

Sunday after Christmas
Jesus' birth
Jesus' return

After Christmas

31 December 2023 (in-person)

7 January 2024 (on-line)

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

V	NIV	MSG
1	Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,	<p>I don't think, friends, that I need to deal with the question of when all this is going to happen. You know as well as I that the day of the Master's coming can't be posted on our calendars. He won't call ahead and make an appointment any more than a burglar would. About the time everybody's walking around complacently, congratulating each other—"We've sure got it made! Now we can take it easy!"—suddenly everything will fall apart. It's going to come as suddenly and inescapably as birth pangs to a pregnant woman.</p> <p>But friends, you're not in the dark, so how could you be taken off guard by any of this? You're sons of Light, daughters of Day. We live under wide open skies and know where we stand. So let's not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let's keep our eyes open and be smart. People sleep at night and get drunk at night. But not us! Since we're creatures of Day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation.</p> <p>God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life. Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're alive with him! So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it.</p>
2	for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.	
3	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.	
4	But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.	
5	You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.	
6	So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.	
7	For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.	
8	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.	
9	For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ	
10	He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.	
11	Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.	

Reflection Thoughts & Questions

- **Acts 2:42** describes the early church as devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer
- Many people see as living in an apocalyptic moment, in a world where humanity is seemingly hurtling towards calamity.
 - Post on a friend's Facebook wall:
You guys are a little oasis of awesome in a desert of stupid
 - Would this be said about us?
- Living in a so-called "apocalyptic" age remember that
 - Jesus didn't know when he was coming back [**Matthew 24:36**] so let's not pretend that we know more than Jesus
 - We are told that until he does come we are to be faithful until he comes
 - It could be the last day of our life, it could be the first day of our life
We live life in this Alpha Omega sense: that this is the first day of the rest of my life and it could be the first day in Jesus' presence
 - Why are so many Christians so anxious for "the rapture", for escape from this earth?
- As part of this preparation we are given a breastplate and a helmet (**1 Thessalonians 5:8**)
 - Protect your heart
 - Protect your mind
 - **Ephesians 6:10-18**
- Way of doing this:
 - **limit** my consumption of negative news
 - **immerse** yourself in prayer... time with Jesus
 - **practice** acts of kindness
 - **express** gratitude
 - **find** creative outlets to process fear & uncertainty
 - **live** one day at a time
- Pastor Mike said: We are to live theologically more than eschatologically
 - Why and how do we do this?
- Our faith and our hope are in what God has already done in Jesus and so we look to him and to what he has already done