

I Thessalonians 4:17–5:5

I Thessalonians 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

THE Christian's hope is to be with Christ, and this hope will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to the earth to have the redeemed meet Him in the air. Because living saints have maintained faith in the Son of God, their reward will be that they are caught up to meet Him in the air. The manner in which believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air is first seen in Enoch, whom the Scriptures state walked with God *before* God took him. *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him* (Gen. 5:24). What started with Seth, when men began to call upon the Lord,¹ found its fulfillment in Enoch and his exemplary walk with the Lord.

The reward for Enoch's faith and spiritual obedience to God was his being lifted from the earth while still alive: *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God* (Heb. 11:5). Such a man was Enoch,

who because of his unique confidence and trust in the Lord, proven by his walking in God's will for his life, was miraculously lifted up into heaven. There is no greater reward for faith than this, which is to be miraculously caught up into heaven, and even Christ's apostle Paul pursued such a spiritual end to his life: *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 3:14).

(*Pulpit Commentary*, Phil. 3:14) *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*; rather, with the best manuscripts, *unto the prize*. The first preposition, "towards," expresses the aim; the second, "unto," the end of the race. *The high calling*; the upward, heavenward calling. God is calling us all upward, heavenward, by the voice of the Lord Jesus, who is the Word of God. Comp. Hebrews 3:1,² "Partakers of the heavenly calling." The words, "in Christ Jesus," are to be taken with "the high calling." It is God who calls: he calls us in the person of Christ, by the voice of Christ, "Come unto me."³ "It was his will that thou shouldst run the race below; he gives the crown above. Seest thou not that even here they crown the most honored of the athletes, not on the racecourse below, but the king calls them up, and crowns them there" (Chrysostom).

In recorded history rapture is rare, purposed only for the godliest of men.⁴ The

1 Gen. 4:26 *And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.*

2 Heb. 3:1 *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*

3 Matt. 11:27–28 *All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*
²⁸*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

4 II Kgs. 2:11 *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

future rapture of present-day saints shows us the monumental work the Son of God has accomplished for His people—whereby through His own sacrificial life and death He makes men worthy of heavenly habitation. The basis for the Christian's being raised into heaven, in contrast to Enoch's translation, is found not in his own personal walk of obedience but rather in Christ's finished work to redeem him.⁵ For Enoch it was his individual walk with the Lord that formed the reason for his translation; for the Christian it is Christ's obedience that forms his.

Before being caught up to heaven to meet Jesus in the air, a man must be found to have become a son of God while on earth. Heaven is not for every man but only for those who by faith have believed in God's Son. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name* (John 1:12). To receive Christ is to receive Him as God has declared Him to be. It is to receive and accept the authority that God has given His Son over all

mankind,⁶ as Lord of all. This verse places emphasis on *the Lord* and thus repeats it in order to draw attention that it is *the Lord* Jesus Christ, the Ruler of both heaven and earth,⁷ Whom the saved are miraculously raised to meet. The rapture of Christ's people is also very directly tied to what Jesus prayed for concerning what would be His disciples' reward for their faith in Him. Previously none have ever been allowed to see the full glory of either God⁸ or the Son of God, but those raised to meet Jesus in the air will have an unobstructed view of both. It was also this being with Himself that Jesus prayed, that those given to Him by the Father should partake of. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world* (John 17:24). Jesus' prayer brings us to two revelations: (1) that Jesus purposed that those given to Him by God should be with Him where He is and (2) that one of the great reasons Jesus prayed that the saved will be raised to heaven is

5 Gal. 4:4–5 *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,* ⁵*To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Tit. 2:13–14 *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;* ¹⁴*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

6 John 17:2 *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

Eph. 1:21 *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

Acts 2:36 *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

7 Phil. 2:9–11 *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:* ¹⁰*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;* ¹¹*And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

8 Exod. 33:18–20 *And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.* ¹⁹*And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* ²⁰*And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.*

Exod. 16:10 *And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

Exod. 24:16–17 *And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.* ¹⁷*And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.*

I Kgs. 8:10–11 *And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD,* ¹¹*So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.*

that they might behold the eternal glory that is now Christ's.⁹ In Paul's revelation to the Thessalonians, the revelation of the believer's rapture is the answer to Christ's prayer.

