

# The Continuing Story of Christmas: Part 2

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[0:00] We're going back now, probably close to 200 years, C.H. Spurgeon was a prominent pastor in Great Britain.

! And in the 1800s, he would often preach. He was kind of the premier preacher there in Great Britain. And he would be invited to go to places, and he would preach in locations without amplification.

They didn't have the benefit of microphones and speakers. And so he had to communicate with just the gifts that God had given to him to emphasize and to just punctuate the morning with his ability to articulate the scriptures.

Well, in one location where he was, he was invited to this massive agricultural hall. And as was his custom, he would kind of check out the acoustics of the place.

And in that particular agricultural hall, it needed some renovation. So up in the rafters was a guy who was working on the ceiling or the roof and trying to help make sure that the things were patched up and ready for the venue that would be taking place later on in the week.

[1:35] And he went and just said one phrase. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And the truth, spoken by John the Baptist, so overcame this worker that he left immediately and gave his life to the Lamb.

The power of the Word of God. And the power of the Lamb to accomplish his work in the hearts of people. This morning, it is my desire.

I'm just going to put all my cards on the table. It is my desire this morning as we work through 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, the first 11 verses, that we become familiar with the Lamb.

And that through understanding the Lamb, that it will fill our hearts not only with worship, but it will lead us to deeper praise of the Lamb.

[2:49] As I think about the Lamb, and I think about that phrase spoken by John the Baptist, it has its roots in the past. Going all the way back to the very beginnings, we see that Cain and Abel offered two different sacrifices.

Cain's was unacceptable, and Abel's was acceptable because he offered a spotless lamb. It was the lamb that was accepted as a sacrifice to God.

Moving a few more chapters, we find that Noah and his family, having gotten off the ark, and having experienced rescue through the ark, through the flood, now offer some sacrifices to God.

The sacrifice of a lamb that helped to remind them of the covenant promise of God. This promise of God that he would never bring a flood. This kind of destruction on the earth again.

And they commemorated that promise, and that recognition of who God was by sacrificing a lamb.

Moving forward to the time of Abraham, and Abraham having waited years and years and years for the promised son, Isaac, and then being told by God to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

[4:15] And as he's about to plunge the dagger into his son, God says, I provided a lamb. I provided a sacrifice.

A replacement for Isaac. A way for redemption. A way for escape. Through the lamb. Generations would come and go, and the children of Israel would find themselves in Egypt.

They would find themselves as slaves there in Egypt. And as God unleashes the plagues on the Egyptians, he comes to the end where there is going to be a firstborn son from every household that will be destroyed.

Save those who put the blood of the lamb across their doorposts. And beginning what we would come to know, and what would be commemorated as the Passover.

This time of passing over and saving those who put their trust in the lamb. And the sacrificial system, which would require the price of a lamb, who through the lamb you would be able to come, and you would make your way to Jesus, to God in heaven, and you would ask for forgiveness.

[5:41] Generations more would come and go, and John the Baptist would commemorate the ministry of Jesus through that statement, Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And then Jesus' ministry would begin, and for 30 years he would talk about the redemption that would come through the lamb. Peter would mention this in his little letter.

He would talk about the precious blood of Christ, the redemption that came through the lamb. Fast forward all the way to the end, into Revelation, and we see in Revelation chapter 5 a scene that is portrayed for us.

The coming of the king, the coming of the one who would exact judgment on the earth, who would unleash the wrath of God's fury on those who were wicked.

And the only one who was worthy to open the scroll was the lamb. The lamb from the beginning to end. And so we come to our passage this morning in 1 Thessalonians.

[6:54] We pick up where we left off last week, and we recognize that there is continuity throughout the scripture from start to finish. And as we worked our way through the passage, I want to just touch on these things to catch any of you up who were not here last week, so that you can kind of get in the flow of our study.

We opened up to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and we read that first phrase. The first phrase beginning there in verse 1 now, concerning the times and the seasons, brothers.

And we came to realize that Christmas is not just locked away in Bethlehem. It's not just locked away with the angels and the shepherds and Mary and Joseph making their way to this anonymous little town, and the wise men that happen to show up, and who knows exactly how much further down the road.

