

## ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

### Adult Bible Class: *“What Will the End of the World Be Like?”*

#### II. New Testament Passages

C. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 (*continued*)

Verse 17: **What will happen “after that”?** \_\_\_\_\_

This act combines the ideas of both force and suddenness. It is a reunion with Christ and fellow believers (have you ever been to an all-school reunion where you get to visit not only with your own classmates, but with others who attended that school at different time periods?)

The Latin translation for “caught up” is *rapio* from which we get the English word “rapture.” This has given rise to a false teaching of a secret taking of believers from the world while leaving behind unbelievers for a second chance at faith in Christ for 1000 years before He returns for real (e.g. the Left Behind series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins).

“together”: Those still living will join those recently raised in the clouds.

“to meet the Lord in the air”: The noun is a technical term for the greeting of a visiting dignitary outside of town to escort him back into the city (think of an important world leader getting off a plane, walking on the red carpet to be greeted by local officials and then gets in a limo for a motorcade into the city). What is not mentioned here by Paul now is the sheep/goat judgment of Matthew 25:31ff. In the first century the air often was thought of as the abode of demons.

*Ephesians 2:2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

**Then what will happen?** \_\_\_\_\_

Paul does not speak of unbelievers here. He is writing to believers with the main point that one group of believers will not precede another group at the resurrection.

*2 Corinthians 6:2a Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?*

Verse 18: **For now, what are the Thessalonians to do?** \_\_\_\_\_

This is an important word in 1 Thessalonians, used here and in 3:2; 5:11, and 14(2x).

**Which words should we use to encourage each other?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are some occasions we can do this?** \_\_\_\_\_

What do we tend to say at visitations/funerals? “He looks so good” (Really!) or “I’m so sorry” (nice, but unbelievers can say this). How about, “Christ has risen from the dead and He will raise us also.”?

“All things and all people are in His hands. When it is His will to bring in the end of this age, those who have died in Him and those who still survive will be united in His presence. The thought gives meaning to existence and suggests the certainty of ultimate triumph” (Leon Morris, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, Eerdmans, 1991, page 146).

## Chapter 5:

Verse 1: **Why not write about times or dates?** \_\_\_\_\_

“times” *chronoi* refers to linear, chronological duration, the length of time

“dates” *kairoi* refers to the right time, the character of time

Verse 2: The “day of the Lord” is a prophetic way (Amos, Joel) to refer to the end of time.

**What image does Paul use to refer to the “day of the Lord”?** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus used this same image in Matthew 24:43-44 to emphasize our need for preparedness and expectation for His return.

**While this may not be flattering, what meaning does it convey?** \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 3: **What will be the message of the world before Christ returns?** \_\_\_\_\_

Unbelievers will be “whistling in the dark” not knowing what is about to come upon them. In 1938 the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from a meeting with the German leader Adolf Hitler and uttered the infamous phrase to reporters “There will be peace in our time.” A year later Germany invaded Poland to begin World War II. (This is the most famous, but not the only, example of wanting “peace” so much that one has his head in the sand and does not see what is coming.)

**What will be their reality?** \_\_\_\_\_ (separation from God, not annihilation)

**What image does Paul use to describe this destruction?** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus had used this image in Matthew 24:8 to describe how the events leading up to His return point to that coming judgment. Here Paul uses it to emphasize the suddenness of this judgment. But also included in this image is the idea of no turning back. When labor pains hit it is too late to reconsider being pregnant. When Christ returns, it is too late to come to Him in faith. (We cannot turn in our NCAA bracket after the championship game is over and expect to win the contest. We cannot buy homeowner’s insurance when our house is on fire. We cannot buy auto insurance after the teenager has driven the car into the ditch.)

Verses 4-5: Paul now adds the image of light and darkness, day and night to his discussion. In the ancient world especially the night was the time when bad things happened and darkness was scary for people. They did not have the artificial lights that we have to drive away the darkness.

**What is the light that we have?** \_\_\_\_\_

To be “sons of” is a way of saying “belonging to” or “characterized by.” It expresses a close personal relationship with an object.

Verses 6-7: Paul adds the image of sleep to his discussion. Unbelievers are in a spiritual sleep.

**Are you aware of what is going on around you when you are sleeping?** \_\_\_\_\_

Paul then adds the image of drunkenness. Unbelievers are spiritually drunk.

**Are intoxicated people aware of what is going on around them?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are the things that are putting the world into a spiritual slumber and stupor?**