

I come like a thief

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[0:00] I wrote it up and it said he gathered, that's what I could find, and NIV says they gathered. I'm not really quite sure why that is. I suppose the they is meant to refer back to the frogs, but as far as I could see in the Greek, it says what you said, he gathered.

So maybe it's the frogs on the one side of the coin, and maybe it is the Lord gathering people on the other side of the coin.

So I don't know. I think it's just the amplifying. Yep. He says, and they, what the demons, gathered the kings and armies of the Lord together at the place which is in Hedon called Magadon.

Yep. Okay. So that translation is taking the idea that the gathering is done by the demons, so that's plural, and it would be they.

However, I go back to when I looked it up in Greek, it says he, just like, have you got an AV? Is that, yeah. Anyway. Anyway. A little memory test.

[1:08] There was a word that was repeated, a significant word that was repeated with a number of different translations. Anybody remember what the word was that goes through this chapter?

Bowls. Seven? Bowls. Bowls. Bowls, yeah. Certainly, the bowls, yeah. I was thinking it was great. Do you remember? Great. I'll just take you through it. Verse 16, verse 1. I heard a great voice. A mega voice. And then in verse 9, they were seared by the mega heat, the great heat.

And in verse 11, oh, no, no, no, no, somewhere in there. No, maybe not. Verse 12, the great river Euphrates.

And verse 14, to gather them for battle on the great day of the Lord Almighty. In verse 17, out of the temple came a great voice, a mega voice.

[2:13] And in verse 18, no earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth. So mega, so great was the quake. Verse 19, the great city split into three parts.

God remembered Babylon the great. And then finally, in verse 21, they cursed God on account of the plague of hail because the plague was so great.

It's just one of the things about the biblical text. People emphasize things by repeating. You don't always notice the repetition, but it sort of creates an atmosphere. It's a great chapter with a lot of big, great things going on in it.

Let's sing something, shall we? Can we sing 506? I'm thinking of the... So just by way of catch-up, I found these two chapters, 15 and 16, very challenging to think about and very challenging to present.

Not because they're difficult in themselves, but because I think what they imply, what they, the solemn and weighty things they tell us about, and I introduced it last time by asking about our view of life and our view of Christianity, if we miss out chapters like 15 and 16, which are chapters about God's wrath at the end of the world, or coming to a climax at the end of the world, if we miss that out, well, if we have a sort of Christianity which omits that, and it's only for this life, we end up with a sort of Christianity which focuses then on social action and being kind and affirming people, and we would get towards a sort of universalism where we end up saying that everyone will go to heaven with the possible exceptions of really bad people like Jimmy Savile and Hitler.

[4:17] And death, well, how do we cope with death? How do we think about it? And people would say, well, it's just something that will be okay when it comes, and I shall probably be okay, I expect, because I'm not as bad as other people.

And to look at it that way raises the issue of, well, is God really so indifferent about sin, that the only people's sins that he really notices are Hitler and Jimmy Savile.

I mean, what about our sins? And what is a Christian then? Is a Christian just pretty much the same as other people, but sort of a somewhat nicer version?

Isn't being a Christian a radical thing compared with the world? Doesn't Jesus say, you who are evil? Didn't he say that to people? And don't we need to be born again?

Didn't Jesus say, do you not realize you must be born again? That's what being a Christian is about. And is the Christian message, be nice to people and God will pat you on the head?

[5:26] Or is the picture a different one, which says there's actually a massive spiritual battle going on, in which we are either on one side or the other, and there is no neutral ground?

That seems to be much more the picture that the Bible presents, and particularly the book of Revelation. So just to orientate, is that a word? Orient ourselves, get ourselves looking at it the right way.

The book of Revelation is a book in the Bible. It is for our edification. It is for our survival. It is for our progress as a Christian. It depicts the Christian life as a fight.

The word apocalypse means to unveiling, to take away the veil, so that we see the truth behind the obvious appearance, but we see the real truth behind that.

It is in the form of a letter, and a letter in its nature is relevant to the people who receive it. And we find that the book of Revelation has relevance to the people in the first century in those seven churches.