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, John 17:24) *That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.*—Comp. Note on John 17:22.¹⁰ That we are to think of the future glory of the divine-human nature of Christ, is shown by the addition of the words, "which Thou hast given Me." The pre-incarnate glory of the Son was of His divine nature only, and is not, therefore, spoken of as given to Him, nor could it be given to those who believe in Him (John 17:22). That with which the Father has glorified the Son, is "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was" (John 17:5),¹¹ but it is the Son of man who is glorified with it, and therefore it is that human nature is made capable of receiving it.

True believers in Christ will be raised from the earth by being *caught up*. This indicates that it will be through no ability of their own that they will be raised to meet the Lord in the air but rather by Christ's heavenly might and power exerted upon them. As the word implies, being *caught up* will be both sudden and unexpected.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Thess. 4:17) *Shall be caught up*—The word here used implies that there will be the application of external force or power by which this will be done. It will not be by any power of ascending which they will themselves have; or by any tendency of their raised or changed bod-

ies to ascend of their own accord, or even by any effort of their own will, but by a power applied to them which will cause them to rise.

The closeness established on earth between Jesus and His people¹² will reach its purposed end when both the living and the dead are eternally joined to the Savior. Some have speculated that the reason the saved will join Christ in the air is that the earth cannot contain such a great number of redeemed ones being gathered together for such occasions as the church's salvation and the world's final judgment.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Thess. 4:17) The world would not be spacious enough to contain all the assembled living and dead, and hence the throne of judgment will be fixed in the ample space above it.

This rapture, as I Corinthians reveals, will transpire in the twinkling of an eye: *Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed* (I Cor. 15:51–52). The trumpet, as seen in I Corinthians and I Thessalonians, as well as in many other records in Scripture, is attached to the Lord's return and will herald the Lord's people to their final gathering. Here the trump of God signals the Lord's chosen to assemble themselves before Jesus in heaven. Its ultimate purpose is to summon the saved to inherit their spiritual

9 Matt. 25:31 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

10 John 17:22 *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*
11 John 17:5 *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

12 John 15:4 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

John 17:23 *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

John 6:56 *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

destiny.¹³ However, it will not be upon a mountain that the Son of God will come down to reveal Himself to mankind, as the Lord previously did with Israel.¹⁴ Instead, Jesus will appear in heaven, and by the spiritual power given to Him by God, He will raise His people to meet Him in the air. The contrasting meetings of God descending to the earth to meet Israel to now the church's being powerfully raised to meet its Savior mark a change of administrations, signifying that all that is earthly is to be replaced by all that is heavenly. Note that *change* is the optimal word to define the events that will transpire with the return of the Son of God. Here it is the changing of His people's bodies, but many other things will also be transformed at this time. The entire world order will transition from human governmental authority to divine spiritual authority.¹⁵ No longer will the descendants of the first Adam function according to their own human will, which has always resisted God's sovereignty over them. Fallen man, as we know him now, has lost both the right and responsibility to be given stewardship over anything. Hence, a new race of men, created in the image and likeness of God's Son,¹⁶ will replace him. This new race of man created

by God will forever remain loyal to Him through faithfully keeping His laws and adhering to His commandments.¹⁷ Many other Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled at this future time, but the Christian's spiritual transformation provides great insight into the celestial glories and spiritual changes to come.

Another potential reason that the rapture takes place in the clouds is so the saved are removed from the earthly judgments to come. *And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come* (I Thess. 1:10). That believers are instructed to wait for God's Son from heaven to deliver them from wrath reveals that it will be the personal appearance of Jesus Christ that will directly provide for their protection from it. Hence, before the day of the Lord comes and God's wrath is poured out upon the world,¹⁸ those chosen for heaven will have departed from the earth. The trumpet also marks the beginning of the day of the Lord, and once it is sounded, the world will have to endure the Lord's long-promised wrath of God. Both events—the raising of the saints and the wrath of God being poured out upon the world—will be supernatural

13 Matt. 24:31 *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

14 Exod. 19:11 *And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*

Exod. 19:20 *And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.*

15 Rev. 11:15 *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

16 Col. 3:10 *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

17 Ezek. 36:26–28 *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. ²⁸And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

18 II Pet. 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

Rev. 6:16–17 *And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

and a testament to Christ's divine power. *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men* (II Pet. 3:7). Because of its wickedness, the first world, as observed in the time of Noah, was destroyed by water;¹⁹ the one we live in now, of which I Peter speaks, is promised to be destroyed by fire. Whereas water covered the earth, now it is revealed that fire will consume it.