But Christmas is actually encompassing an event. And we saw this last week. It says, Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers.

Paul uses two words to help connect us to some chronology. The first is the word chronos, which helps us recognize the transpiring of hours and days and calendar.

[8:21] Whereas the next word we come to is the word seasons or kairos. It's the word that helps us summarize events or periods of time. Things that fit together as one unit.

And we're forced to ask ourselves the question, Okay, so is this something that we are anticipating yet to come, or is this something that has already happened?

Well, we look at the language here, and we look at verse 2, and we try to get some clues as to whether or not this is a future event or a past event. And Paul says, For you know and are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

This all fits in the context of chapter 4 as well. And you back up to chapter 4, verse 13, and you get some more clues. It says, We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those things, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others who have no hope.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring those who have fallen asleep.

[9:36] So there's our answer, right? We're talking about future events. We're talking about things that are yet to come. But then I messed everything up as we were looking at these future events in the anticipation of what the prophets thought was going to happen.

How they summarized these events that would take place in terms of the Messiah's coming. And then the angels, what was their understanding about the prophecies of the Old Testament?

And how did the apostles see things? And we got to understand that the first coming, Christmas actually sets the context for everything that is about to follow.

That what Jesus accomplished, what the Lamb has done for His people, for the people of Israel, and also for the nations, actually guarantees what we have to anticipate in terms of Jesus' future coming.

It helps us to order and recognize the things that Jesus did do in accomplishing and fulfilling His promises and what we can expect to happen well into the future.

[10:58] We saw that Christmas is connected to future events. But then we moved on a little further. And we got to explore this loaded word that comes next.

It says, Now, concerning the times and the seasons, brothers. We saw that that was an important word for us to begin to understand. Because for us, living here in the 21st century, we make some assumptions.

We begin to say, Well, that must be talking about Christians. And we understand that there are certain truths, and I want to walk us through four truths about the Lamb and four truths about the promises of God in the Old Testament that help to order our understanding in relationship to the coming of the Lamb.

The first truth that we find right here is that Israel and the church are unified but distinct. Israel and the church are unified but distinct.

All of that is encapsulated in this one little word, the word brothers. Paul uses this word 20 times in this little letter.

[12:22] He uses this word for a couple of reasons. One is to help emphasize his relationship to them. They were special to him. He had an affection for them.

It just explodes out of the pages of 1 Thessalonians. Paul's interest and his desire for these people. And so he calls them brothers time and time and time again. This little letter uses the word brothers more times or concentrated more times than any other New Testament book.

because Paul wants to stress his relationship to these people. But he also wants to help emphasize their relationship to one another.

He wants them to recognize that although they may come from different backgrounds, that they are in actuality united because of the work of Christ in their life.

[13:24] although they are distinct as people, their heritage may be different. They are unified by the working of Christ in their life to make them part of one unified body.

Paul wants them to recognize especially those who are Jewish to understand that although God has made them distinct through Christ he has brought them together.

If you were to go to Ephesians chapter 2 and I would just let me just encourage you turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2 we can see this for ourselves. Ephesians chapter 2 beginning in verse 11. We'll begin to understand why the Jews were so interested in the heritage that they had through Abraham. Here's what it says.

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands.

[14:40] Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world.

So if you're a Jew and you're part of Abraham what is your thought? You're thinking hey God has blessed me.

Hey I get to enjoy God's favor. Hey I'm not one of those people one of those Jews or one of those Gentiles who as Paul describes it well have a lot of strikes against them.

They are alienated from Israel. They're strangers from the covenants. They have no hope and they are without God.

so in one sense of the word they were right. Everything that they had in their Jewishness they got to enjoy because God had made them a covenant people.

[15:53] But those who were outside of the covenant of promise were not able to enjoy the blessing of being called the people of God. So there's no wonder why when Paul begins to share the gospel all over Asia and Macedonia the Jews initially received the gospel with great zeal and interest.