[6:31] Relevant to their hearers in the Roman Empire, and the letter refers to things in the Roman Empire. It's applicable to that. It is in the form of a prophecy.

It says it's a prophecy. It tells them what is soon happening or quickly happening. Excuse me. But the horizon of the book stretches to the end of the world, between the ascension of Christ and his return.

And it gives behavioral implications. If you live in a world where Christ came, died, rose again, went to heaven, and a world to which he will come, then how should you live?

How then should we live? And I thought I had another bit at the bottom of that. In reading the book, we are gradually getting to know his accent, the way that he speaks.

We learn, and this is important, that further on in the book does not necessarily mean further on in time. He can present a...

[7:39] What's the word when you have all those different things that you put up on the wall? Collage. A collage picture to represent the reality he's speaking about.

He can press the rewind button and take us to the end of the world, and then in the next chapter go back to the beginning. He's very carefully constructed literature. He uses symbols, symbolic numbers like the number seven.

He uses symbols. Some refer to the context at the time of writing. So I am told that in the way that we are worried about President Putin and Russia and Ukraine, they would have been worried about the Persians, who are just over the banks of the river Euphrates, lurking there with their cavalry, and who knows when they're going to invade, which I suppose would be the equivalent of firing their atomic missiles over the border.

And there's reference to the threat at the river Euphrates in the chapter that we read. He uses symbols and themes from the Old Testament. And last time, looking at these plagues, we found that the plagues drew their imagery and their theology from where?

From Exodus, from the plagues on Egypt. And in the plagues on Egypt, do you remember what happened to Pharaoh? What did he do? He hardened his heart.

[9:15] And these plagues are meant to say something. And there is a reference to not hardening the heart. It's in verse 9.

They were seared by the intense heat. They cursed the name of God who had control over these plagues. But as it's depicted here, they refused to repent and glorify him, which is what Pharaoh did, didn't he?

Let my people go, but Pharaoh would not let the people go. And extra thing, which I put in preparation for the bit that I didn't get to, he uses symbolic places. Can anybody think of a symbolic place that we might already have come across? Jerusalem, yeah, is a place.

Yeah, a new Jerusalem. Jerusalem, yeah. And it's... So the spatial, historic Jerusalem is used symbolically to mean the city of God in its final form.

[10:21] So it sort of points with a fulfilment of that. Any other places in the east that actually we read about in the... This chapter?

Babylon. Babylon, yeah. Again, Babylon. There's a historical Babylon, but there's a sort of Babylon principle that goes all the way through history.

Ancient Babylon didn't exist, I guess, at the time of writing here, but he can refer to Babylon because he's taking that Babylon principle, which we will have to look at another time because there's a whole chapter on it in chapter 17.

And I was going to pick up on the place in verse 16. Ar or har in Hebrew is mountain or hill.

And the hill of... Anybody know what it would be? Yeah. Megiddo. Yeah, Megiddo, Megiddo. It's a city and there's a plain around it and it's the site of some battles.

[11:35] That was what I was planning to research for this evening, but I didn't get as far as that. But just told that thought in the same way that we have symbolic cities, Jerusalem, Babylon, we can have symbolic battlegrounds.

Battlegrounds. And let's be consistent. Don't say, oh, but that one's literal. Because all the way through we've been understanding that his accent is to use symbolism and theology to paint his picture.

And that is true about this battleground. But that's something that we haven't got on to. These chapters about wrath are in a context.

The book of Revelation begins with a vision of the risen Jesus. Chapters 4 and 5, it shows us the lamb upon the throne. So it is Christ-centered.

It applies truths to the contemporary situation of the churches where Jesus walks among the seven golden lampstands.

[12:53] It ends with the triumph of the heavenly city coming down to earth. So it's not all about God's wrath, but it does include God's wrath.

So thinking again of these chapters, they're not the only chapters in Revelation, but we don't want to do justice to them. But we don't want to so overbalance things that we think all the book is about is God's wrath.

It's not the whole picture, but definitely part of the picture. And without the wrath of God, as we were thinking over the past two evenings, Christianity becomes unrecognizable.