(*Benson Commentary*, II Pet. 3:7) *are kept in store*—Τεθησαυρισμενοι εισι πυρι τηρουμενοι, *are treasured up and preserved for fire*; that is, preserved from a deluge for the purpose of being burned. Therefore the earth is not always to remain, but is to suffer a destruction even more terrible than the former; at the *day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*—The day when God will judge the world, and punish the ungodly with everlasting destruction.

The Greek word for *ungodly* is #765. *HELPS Word-studies* defines it as “*ase-bēs* (an adjective which is the negation of 4576 /*sébotomai*, ‘to respect’)—properly, lack of reverence (‘without due respect’), i.e. failing to honor what is sacred—especially in the outward (ceremonial) sense.” God demands reverence and respect for

what is sacred. When men do not respect or have a high regard for that which is holy, they prove themselves ripe for divine judgment. The two greatest sins in man, aside from blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,²⁰ are unbelief²¹ and ungodliness.²² These sins are committed directly toward a holy God, and as such they are worthy of divine judgment. The Scriptures also teach us that now—that is, even today, before this great day of God's judgment—a portion of God's anger is being revealed in the earth. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness* (Rom. 1:18). If men refuse to believe that divine judgment for sin will come in the future, they need only to observe a small amount of God's wrath being revealed toward the ungodly and unbelieving in the present.

(*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, Rom. 1:18) This Wrath of God, Revealed against All Iniquity, Overhangs the Whole Heathen World.

Whereas today God's wrath and anger are measured—at Jesus' return, marking the day of the Lord, the Lord's anger will not be measured. It is from this final judgment of God, upon the unsaved and

19 Gen. 6:17 *And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.*

20 Mark 3:29 *But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:*

21 John 3:18 *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Heb. 3:12 *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

II Thess. 2:12 *That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Heb. 3:17–19 *But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

22 Ps. 1:6 *For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

II Pet. 2:5 *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

II Pet. 3:7 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

Jude 1:15 *To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

The Dead Shall Rise

unbelieving, that Jesus came to save men from.²³ Just as Lot was delivered from Sodom and Gomorrah and led out by angels from the place where God's judgment was to fall,²⁴ so shall the Lord Jesus redeem the righteous and lift them up into heaven before the Lord's vengeance is revealed upon those who have refused to obey the gospel of His Son. *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* (II Thess. 1:7-9).

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Once raptured by the Son of God, the saved will never again be separated from Him. It is common today for those who possess the Holy Spirit that any separation from

God, no matter how brief, causes pain to the soul. Whether because of personal sin or simply the trials of life, nothing disturbs and causes inner consternation more than when spiritual fellowship with the heavenly Father is damaged and needs repair. However, once the believer is literally joined to the Lord Jesus, all such fear will be removed as every Christian's heart will remain at peace because of its close proximity to the Lord of peace.²⁵ In God's presence is fullness of joy,²⁶ and this joy will be exceedingly experienced once the saved are joined to Christ in heaven.

I Thessalonians 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

There can be no comfort, nor any sustainable hope, regarding good expectations for the dead if while living they did not have a personal relationship with the Son of God. Before there can be true comfort when facing either one's own death or the

23 Rom. 5:9 *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. I Thess. 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

24 Gen. 19:12-26 *And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: ¹³For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. ¹⁴And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. ¹⁵And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. ¹⁶And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. ¹⁷And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. ¹⁸And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my LORD: ¹⁹Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: ²⁰Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. ²¹And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. ²²Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. ²³The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. ²⁴Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. ²⁶But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*

II Pet. 2:6-7 *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; ⁷And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:*

25 II Thess. 3:16 *Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.*

26 Ps. 16:11 *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

death of those the person loves, a man must be found in Christ²⁷ and Christ in him.²⁸ It is also worthy of note that before the Son of God's entrance into the world, mankind knew little to nothing of the concept of spiritual immortality. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:* (II Tim. 1:10). Today, because of the revelation given to Paul by the Lord Jesus,²⁹ we know much more. And it is this knowledge of future events that has been purposed to bring comfort to the sons of God, even when their earthly lives, and the lives of those they love, cease.

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, II Tim. 1:10) Before the Gospel revelation from God, man, by the light of nature, under the most favorable circumstances, had but a glimmering idea of the possibility of a future being of the soul, but not the faintest idea of the resurrection of the body...