Wow the Messiah has come look what he has accomplished for me. But once the Gentiles began to embrace the gospel for themselves now the Jews became jealous and because of their jealousy

they expelled Paul and they came against Paul and sought to push him out of every town in which he was sharing the gospel.

Things in Thessalonica were no different. The hostility of this location was intense. We've got to see it over the past several weeks of going through this little letter.

And so it was of utmost important for the apostle Paul to emphasize the unity that this church had with one another and it was a unity that they had because of faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice if you're still in Ephesians what Jesus did to eliminate the division. Now in verse 14 of Ephesians chapter 2.

[17:26] For he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two thus making peace.

You see the lamb? You see what Jesus accomplished? Jesus as the seed of Abraham Jesus as the offspring of David comes and now breaks down the hostility because he fulfilled the law and brings the two together in himself now creating one new man from the two.

Although we recognize there is still distinctiveness that we looked at a bit last week in Romans chapter 11 Paul is coming against some of the natural questions that would come up.

He says has God neglected the promises to Israel? Certainly not. And as we see in Revelation God has a continuing and enduring desire to uphold and to favor the people of Israel.

But those of us who are Gentiles which probably includes all of us in this room if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ you now get to enjoy the benefits of being a son the benefits of being a daughter because of faith in Jesus Christ.

[19:03] All of the promises that God gave to Abraham Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David can be yours through faith in Jesus Christ.

We have been adopted into the family. We have been grafted into this amazing tree that Paul talks about in the book of Romans. there is now unity that God has created because of Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross because of the lamb.

We can rejoice in the work of the lamb for us. Israel and the church are unified but distinct. We turn then to the next few verses in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

we look at Christmas in the future. We're evaluating this truth about Israel and the church being distinct but unified and then we turn to this second truth that we find in verses 2 and 3.

for you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night while people are saying there is peace and security then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape.

[20:25] the second truth is that God's wrath will be poured out on unbelievers. Now where do you get that Andrew? Well notice this statement given by the people who are looking around at the circumstances and wondering what's about to happen.

What do they say? It says in verse 3 while people are saying there is peace and security then sudden destruction will come. Now isn't that an interesting question?

You're looking around they seem to look at the world now by the way they're not looking at the world and saying oh there's no conflict oh there's no war because as sin continues to increase those things will also increase.

It has nothing to do with what's happening around them. It has everything to do with an anticipation of judgment that has not yet come. That's why they say hey peace and security we're doing really good look what we're getting away with things are going pretty well for us God doesn't really care and maybe God doesn't actually exist.

very interesting observation by those who are in the world who say hey there's peace and security in the world which points to the fact that unbelievers expect judgment to come they expect judgment to come because it is hardwired into their very conscience it's hardwired into every individual that walks this earth because God has wired it into them if you look at Romans chapter 2 verse 14 and 16 I may have put this on a slide maybe not let me read it for you here we go for when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do what the law requires they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when according to my gospel

[23:00] God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ one of the greatest resources that we have in our gospel testimony is that hired wired into every person who walks this earth is a recognition however broken however insufficient there is still a sense of morality there is a broken moral compass in every individual that God has put there and that's why people in the last days are asking themselves this question where is God I guess I guess I can just do what I want to do because judgment hasn't come yet God's wrath will be poured out on unbelievers when is this going to happen when will his wrath be poured out will it happen in eternity in hell or is there some aspect of his wrath that is going to be poured out here in this day and age

I want to help us understand that people understand that there is a demand for justice they recognize that God will exact judgment on them there is a demand for justice that they recognize but where is the place of justice where will it happen will it be something visible or will it be something that we don't get to see what to see is the testimony of scripture is there is a future element an eternal element of judgment because of sin that God will sentence us to hell apart from him forever but there is also coming a day when judgment will be poured out on the wicked here on the earth that has been the testimony of God since the very beginning look at Adam and Eve expelled from the garden you look at