God becomes unrecognizable. What Jesus did on the cross becomes unrecognizable. The issues of salvation become unrecognizable.

So even though they're uncomfortable chapters, they're absolutely necessary. I don't know whether I can. I think without the chapters on God's wrath, God becomes unrecognizable because he is not a just God.

[13:58] This is all about his justice. What Christ did on the cross becomes unrecognizable because we believe he suffered wrath for us. And if there is no God of wrath and he didn't do that, well, what did he do?

And the issues of heaven and hell become unrecognizable. Why should I become a Christian? I'm not particularly religious. I can have much more fun if I'm not a Christian. Well, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come is what John the Baptist said.

And in a sense, that's the church's mission to say there is a day of wrath, which we're telling you about. It's what Paul said in Acts 17, isn't it? He has designated a man through whom he will judge the world.

And he has given proof of this by raising him from the dead. So the day of judgment is crucial. Is that okay with everybody? That's really just a rewind.

That's the picture that we had in chapter 15 of the singing, strumming army singing the victory song. Worthy as the lamb with harps and with vials there stand a great throng when the saints go

marching in, etc.

[15:10] And then we looked at the seven bowls of wrath. And I'll just do this as quickly as I can. It had four hits on the ecosystem. Previous sevens had proportionality, a quarter, a third, but this is just total.

Repentance didn't happen. And we have the final undiluted wrath of God depicted. And the city breaks into how many pieces?

Three parts. And in the middle of that, there are two short interludes. I call them an interlude.

There's the interlude, if you could call it that in verse 5, of what the angel in charge of the waters says.

And we've got the interlude in verse 15. It sort of breaks into the flow of the words. Behold, I come like a thief. And so I put, so the angel on the altar, which says the final end is completely just.

And then this second interlude of the thief in the night. And that's what I'd like us to look at. So, there's a picture of a thief breaking in, in the night, when the householder is asleep.

[16:26] Let's look at this. That's what we're going to do this evening. Just, we'll look at this idea and this particular verse. So, it says, behold.

Behold, is it right, David? Does it say behold in yours? Behold, yeah.

So, it's a sort of lookout thing. Behold. I come like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed or they will see the shame of the person.

Depends how you translate it. So, that just comes in as a little, not quite of a blip, but an interruption, doesn't it? Now, what a pity that I didn't manage to do this to come up on click.

So, I've got all the answers there as well as the questions. How does, I will ask the questions nevertheless and you can read the answers from the screen. What is the thing about the thief?

[17:35] Why should we be, what is it about the thief that we should beware of? He's unexpected.

Yes, this is the idea, isn't it? The thief in the night. It doesn't say in the night, but it refers to the night. Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed. That is, we'll look up some other verses on that.

And the person who stays awake, you will be interested, or you might not be interested, but in Greek it's Gregorio. How do you pronounce that?

Gregorio or something like that. And it means to stay awake. That's what the shepherds did when they were keeping their watch over their flocks by night. They were Gregorioing.

And it means to stay awake. And that's why it's a Christian name, Gregory. So, Pope Gregory, presumably, was the Pope who stayed awake.

[18:34] That's the idea of the name, to Gregory. And here it says something about being clothed. Blessed is the one who stays awake.

And it says being clothed. And the opposite of being clothed is to be naked. And the word for naked in Greek is gymnos.

From which we get gymnastics. Yeah? Gym. Gym, yes. Because the Greek athletes used to compete naked.

So, I'm told. Sounds a bit inconvenient to me. But that's where we get the idea of gymnastics. Because we're taking gymnos, which originally meant naked.

And the text makes the opposite of being naked. Oh, sorry. So, as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.

[19:37] So, it's the exposure of shame. And we talked about this the other day. Which is a subject worth exploring. That Christ doesn't just bear away our guilt.

But our shame. So, this doesn't refer to guilt. It refers to shame. The idea that I couldn't lift up my head. I would be so embarrassed and ashamed.

And he says that blessed is the one who stays awake for they won't find shame. So, that's what we're going to check out. And let's read some parallel passages.

