

Session 4 The Forerunner Message in 1 Thes. 4-5 and 2 Thes. 1-2

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The IHOPKC leadership team does not ask anyone to accept our views blindly. Rather, we urge all to refuse ideas that they cannot clearly see in Scripture themselves—***be a Berean*** (Acts 17:11). Our understanding of the end times is not complete—we seek to learn from other ministries.
- B. The IHOPKC team holds convictions which differ from the popular view that the Church may be raptured at any time and, thus, miss the revival and crisis in the Tribulation (Rev. 7:9). We honor the genuineness and godliness of many who hold this view but see it as a mistake that will leave multitudes spiritually unprepared when negative events escalate in the end times.
- C. In 1 Thessalonians 4-5, Paul gave important details on Jesus' return, the rapture, and the day of the Lord. Paul continued teaching on the end times in 2 Thessalonians 1-2, giving details on God's end-time judgments, the day of the Lord, and the Antichrist's deception and ultimate destruction.
- D. **Outline of 1 Thessalonians 4-5**
4:13-18 The return of Jesus and the rapture of the Church
5:1-11 Watching for the day of the Lord
- E. **Outline of 2 Thessalonians 1-2**
1:4-10 The Lord's righteous end-time judgments
2:1-5 The Antichrist arises before the day of the Lord
2:6-12 The Antichrist's deception and ultimate destruction
- F. Paul taught them the basics of the end times during his first visit that lasted three weeks (Acts 17:2).
²Then Paul...went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures... (Acts 17:2)
- G. Most agree that, in 1 Thessalonians 4-5, Paul was replying to their question about their loved ones who died in Christ—they feared their loved ones would not be raised from the dead until after the rapture and at the end of the Millennium. Paul assured them that the dead in Christ will rise first and thus will fully participate in the events related to Jesus' returning to rule to earth in great glory.
- H. The believers in Thessalonica were familiar with Jesus' second coming and with believers alive at that time being raptured or "caught up" in the clouds when the trumpet sounds (Mt. 24:29-31), but they were not sure where the resurrection of dead believers fit in.
- I. Paul's answer in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 connected the timing of the resurrection of dead believers to the rapture (catching up) of the living believers at the time that Jesus returns. Paul exhorted the saints to comfort one another with these truths (1 Thes. 4:18).
- J. The *second coming* is about *what Jesus does*, and the *rapture* is about *what happens to the Church*.

II. THE RETURN OF JESUS AND THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH (1 THES. 4:13-18)

- A. The saints were assured that the dead in Christ will rise and fully participate in the second coming. Paul relied on Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24) as a backdrop for His teaching about the rapture. Note the similarities—Jesus' coming attended by angels and a trumpet blast to gather the saints.

¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope...¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive...shall be caught up [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thes. 4:13-17)

1. Paul highlighted things taught by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24): His coming from heaven on clouds (24:30), with angels (24:31), and a trumpet blast (24:31) to rapture His people (24:31). Every eye will see Jesus when the Church is gathered in the sky (24:30).

²⁹“Immediately after the tribulation...the sun will be darkened...³⁰Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven...³¹He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together [rapture] His elect from...one end of heaven to the other.” (Mt. 24:29-31)

⁷Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)

2. About three years later, in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, Paul again highlighted the same truths about Jesus' second coming and the rapture of the Church. Paul specified it is at “the last trumpet” that the dead are raised, the “last” trumpet indicating a series of numbered trumpets.

⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye [raptured], at the last trumpet [Rev. 11:15]. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised...we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15:52)

3. ***Last trumpet:*** When an angel blows the seventh and last trumpet (Rev. 11:15), then the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of God and the dead will be judged.

¹⁵The seventh angel sounded...“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord [coming of Jesus]...¹⁸The time of the dead...[to] be judged... (Rev. 11:15-18)

- B. ***I do not want you ignorant:*** Paul did not want believers uninformed about the end times.
- C. ***The Lord will descend:*** We can assume that all nations who see Jesus with their eyes will also hear these awesome sounds—the Lord's command, the archangel's voice, and the trumpet of God.
- D. ***With a shout:*** The shout or “command” (ESV, NIV) related to the day of the Lord is usually a directive given by the Father against His enemies in context to bringing salvation to His people. Jesus will “command” the dead in their graves to arise (Jn. 5:28-29).
- E. ***With the voice of an archangel:*** An archangel speaks of a powerful angel of high rank who is in charge of other angels—this may be to mobilize the angelic army to go forth with Jesus.

- F. Paul tells how the saints will participate in Jesus' return (4:17). The dead in Christ will be raised and those alive will receive their resurrection bodies in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52).
¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [raptured] together with them [the dead in Christ] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.
¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:17-18)
- G. **Caught up:** The phrase, "caught up," is *harpazo* in the Greek or *rapturo* in the Latin Vulgate and is where we get the English word, *rapture*. The saints being "caught up" is modified by three phrases: "together with them" (resurrected saints who died), "in the clouds," and "meet the Lord in the air."
- H. **In the clouds:** These clouds are heavenly or supernatural—they are one mode of transportation. Jesus ascended to heaven on a cloud (Acts 1:10) as will the two witnesses (Rev 11:12).