I Thessalonians 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

Regarding the time of the advent and the rapture of the saints, the apostle now states that it makes no real difference as to when these things will take place but

only that they will. Not surprising, people can very easily become distracted concerning when something will be, though instead they should concern themselves only with the fact that it *will* be.³⁰ Human curiosity, though common, is not a heavenly virtue. The secret things belong unto the Lord,³¹ and that which He determines should remain hidden cannot be discovered by human effort. Jesus' words to His disciples before His ascension, reveal where the believer's proper focus should be while patiently waiting for Christ's return to the earth.

Acts 1:6–8 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

⁷ ***And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.***

⁸ ***But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.***

The disciples sought to know about the future restoration of Israel; instead, Jesus directed them to a very near event, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.³² Hence, instead of speculating as to the timing of future events, like

²⁷ Phil. 3:9 *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

²⁸ Rom. 8:10 *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

Col. 1:27 *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

²⁹ Gal. 1:11 *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*

³⁰ Matt. 24:36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.* Mark 13:32 *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

³¹ Deut. 29:29 *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

³² Acts 2:1–4 *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each*

Israel's restoration, true believers should pursue receiving the Holy Spirit, manifesting Its power, and testifying to the reality of the Son of God and His resurrection by God. It is also the Holy Spirit and the spiritual power associated with It, that are the best witnesses of Jesus' resurrection from the dead—simply because it is Jesus Who promised to breathe into His followers the Holy Ghost. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost* (John 20:22).

I Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, I Thess. 5:2) *The day of the Lord.*—Here “the Lord” (as usual in the New Testament) means Jesus Christ; and this day can mean nothing else than the great day of His return to judgment. The expression is taken from the Old Testament, where, of course, it does not primarily mean what we call “the Day of Judgment,” but the set time which God has fixed for any great visitation. Thus in Joel 2:1,³³ et seq., it means the time appointed for the plague of locusts; in Ezekiel 13:5,³⁴ generally, any day when God visits His people; in Joel 3:14,³⁵ the fixed time for vengeance to be taken upon the heathen for persecuting the Church; which, in Isaiah 2:12³⁶ (a passage largely influenced by recollections of Joel), seems to widen into a general day of judgment for mankind.

The *day of the Lord* is that day when Jesus Christ will be openly manifested to the world. It will come unexpectedly upon the unsaved, *as a thief in the night*. It will understandably be both surprising and frightening to those living in sin. The *day of the Lord* in Scripture is the future time referred to as *the Revelation of Jesus Christ*.³⁷ Like the book of Thessalonians, the Book of Revelation reveals that Jesus will come with clouds. *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen* (Rev. 1:7). Jesus' return and His appearance to the world will cause many to wail. This wailing will originate from those who have rejected God's sovereignty and have now become fully aware that divine judgment is ready to be revealed upon them. All the previous rejoicing of sinners will cease once they realize that God's authority has returned to rule the world through the person of His Son. What a contrast this is to when Jesus was crucified and His followers mourned and wept for His death!³⁸ Here a completely opposite scene is described, for now it is sinners who will wail and bemoan the sight of the Lord Jesus, and not those who have believed in Him. How different also are the ungodly from the saints: whereas unbelievers rejoice when sin spreads, saints rejoice when God's authority appears to remove it.

of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

³³ Joel 2:1 *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;*

³⁴ Ezek. 13:5 *Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.*

³⁵ Joel 3:14 *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.*

³⁶ Isa. 2:12 *For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:*

³⁷ Rev. 1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

³⁸ Mark 16:9–10 *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. ¹⁰And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.*

(Benson Commentary, Rev. 1:7) *Shall wail because of him*—For terror and pain, if they did not wail before by true repentance; even all who have rejected his government and opposed his interest, shall lament the fatal opposition, by which, instead of prevailing in the least against him, they have only effected their own destruction. In this verse is prefixed the great moral, which the whole book is designed to illustrate; namely, that though there should be great opposition made against the cause and kingdom of Christ, yet it should be utterly in vain, and his kingdom should triumph in the most illustrious manner, so that all who opposed it should have the greatest reason to mourn.

Note that the unrighteous and the ungodly will wail *because of him* (Jesus). This is because the actual sight of Jesus coming in glory will awaken in even the dullest of men the arrival of the authority of God. The great majority of this world has always rejected divine rule. But at Jesus' return this practice will eternally cease.

I Thessalonians 5:3 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.