So, Matthew 24. Right, where's the microphone at the moment?

Could we have a volunteer to read from verse 36 to 51?

[20:45] So, that long section. So, just saying, this is Jesus himself teaching about the final end.

And he does teach about a final end. I was reading a book this afternoon, just checking this out. N.T. Wright saying, he seemed to be saying, oh, Jesus doesn't really expect that. I can't get that at all.

I think this is very specific that Jesus is talking about his return. Incidentally, the expression second coming, I don't think that's in the Bible at all.

I mean, we talk about his second coming. But I don't think that expression is in the Bible at all. He will appear a second time, not to take away sin, but something else.

Is it for judgment? Is that what it says? But the expression second coming is, as far as I can see, and I'm open to correction, but it's not in the Bible. But his coming is.

[21:46] So, let's have Matthew 24, verse 36 to 51, first of all, please. But about the day and for hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

As it was in the day of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.

And they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Two men will be in a field, one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with their handmills, one will be taken and the other left.

Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house to be broken into.

[22:58] So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. More? Yeah, please, please. Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom the Master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?

It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly, I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, My master is staying away a long time, and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards.

The master of that servant will come on the day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he will not be aware of. He will cut him into pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Thank you very much indeed. Thank you. So there is a day and an hour which at the time of Jesus speaking the Son did not know.

[24:16] About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. So that's something that the Father had not chosen at that time to impart to the Son.

B.B. Warfield has got an article about this in which he is contradicting people who say that this shows that Jesus must be less than divine.

And he says, please notice what it says. It says that Jesus is greater than anyone, greater even than the angels. He's the Son.

So it exalts Jesus, but it just says that the Father has chosen not to impart this at that particular moment to the Son. What is this day or hour likened to compared with?

The days of Noah. The days of Noah. The days of Noah, yeah. And in particular, what happened in the days of Noah? The flood. The flood, yes, that's right. And in the flood, how many people escaped?

[25:29] Or which people escaped? Was it eight? Eight. Eight, yeah. And where were they? In the ark. In the ark. And what happened to the others? The days.

They perished. They perished, yeah. And what's the word used for, in verse 39, for the perishing? Taken away.

Taken away, yes. So the ones who were taken away were the ones who perished, yes? And in verse, in the next verses, in verse 40 and 41, is anyone taken?

One of the two. One of the two, yes. Two men will be in the field. One will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding the hand mill. The other will be taken, the other left. So, if it follows the pattern of Noah, they're the ones that perished.

If it follows the pattern of Noah, eight people survived. The others were taken away. In the picture here, one and one, one is left, the other taken.

[26:36] The taken ones perish. I'll just point this out because there's another way of looking at it. But if you follow the logic, the taken ones are the ones who perish.

Yeah? Now then, let's, I've got some questions here. So what's the logic behind verse 42? Keep watch. So why to keep watch?

What does it tell us? Pardon? Keep watch for the Lord. Keep watch for the Lord, yeah. The therefore indicates a piece of reasoning, a piece of logic.

What's the logic? Yeah? But why do you have to be ready? Exactly. You don't know when he's coming. And I think it's a very important piece of logic.

You keep watch because you do not know. Jesus says that that's withheld from him at that time. But it's certainly withheld from us. We do not know.

[27:39] And I point this out because there is a strand of Christian thinking which says, if you delve enough into prophecies, particularly obscure ones, and if you follow things on YouTube, you will find out when Jesus is coming.

And Jesus specifically says, no, you won't. The whole point of it is you don't know and you can't know. So that's why you have to be ready. Yeah?

Is that what the logic says? Keep watch because you do not know. And then he says, well, if the owner of the house had known what time of night the thief was coming, he would have set his alarm clock for 15 minutes before, got up, got his baseball bat or whatever it is, and have been ready for the thief.

And he could have had a good night's sleep apart from waking up at 3 o'clock in the morning when the thief was coming. He would have kept watch and not let his house be broken into, verse 44, so you almost also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

It's a very important piece of logic. We do not know. We cannot know. That's why we have to be ready all the time. Yeah? So let's just see what I put up here.