III. WATCHING FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD (1 THES. 5:1-11)

- A. 1 Thessalonians 5 continues with the theme of Jesus' coming after Paul had just made clear what will happen to believers when Jesus returns (4:13-18). Now he writes about the lifestyle of the believer. They are to be watchful and alert or prepared for the coming of the Lord (5:6-8). Paul used two analogies in 5:2-3: the day of the Lord will come like a thief and like a woman's labor pains.
- B. Paul prophesied a "counterfeit peace and safety" that will end suddenly when the destruction associated with the Great Tribulation begins (5:3). This counterfeit time of peace will continue for the *first 3½ years* of the final 7 years of this age.
¹But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.
²For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.
³For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction [Great Tribulation] comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:1-3)
1. **Times and seasons:** The early church knew what events and trends signified the end times (Mt. 24:4-28), yet without knowing the precise time. They knew the **times** (*chronos*), referring to the sequence of the major events signaling the end times, and **seasons** (*chairos*), referring to the duration of these events. These two words we often use as a familiar technical term were often put together as a stock phrase that some see as virtually meaning the same thing.
 2. **You know perfectly:** They knew about the day of the Lord and how it will come suddenly as a thief to begin the great tribulation or the time of sudden, swift destruction.
 3. **The day of the Lord:** There are two expressions of the day of the Lord in Scripture—it is both a *narrow day* (24 hours) and a *broad day* (the Tribulation through the Millennium). Both "days" come like a thief to those who are not prepared spiritually by watching with prayer.
 - a. The *broad day* includes His judgments against His enemy in the Tribulation and His blessings for His people extending from the revival in the Tribulation to the end of the Millennium. The narrow day speaks of Jesus' second coming (a 24-hour day).
 - b. It is "His Day" because He displays His great power for all to see in an unusual way. This day indicates a unique time frame when God acts with unusual manifestations of power seen on the earth in delivering His people and judging His enemies.

4. **Thief in the night:** The Day of the Lord comes “as” a thief in two ways—it comes *suddenly* (5:3) resulting in people *suffering loss*—spiritually and physically (Mt. 24:43; Lk. 12:39; 1 Thes. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). It comes like a thief to those who are unaware.
 5. **Peace and safety:** “They” (the unredeemed) will say, “peace and safety” in light of the peace treaty that the Antichrist will confirm between Israel and Islamic nations at the start of the final 7 years of this age (Dan. 9:27). The Antichrist will initially be seen as a man of peace.
²⁷Then he [Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant [peace treaty] with many [Israel and Islamic nations] for one week [7-years]; but in the middle of the week [after 3½ years] he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering [breaking his covenant with Israel]. (Dan. 9:27)
 6. **Sudden destruction:** This will start when the abomination of desolation starts (Mt. 24:15).
 7. **Labor pains:** Destruction will also come as birth pains that intensify and occur more rapidly.
 8. **They shall not escape:** Those who are unaware will not escape, as declared in Luke 21:35-36.
- C. Paul exhorted believers to engage in a lifestyle of watchfulness. The Church is not in the dark like unbelievers are; therefore, we should live radically differently. Watchfulness is key to preparedness. Paul used “sleep” in different ways—spiritual sleep (5:6), natural sleep (5:7), sleep of death, (5:10). When teaching on the end times, Paul sought to inspire confidence and godly lifestyles.
- ⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (1 Thes. 5:4-8)*
1. **This Day will not overtake you:** Paul exhorted believers not to be overtaken by the pressures leading up to and occurring in the Great Tribulation—they will *still be on earth* at that time.
 2. **Believers are sons of light:** Healthy believers are “not in spiritual darkness” (5:4), being “sons of light and sons of the day” (5:5), and they “are not of the night or the darkness” (5:5) because they watch and are sober or self-controlled (5:6). Unbelievers are “in darkness” (5:4), “of the night” (5:5), “spiritually asleep” (5:6), and “are of those who get drunk” (5:7)—spiritually they cannot see clearly and are totally unprepared for the coming pressures.
 3. **Let us not sleep, but watch and be sober** (5:6): Paul exhorted believers to watch or be alert to what is happening in the culture and to be sober (self-controlled) and not asleep (unaware and unresponsive) to things that the Lord has revealed in the Scripture about the end times.
 4. **Breastplate and helmet:** Believers are to be alert, watch, and be sober by spiritually putting on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of salvation by responding to Jesus when mistreated, disappointed or when facing obstacles and pressure with love and faith.
- D. The Lord has not appointed His children to wrath but to the fullness of salvation (5:9-10; 1:10). The ultimate is to be with Jesus (5:10). We are to comfort each other with these truths (5:11; 4:18).
- ⁹For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation...¹⁰that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹Therefore comfort each other [with these truths]... (1 Thes. 5:9-11)*