Before the Lord's judgment comes upon this world, the world will imagine itself in both *peace and safety*. But consistent with Jesus' unexpected return to the earth and believers being instantaneously caught up to meet Him in the air, so also will be the abrupt and sudden destruction of the ungodly—revealing that both deliverance and justice will be swift. Ultimately the Lord will not hesitate in redeeming the saved, nor will He delay in executing His wrath upon any who are not. All

fates have been settled, all choices made, and no time is needed before justice is served. In short, the world has waited long enough for this glorious day,³⁹ and it need not wait any longer.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 5:3) *And they shall not escape*—That is, the destruction, or punishment. They calculated on impunity, but now the time will have come when none of these refuges will avail them, and no rocks will cover them from the "wrath to come."

Because sinners have believed themselves wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight, they are blinded to their final end. Hence, there is no one more ignorant of Christ's return than he who has believed himself humanly wise. It is for these, the proud of heart, that heavenly punishment is purposed. *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!* (Isa. 5:21).

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Isa. 5:21) *Wo unto them that are wise ...*—This is the fifth crime specified. It refers to those who are inflated with a false opinion of their own knowledge, and who are, therefore, self-confident and vain. This is expressly forbidden; Proverbs 3:7:⁴⁰ 'Be not wise in thine own eyes;' compare Proverbs 26:12.⁴¹

In their own eyes—In their own opinion, or estimation.

And prudent—Knowing; self-conceited. This was, doubtless, one characteristic of the times of Isaiah. It is known to have been strikingly the characteristic of the Jews—particularly the Pharisees—in the time of our Saviour. The evil of this was,

(1) That it evinced and fostered "pride."

39 Rom. 8:22–23 *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

40 Prov. 3:7 *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

41 Prov. 26:12 *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

The Dead Shall Rise

(2) That it rendered them unwilling to be instructed, and especially by the prophets.

As they supposed that they were already wise enough, they refused to listen to others.

(*Pulpit Commentary*, Isa. 5:21) *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes.* The fifth woe. Self-conceit is the antithesis of humility; and as humility is, in a certain sense, the crowning virtue, so self-conceit is a sort of finishing touch put to vice. While a man thinks humbly of himself, there is a chance that he may repent and amend. When he is “wise in his own eyes,” he does not see why he should change.

They shall not escape. Just as Adam and Eve hid⁴² in an attempt to avoid giving account for their sin, and yet the Lord found them,⁴³ so shall those who have resisted divine rule also attempt to flee from divine judgment yet not be able to. The earth, though vast in human estimation, is small to the Lord, so that when God’s righteous judgment is brought upon it, there will be found no place for sinners to either hide or escape His wrath. Whereas the unrighteous once freely sinned and moved upon the earth without any thought of divine intervention, now the earth has become their prison. *They shall not escape* is forceful, simply because there will be no place for sinners to avoid spiritual accountability. And though they will wish that the hills could cover them,⁴⁴ this hope, like the lives they lived, shall similarly be in vain.

I Thessalonians 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

Because God has illuminated the saved through the Spirit of the Lord given to them, this upcoming day of judgment, though it will come quickly, will not come unexpectedly since all true believers will be neither surprised nor frightened that the day of the Lord has begun. Because God has shined His light in believers’ hearts, the future of this world is no longer hidden. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (II Cor. 4:6).

(*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, II Cor. 4:6) ... this verse teaches the fact, that the minds of Christians are illuminated. They are enabled to see things as they are. This fact is often taught in the Scriptures; see 1 John 2:20; 1 Corinthians 2:12–15.⁴⁵ They have different views of things from their fellow-men, and different from what they once had. They perceive a beauty in religion which others do not see, and a glory in truth, and in the Saviour, and in the promises of the gospel, which they did not see before they were converted.

I Thessalonians 5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

42 Gen. 3:8 *And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.*

43 Gen. 3:9–10 *And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? ¹⁰And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*

44 Hos. 10:8 *The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.*

Luke 23:30 *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*

45 I John 2:20 *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

I Cor. 2:12–15 *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

Every son of God, every child of God, is a child of light—first, because the light of God in the form of the Holy Spirit fills his heart, and second, because his eyes have been illuminated both to God and to the higher spiritual realm. Ultimately, Christian minds have been enlightened,⁴⁶ whereas things previously hidden are now spiritually observable and able to be be-

lieved. By instructing the Thessalonians that they were *the children of light* and *the children of the day*, the apostle sought to remove any fear they might have concerning the day of the Lord. This fear, the apostle revealed, was reserved only for those who by freedom of will have chosen darkness over light.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Eph. 1:18 *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

⁴⁷ John 3:19 *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