[29:02] You do not know. Now then, I'd like to know, I would like the blessing described in the book of Revelation. I would like the blessing of being ready because it says that's a blessed position to be in.

Lots of other things. Might have got a bad back and I might have, all sorts of things, you know, you fill in the blanks for yourself. But we would like to be ready, wouldn't we?

Now, how are we to be ready? That's what I'd like us to think about. So in verses 42 to 44, being ready is staying awake.

Yeah? Now then. Well, yes, is it literally? I hope it's not literally because I need my sleep. And I'm pretty sure you all do.

And before we go to bed, Maria and I usually pray for particular people who are having a problem with sleep, that they'll get a good night's sleep as we pray for ourselves. And I particularly think of those with little babies because it's just, being sleep deprived is awful, isn't it?

[30:11] It just turns you into a zombie. Right. So let's, so we've got so far to stay awake, Gregorio, to stay awake.

Now then let's look at 25, 1 to 13, because this seems to say the opposite. So could somebody volunteer us to read 25, 1 to 13? At that time, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.

The bridegroom was a long time in coming and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, the cry came out, Here's the bridegroom, come out to meet him.

Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out. No, they replied.

[31:31] They may not be enough for both of us. And you, instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.

But while they were awake to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet.

And the door was shut. Later, the others came. Lord, Lord, they said, open the door for us. But he replied, truly, I tell you, I don't know you.

Therefore, keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour. Thank you very much. I think it's worth pondering this. Jesus does say that same thing.

Keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour. But this time, they all go to sleep. So let's just take it apart and notice this.

[32:29] So this is a wedding. And I'm told that in Middle Eastern weddings, as we call it Middle Eastern, instead of the bride turning up late, the bridegroom would turn up late.

So just to fill you in, there's a bit of a tradition in English weddings that the bride always turns up late. That's not advice.

That's simply the way it often is. But in these weddings, they had to wait for the bridegroom. Goodness knows what he was doing.

But he was very, very late. And there are ten girls who are, I don't know, part of the bridal party or something like that. Five were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. They didn't take spare batteries for their phone. Or they did whatever. The wise ones had backup batteries for their phone.

[33:35] Or they had extra batteries for their flashlights. They took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time coming.

And they all became drowsy and fell asleep. So that seems to contradict what Jesus said before, doesn't he?

What do you think is the virtue that the wise ones had, that the foolish ones didn't, given that they all went to sleep?

They brought extra oil. Prepared? Prepared? In what sense? They brought extra oil. What were they prepared for?

Long wait. Yeah, they were prepared for a long wait. I think that's the key to it. They were prepared for a long wait. And that's why it fits in.

[34:33] So we should be prepared for a long wait. When you first become a Christian, you might be very enthusiastic and think, well, the Lord's coming any time soon. If you watch things on YouTube and you follow politics, you could easily say, these are the last days.

Meaning to say, the Lord will come in the next couple of years or something like that. Or maybe even before the end of the year. I mean, he may, because we don't know. But the point is, we don't know. And the wise ones were prepared for a long wait.

The Lord may not come in our lifetime. He may. He may not. We should be ready whenever. And if that means hanging on right through to our deathbeds, then so be it.

Yes? That's what we should be doing. The wise girls were prepared for a long wait and were ready when the time came. Now, what... Let's go back to verses 45 to 51.

And answering the question, what does it mean to be ready? In Thessalonians, we'll look at Thessalonians in a moment, but I think in Thessalonians they thought, if the Lord is coming soon, it's hardly worth finishing my university course.

[35:55] It's hardly worth painting the front of the house. It's hardly worth investing in a pension because the Lord is coming soon. It's hardly worth turning up to work.

I mean, let's just wait on the top of a mountain. And the Apostle Paul says, that's not the way to be waiting for the coming of the Lord. But what is the way?

So just looking again at verse 45, would anybody like to suggest what being, as Jesus gives this as an example or an illustration, what is being ready in the terms of verse 45 to 51?

Doing what he's supposed to be doing, I think, is a good answer.