Noah and the flood that came on the earth and extinguished all living creatures you look at Sodom and Gomorrah and the fire and brimstone that God brought on the earth to judge the people living in those cities you look at those from Pharaoh's army who pursued the Israelites across the Red Sea all drowned in the Red Sea God gives deliverance to his people the place of God's vengeance is consistently visible earthly and terrible and as we look at the Old Testament we see the very same things and reiterated again by Jesus Christ and helping to set the expectation for what that future day will look like and it always involves a physical component an earthly component but why does there seem to be a delay why is there a delay in justice why is God prolonged and pushed out this day of wrath it is coming and I want to point us to a couple of verses in 2nd

Peter that help us to recognize a similar passage that helps us see and draw out some of the same points 2nd Peter chapter 3 verses 3 and 4 says know this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires they will say get this where is the promise of his coming forever since the fathers fell asleep all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation you see it there peace and safety God's not coming after all everything is fine there's no judgment you tell me that God is a God of justice and he's a God of sovereignty but where is he that's what the scoffers will say but moving on the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance the reason for delay is because

God desires salvation he prolongs judgment because of a heart of mercy he prolongs justice that he will have on this earth because of a desire to lead us into repentance but the day will come the day of the Lord will come like a thief that should sound very familiar taken right out of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed this earthly component that is coming to bear on this world that God will judge the earth and it is coming like a thief in the night a couple of days ago maybe you've had this experience maybe not a couple of days ago

[28:46] I was at the gas station filling up I pulled into the slot and the gas price was \$1.29 \$2.29 it's like okay well it's not as good as a few days ago but hey I can or maybe it was \$2.29 you guys are saying wow where is that gas station I want to find that yes it was \$2.29 I don't want to get your hopes up too much okay so \$2.29 I'm filling up and then I look at the sign again and it says \$2.16 I'm like \$2.29 which price did I pay I looked at the receipt I paid \$2.29 and so I walked into the store and said hey \$2.29 it says \$2.16 out there right now and it didn't switch for me when I was in the middle of pumping he said I'm sorry I missed out on \$2.16

I thought at least \$1.50 that's nothing he can just hand that over to me and I feel like I got something the point is this how does this relate Jesus is coming like a thief in the night and you may not be ready and if you aren't ready there is no refund there is no refund for those who miss the coming of the day of the Lord that's why Paul moves on through this passage he's speaking to those who are living in the light who've been called by the lamb into salvation be ready don't miss it anticipate the coming of Christ come into a relationship with him so you don't miss that future reuniting that will happen on that day which now leads us into our next point this third truth the truth that God keeps his promises we find that here in our the next several verses it says beginning in verse four but you are not in darkness brothers for that day to surprise you like a thief for you are all children of light children of the day we are not children of the night or children of darkness so then let us not sleep as others do but let us keep awake and be sober Paul is talking to a group of individuals who have experienced the joy of having been brought into salvation and because of what they know about Jesus death and resurrection just like we saw in chapter four there is now a new anticipation an anticipation of his future coming and it needs to reorient everything about our perspective it needs to transform our way of life it needs to reorder our priorities it needs to help us as

Paul says to walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise redeeming the time because the days are evil those who are in the light will live as those who are alert those who are ready those who are looking and anticipating this future coming of Messiah just like Simeon and Anna that we'll look at briefly next week this feeling of expectation he's coming I want to get myself ready for this I want to be ready for when he comes and the promise of what Christ has accomplished for this people will set for them an expectation that's what we see in verses 4 and 5 and 6 several years ago when Sarah and I got married and I don't recommend this by the way but here's what

I did on our honeymoon I put together a list of letters I didn't even tell her where we were going I just said pack with certain things and kind of gave her a list she didn't know what was going to happen I had a letter set aside for every day and on that letter was kind of the location and some of the activities that we could do in each of those places and so she had kind of an expectation of hey there's certain number of letters certain number of days I guess there's a promise at least of hope for what is to come and hopefully based upon knowing me and deciding to marry me there was a confidence at least in my character of being able to come through with the promise of a honeymoon and not just we're going to San Jose in a similar fashion