IV. THE LORD'S RIGHTEOUS END-TIME JUDGMENTS (2 THES. 1:4-10)

- A. Paul gives insight into God's righteous end-time judgments in 1:4-10. Paul boasted about their perseverance in that they refused to quit or draw back in the face of persecution (1:4-7).
4...we boast of you...for your patience...in all your persecutions...that you endure, ⁵which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom [millennial kingdom]...⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels ... (2 Thes. 1:4-7)
- B. **Evidence of God's righteous judgment:** The believers in Thessalonica were not sure how the Lord viewed them since He allowed them to be persecuted. In the ancient pagan world, pressure and persecution was a sign of not being under the favor of the gods. The evidence that God judges or evaluates rightly will be seen by all when He punishes ungodly persecutors and rewards the saints.
1. Being faithful under pressure gives evidence that God's judgment is right in calling you to His kingdom. While no one "earns" the right to enter the kingdom because of their perseverance, perseverance gives evidence that one is genuine in receiving and returning God's love.
²⁷Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel...that you stand fast...²⁸and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation... (Phil. 1:27-28)
 2. The persecutions endured by the faithful is evidence that God is right to condemn evil men who prove their ungodliness by persecuting His people (1:6). This demonstrates that God is right to judge the faithful as worthy and the ungodly persecutors as condemned.
- C. **A righteous thing:** Paul boldly declared that it is a righteous thing for God to repay the persecutors of His people and to give the saints who are troubled (persecuted) rest or relief when Jesus returns to the earth in flaming fire at the end of the Tribulation to administrate a glorious reversal.
- D. Jesus will come with angels in flaming fire to punish those who refuse His leadership (1:7-10). They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord when He returns.
⁷...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not...obey the gospel...⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe... (2 Thes. 1:7-10)
- E. **Everlasting destruction:** The ungodly will suffer eternal separation from Jesus and His glory. Those who reject Jesus will be rejected by Him because He will not force anyone to receive or return His love. The Greek word, *olethros*, means destruction, not annihilation which is not "everlasting."
- F. **That Day:** Jesus will come on "that Day" or the narrow day of the Lord (a 24-hour day).
- G. **Glorified and admired:** Jesus will be glorified in His saints and admired by them (1:10).

V. THE ANTICHRIST ARISES BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD (2 THES. 2:1-5)

- A. Some were confused, thinking that the day of the Lord had come or was at hand because of the fierce persecution that they were facing. They understood that the coming of Jesus and the rapture of the Church were aspects of the day of the Lord—the narrow day of the Lord (24-hour day).

¹...concerning the coming of our Lord [second coming] ...and our gathering together [rapture] to Him, we ask you, ²not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit [prophetic word] or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. (2 Thes. 2:1-2)

- B. Paul emphasized that “the Day” (day of the Lord) of Jesus’ second coming and the rapture of the Church would not happen until three unprecedented global events occur so every believer could know with certainty what was happening. Paul clarified three significant global events had to take place before Jesus returned: the *falling away* (apostasy; 2:3), the man of sin or *Antichrist revealed* on the global stage (2:3-4, 8), and the *removal of the restrainer* of the Antichrist and lawlessness (2:6-7).

³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [the Antichrist] is revealed [on the global stage], the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thes. 2:3-5)

1. ***Let no one deceive you:*** Paul warned them not to be deceived since believers will see the Antichrist instead of being raptured before the Antichrist goes into the temple.
2. ***Antichrist is revealed:*** The Antichrist is referred to as “the” man of sin and son of perdition.
3. ***He sits as God in the temple:*** He will sit in the temple proclaiming himself to be God. He will exalt himself above everything that is associated with the God of Israel (2:4).
4. ***I told you these things:*** Paul taught them these truths during the three weeks that he was with them (Acts 17:2). Thus, we are to conclude that Paul understood these as significant to know.

VI. THE ANTICHRIST’S DECEPTION AND ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION (2 THES. 2:6-12)

- A. Paul taught them *what* and *who* restrained the Antichrist until God’s timing. The restrainer is referred to both as “what” (neuter) and “he who restrains” (masculine). I see the “what” as human government and “he” as God’s will—His decreed timing to lift restraints off the Antichrist.

⁶And now you know what is restraining, that he [the Antichrist] may be revealed in his own time. ⁷...only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one [the Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth... ¹¹For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who...had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes. 2:6-12)

- B. The Antichrist will be empowered by Satan to deceive many by doing great miracles (Rev. 13:2-4). Those who refuse to accept the truth will find themselves delivered over to “the lie” that he is god.