Who is the wise and faithful servant whom the master has put in charge of the servants of his household to give him their food at the proper time? It would be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

[37:11] I think that's the point, isn't it? That we've been given a job to do in one way or another. There's all sorts of things and we're all given slightly different jobs, aren't we?

Some of us are parents. Some of us are grandparents. Some of us are employees. Some of us, well, we're all something family members. It seems plain enough that it is the person who is getting on with what they were supposed to be doing who is the one who is ready for the master to return. Would you like to contrast that with the other? What is the opposite of getting on with what you're supposed to be doing from the chapter? What happens there?

Yep. Verse for that. Sorry. 48. The wicked servant says to himself, my master is staying away a long time.

And verse 49, then he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. Could you put that into other words? What's going on with that servant? Doing his own thing.

[38:30] He's doing his own thing. Yeah. Anything else? He's being disobedient to what he was set out to do in the first place. Disobedient to the master.

Thinking only of himself. Thinking only of himself. Yes. Yeah. Thinking only of himself. Sorry. He comes in with drunkards.

Yeah. He joins in with drunkards. I think the idea of what drunkenness represents here. Because it isn't just excessive alcohol, is it? It's the way of life behind that.

Anybody want to think about that? The lack of self-control. Thank you. I think a lack of self-control. Yes. It's saying, well, it doesn't matter what I do.

Because it doesn't matter. There's no consequence to it. But, yeah. So, a lack of self-control. What did I put here? Being ready is not forgetting what they were supposed to be doing.

[39:29] Not forgetting that we'll have to give an account. And not giving in to despair and letting go of spiritual reality. So, my take on drunkenness. It's a sort of despair, isn't it?

It's a saying. Saying, well, I can't cope with the real world. I will enter another world in which reality is distorted and manageable.

Although, there's a sort of desperation to doing that, isn't there? That's one of the temptations of Christians to despair. To think, this is so difficult.

I won't bother anymore. This is taking so long. I'll just give up on this. Why hasn't God answered my prayers? And then to start thinking hard things about the Lord.

I think there's a sort of spiritual drunkenness, if you like. In that despair. And giving up. And he says, that's not being ready.

[40:32] To be ready, we're to be getting on. Faithfully. Do you notice that verse 45? Faithful and wise. Jehovah's Witnesses think that's a description of the Jehovah's Witness church.

That that's the faithful and wise steward. And all the other churches aren't. That's what they believe. But we want to be that faithful and wise steward, don't we?

We want to be carrying on doing what we're doing. And not giving up. And not giving in. To unreality. To an alternative reality.

Etc. Okay. Let's look at one other text. One Thessalonians 4. 1 Thessalonians 4.

Thank you. Thank you. So, 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13 through to 15. Old thing.

[41:42] Anybody like to volunteer to read that for us? over here brothers and sisters we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope for we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him according to the Lord's word we tell you that we who are still alive who are left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God

and the dead in christ will rise first after that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the lord in the air and so we will be with the lord forever therefore encourage one another with these words yeah could you go to verse 11 please now brothers and sisters our times and dates we do not need to write to you for you know very well that the law the day of the lord will come like a thief in the night while people are saying peace and safety destruction will come on them suddenly as labor pains on a pregnant woman and they will not escape but you brothers and sisters are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief you are all children of the light and children of the day we do not belong to the night or to the darkness so then let us not be like others who are asleep but let us be awake and sober for those who sleep sleep at night and those who get drunk get drunk at night but since we belong to the day let us be sober putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet for god did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our lord jesus christ he died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing amen thank you very much so i hope that's what we're doing this evening encourage one another encouraging one another and building each other up because that's what we're supposed to do there's some common themes for what we've seen so far so what theme do we have in five verse one that we've seen so far correct we don't know the times or dates and what theme do we see in verse two that we've seen so far coming as a thief that's right coming like a thief in the night and i'm sorry yes i've got that coming up in a minute i think it's particularly appropriate isn't it you know it's coming but you don't know when it's definitely coming and you're waiting how long oh lord yes yes yes yes i think it's a picture of not being ready i think the thief in the night that is that is a very emphatic way of saying something very important is going to happen and it's going to happen and you're going to have to make a special effort to be ready for it i think that's what it's saying you can't see it no you can't see it true yes i mean if we think of sleeping there's a few references to sleeping and they're different anybody spot any references to sleeping

