaven (1Jn. 5:13).
 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.
- F. Salvation comes in three tenses:
1. Past--I have been saved from sin (at baptism, 1Pet. 3:21).
 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,...
 2. Present--I am saved from the power and pollution of sin (Rom. 8:1).
 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 3. Future--I will be saved from eternal destruction at the judgment (Mt. 25:31-34).
 “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. **32** “And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; **33** and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. **34** “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

IV. SALVATION AND JUDGMENT.

- A. Scripture text: 1Th. 5:9-11.
 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. **11** Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

- B. How could God predestine some for wrath since He sent X to die for the world (Jn. 3:16).
 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”
- C. Again the thought of some being awake and others being asleep is a reference to those living and those who have physically died. Such a condition is not relevant, all who have been faithful will live together with JC.
- D. Therefore be of good cheer, encourage others, keep on doing good works.

V. SOME PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS.

- A. Scripture text: 1Th. 5:12-28.
 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, **13** and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. **14** And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. **15** See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men. **16** Rejoice always; **17** pray without ceasing; **18** in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. **19** Do not quench the Spirit; **20** do not despise prophetic utterances. **21** But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; **22** abstain from every form of evil. **23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. **25** Brethren, pray for us. **26** Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. **27** I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. **28** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
- B. This is a wonderful list of things to be done to encourage and strengthen one another.
- C. Very quickly we are to:
 1. Appreciate those who work hard in the Lord, and esteem them highly.
 2. Admonish those who are not living right to repent and do so.
 3. Seek after that which is good.
 4. Rejoice.
 5. Pray.
 6. Give thanks.
 7. Listen to the word of God as spoken by the spirit through the NT prophets.
 8. Examine everything and stay away from evil.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Have knowledge and not ignorance concerning your preparation for X's coming.
- B. Expect Him to return at any time, and don't let him catch you by surprise when He comes.
- C. Be sober in all things by putting on faith, hope, and love.
- D. If have not become a Xian, then you are not ready to meet the Lord.
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.