[34:18] God has given promises to us that are connected to promises given in the past and because of his ability to accomplish and fulfill those promises through Jesus Christ we can anticipate that he will come clean and come through to fulfill promises for us in the future I think I have four promises here I want to just punch through really quickly for you what I want you to recognize is that God gives a promise to a specific group of people and then he blows it up and expands upon it in the New Testament through Jesus Christ that he hasn't replaced that promise he hasn't nullified that promise he hasn't disqualified that promise but he builds upon that promise and strengthens it to now welcome in a whole new group of people for example his promise to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 he says this

I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed promise and in Galatians here's the fulfillment the people of God who were Jews thought this is amazing for me but now this is amazing for the nations know then that those who are of faith are sons of Abraham and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel before him to Abraham saying in you shall all the nations be blessed so then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith through faith we can participate in the promise of Abraham amazing but how about the promise to Israel we find in Exodus chapter 19 now therefore if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples for all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation these are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel and that should be really familiar because we've been going back to 1 Peter a lot so I wanted to give you a different verse in Revelation to him who loves us and has freed us

from our sins by his blood of course speaking about the lamb and made us a kingdom and priests to his

God and father to him be glory and dominion forever well how about promises to David promise to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7 here's what it says when your days are fulfilled David and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up for your your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom you shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever promise come to Luke chapter 1 for the fulfillment behold Mary you will conceive in your room and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus he will be great and be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end in Jesus are the promises to David fulfilled well how about promises to the nations come back to Genesis chapter 12 in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed well which families not just

Jewish families but the families of the earth will be blessed through Jesus who by the way has now cemented a relationship through Abraham as being his seed and strengthened that promise now it is an eternally fulfilled in Christ who is a descendant of Abraham and as we find in Isaiah chapter 49 6 God speaking to Israel I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth fulfilled in Jesus Christ Simeon says now Lord you're letting your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for your glory to the people Israel finally we see what God does for his people we see that here in the last part of 1st

Thessalonians chapter 5 this final truth Jesus endured the wrath of God for those who believe and I've broken this into two parts that we need to touch on really briefly the first is that Jesus paid the price for sin you know that Jesus in speaking to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 this Pharisee of the Pharisee a leader of the Pharisees he's called because he's part of the Sanhedrin Jesus is having a conversation with Nicodemus about what does it mean to be a child of God what does it mean to be one who has been accepted and not condemned he says there in John chapter 3 he says God God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of

[40:55] God those who by faith are now sons of Abraham because of confessing their faith in Jesus Christ and asking forgiveness for their sins will not experience the condemnation of God the wrath of God will not come upon them Paul explains it well in Romans chapter 6 he says for the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord Jesus paid the price for sin have you experienced the benefits of that payment and because he paid the price for sin Jesus also delivers us from future wrath he endured the wrath of God on your behalf as the prophet Isaiah says Jesus was brutalized for you and for me he was crushed he was bruised for you and for me

Jesus does not overlook sin Jesus does not turn a blind eye to sin but God the father laid the burden of sin on the shoulders of Jesus and he paid the price so that you and I would not have to and as we find here in verses 8 through 11 Jesus delivers us from future wrath look at this since we belong to the excuse me but since we belong to the day let us be sober having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation and here we are for God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ this is now the second time that he said this because he's reiterated this from chapter 1 chapter 1 verse 10 says much the same thing and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead

Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come this is all in the context of the day of the Lord this is all in the context of the vengeance of God and the wrath of God poured out on the wicked of this earth but those who are in Christ have already endured the wrath of God because Jesus endured it for you and thus you are preserved from future wrath because it's already been paid what a blessing to know that Jesus has truly paid it all and so all to him I owe as we come now to the close of this service I want to just encourage all of you who are here those of you who are in Jesus Christ who are participating in the promises to Israel and to

Abraham because of the promised seed Jesus who has now brought us in to favor with God take that message this Christmas anticipate his coming be like Simeon and understand the fullness of

Christmas the fullness of his first and second coming and how they're joined together in Christ they're guaranteed because of what Jesus has done in the past and reaches to help us anticipate what's coming in the future but this morning if you're not in Jesus this morning if you've not accepted him as your savior if he's not your lord we would love to lead you into an understanding of how to have Jesus as your savior let me pray for us and then I'll ask the worship team to come out Thank you.