we shouldn't be asleep so which verse is that chapter five verse six let us not be like others who are asleep yeah okay thank you very much we'll come back to that any other references to sleep verse yeah um chapter four verse 15 it says that according to the lord's word we tell you that we who are still alive who are left until the coming of the lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep and in that case the fallen asleep means what they've died so the context of it is people are saying the lord's coming again he'll take his people but unfortunately brother so and so and so and so have died so they're going to miss out and paul is saying no they're not going to miss out because even those people who have already died are going to be caught up in this whatever it is that happens okay now i'm going to stick out my neck and say what is described here is one event with several different aspects to it it's one whole thing and let's see if we can uh pick out what's happening now unfortunately i didn't notice i didn't write down which word is which there are some verbs of motion so there is uh being caught up verse 17 and as it's not say the lord will come down verse 16 as a verb of motion it's a movement word there is another word in there which gets translated and we just should be aware of the drawback of this translation it's the word parousia and parousia means presence so i've got it on there parousia means presence and it was used for a royal visit so when the king gives us his presence and comes and opens brighton dome or something like that uh the royal visitation if you like uh a presence and that i think that's the word translated coming but it would be used of the emperor when he visits such and such a city ephesus on a royal presence and everybody would make sure their dustbins were hidden everybody would tidy up the street everybody would paint the front of their houses but not the back and everybody

put out flags and and everything like that and they would go out to meet the emperor so the mayor would go out to meet the emperor your worship your excellency please come let us escort you to our humble city and then they would go back together to the city and i think that's a helpful idea for what is described in these verses so could anybody tell us what who goes where in this royal visit in the parousia of the lord who goes where thank you the lord comes down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of god so there's a this is the parousia the descent as it were of the lord okay so it's his coming if you like and what other motions do we have sorry yeah there's another motion first

i think the dead in christ rise first so there's this resurrection and then the yes we are who are still alive so that's the resurrected those who are asleep in the lord and those who happen to be alive at the same time no specific advantage in being alive at the same at the time of the lord's coming but you know no disadvantage to having already died because the dead in christ rise and we who are alive are all caught up together to meet the lord in the air and i think if we fill in from revelation it's a meeting the lord in the air but we're not supposed to stay in the air it's a sort of coming back to earth as the the resurrected earth the new jerusalem comes down from heaven like a bride comes down to a new heaven and a new earth so the the forever with the lord doesn't mean we're going to be perpetually suspended in midair that's the way i understand it does that make sense i mean i might not have entirely proved that from the from the text but it seems to make sense the lord descends those who have already died will arise those who are still alive will be caught up together so that is the the snatching up you will have heard about the rapture that's the word that comes here from snatching up so the coming of the lord the resurrection they're being caught up to meet him that's all one thing it's not spread out over thousands of years it's all one next great event that's how i read this in in one thessalonians here are you happy with that you want to have a go at me on that let's and that's how we meet the lord with the lord forever let's just follow this through a little bit about being ready because this has got a being ready it works out slightly differently but there are similarities so chapter 5 verse 4 what's the logic on that one yes yes yes that's right you shouldn't be you don't know when this day is coming but you shouldn't be surprised that it comes yeah brothers and sisters you're not in darkness that this day should surprise you like a thief so it is the thief thing but you knew he was coming and that's why you were ready now then what goes on people will not expect it it's like labour pains you know it's coming but you don't know exactly when people are saying peace and safety destruction will come on them suddenly as labour pains on a pregnant woman and they will not escape but you brothers and sisters are not in darkness that this day should surprise you like a thief so there's the oh right

I've got too many visuals on that what is his how does he go on from here then with the the day and the thief hmm thank you very much behaviour so it's daytime rather than night so there's other texts which say the day is dawning and the night is far spent the day is coming and just say your bit again Steve thank you behave as though it's daytime and not night time so verse 5 you're all children of the light and children of the day we do not belong to the night or the darkness so let us not be like others who are asleep but let us be awake and sober so there's my little picture so instead of being asleep with our pyjamas on we are fully dressed ready to go to work even though it's night time we're equipped for the day and the day is approaching so we're living like with the values and priorities and norms of the day that is coming rather than the values and priorities of the night time which is ebbing away yes does that make sense we're expecting that's right we're expecting that's another another labour pain idea so

I've put that expectations and what is different for Christians in their expectation and their lifestyle and I've got so there's the night time one and what does he say happens in the night time what characterises night time behaviour yeah getting drunk and yes it is the night time economy yes it is yeah so drunkenness is one thing and there's another thing sleep it's a sort of unawareness a sort of non-recognition an unconsciousness he's not saying that all the people aren't Christians are asleep all the time but he's saying there's a sense in which they live unaware unconscious of realities and we as Christians should be conscious of those things and again you've got the drunkenness idea of losing control losing perspective losing meaning so here we are all dressed and ready for work because we're children of the day but he doesn't quite say that does he so in verse 8 what clothing does he talk about what sort of clothing is that armour yes so I think I've got a picture of drunkenness night time behaviour asleep unconscious drunk losing track of reality saying it doesn't matter letting go of boundaries for behaviour that's the night time behaviour and then the day time behaviour do you like my picture of the soldier with the helmet of helmet of salvation it's

the armour of

[56:45] God it comes from Isaiah actually where God wears this armour and I always think of this when we get ready to do work at Ellie's house because we put on our messy clothes so my messy clothes have got paint over them and bits of plaster and holes in the knee where I've been kneeling down and doing tiling and stuff like that but when I put those clothes on it's working time and the clothing says something about my activity if I'm going to do messy work I put on messy clothes usually but unfortunately not always exactly but yeah that's really helpful yes a drunken person is helpless and vulnerable but this soldier is protected so just going back to the armour it's originally worn by God he puts on the helmet of salvation and the blessed plate of righteousness because he's in the work of saving he's getting going as a saviour and in a sort of secondary sense we put on this armour too because we're in the business of salvation too but in our sense perhaps a little bit different we put on faith and love and the hope of salvation as a helmet so this is our daytime apparel we're sober that was the opposite of drunk sober is aware isn't it and serious and self controlled and purposeful and we're clothed for warfare we're on duty as a soldier and his final point is that we're in fellowship with the

Lord verse 10 he died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him which I find is encouraging isn't it so he's saying that if we're getting on we're being ready we're doing what we're supposed to be doing if we're living as according to the daytime behaviour then we're in fellowship with the Lord we may live together with him something we can encourage one another in and build one another up in and I find that helpful as we go into a new week getting on with what we're supposed to be doing doing it in the values and norms and virtues of the real world which is the world to come it's a challenge to us but it's also an encouragement isn't it we haven't got to look at all the videos on

YouTube and understand all the things in Daniel and work out when Christ is coming because we'll never do that we can't do that but what we can do is the next thing in the Lord's service that he's given for us to do which probably for most of us is having our cocoa and going to bed at a reasonable time tonight and getting up ready for tomorrow that sort of thing yes so oh well you can find you can find anything you want on YouTube can't you whatever crazy idea somebody's told you you can find a YouTube video to back it up and it will usually start here's the thing your pastor won't tell you or here's the thing that most churches don't want you to know and then you get nonsense yeah and then there's another one that will tell you the same thing and you think oh it must be true but it isn't yeah oh yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah people send me lots of them so let's just recap therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day your

Lord will come yeah Lord Lord they said open the door for us but he replied truly I tell you I don't know you it's actually very serious to not be ready because it did I didn't point it out as he went through but the alternative was being what was it rejected put into the place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth it isn't an option you know that some Christians we've all got to be ready therefore keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour Matthew 25 13 behold said our text I come like a thief blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed so as not to go naked and they see his shame so brothers and sisters let's stay awake be ready for the Lord's coming amen let's sing something to close