

Chicken Little and the Thief in the Night

^{5:1} Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

³ 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.

⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

⁸ 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.

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:1:11

Chicken Little

CHICKEN LITTLE. Do you remember the story? It isn't very politically correct these days. Chicken Little was running about in gentleman's garden, where she had no business to be. She ran under a rose-bush, and a leaf fell on her tail. So she was dreadfully frightened, and ran back to Hen Pen.

“O Hen Pen,” she said, “the sky is falling!”

“Why, Chicken Little, how do you know it?”

“I heard it with my ears, I saw it with my eyes, and part of it fell on my tail.”

“Come, then,” Says Hen Pen, “Let us run as fast as we can.”

Well, this happened again and again. They came to Duck Luck, told her the story, and they all ran together, quick as a lick, to Goose Loose. The flock grew bigger as they came to Turkey Lurkey, then to Cock Lock, Drake Lake, Gander Lander and all the Jitter Birds bustling about as busy-bodies near the garden.

By now the flock was in a down right frenzy, like chickens with their heads cut off, running this way and that, bumping into coops, scurrying frantically up and down ramps, flying into chicken wire, raising a wind-storm of straw and stubble in their whirling rush to flee the end of the

world. So feverish was the scene that they blew a hole right through the pen and began fleeing this way and that into the wide world beyond.

Then Chicken little bumped hard into Fox Lox. “The sky is falling! The sky is falling!”

“Why, Chicken Little, how do you know it?”

“I heard it with my ears, I saw it with my eyes, and part of it fell on my tail.”

“Come, flee into my den. You’ll be safe there.” Fox Lox opened the door and all the birds scampered inside where, one by one, the sly devil cut off their heads for a tasty fowl dinner, if you get my meaning. Finally, he came to Chicken Little, caught hold her, and ate her all up, finishing his supper. All this from the foolish fright of Chicken Little.¹

The Sky Keeps Falling

Foolish frights, or as the 1941 Disney version of this story adapted as a parable against the Nazi’s said, “A little shy on brains, but a good egg as chickens go.” There is this innate curiosity seemingly hard-wired into humanity that

¹ I’ve adapted this from *Remarkable Story of Chicken Little* (Boston: Degen, Estes & Co., 1865), at <https://archive.org/details/remarkablestoryo00bostiala>.

desperately wants to know about and think we have discovered [the end of the world](#). Sometimes it is to escape from it. Sometimes it is to prevent it. Sometimes it is to make a lot of money. In what we will soon talk about, I want you to know ahead of time that it is not just Christians or self-professed Christians who have this desire, but all of humanity.

For instance, the entire [Terminator](#) franchise, hardly Christian, is built upon knowing the exact date [Judgment Day](#) is coming and trying to stop it (the great part about that franchise is that it concludes it is impossible to stop because it is basically predestined). [Marvel Studios](#) has recently played with this in their Thor movies by reintroducing [Ragnarök](#) into modern popular thought. Ragnarök is sort of the Nordic version of Armageddon, with terrible volcanic eruptions and storms and disasters leading to the total destruction of all things, including the deaths of the gods Odin, Thor, Heimdallr, and Loki. Like *The Terminator*, Thor realizes Ragnarök is here, but he is unable to stop it.

Then there are the real-life predictions. Take the whole political religious cult of “climate change.” They have to call it that, you see, because of the multitude of unfulfilled prophecies about the end of the world by their own scientists. For example, in 1971, the much later-to-be-named

Obama science czar [John Holdren](#) predicted 1 billion people would die in carbon-dioxide induced famines in a coming [new ice age by 2020](#).² Remember, this man became the free world's leading scientist 40 years after his predictions. In 1975, [Newsweek](#) ran a story called "[The Cooling World](#)," which claimed that human caused temperature changes would have serious political implications "[for just about every nation on earth](#)" because of the mass starvation that would ensue from the "catastrophic" famines coming "[quite soon, perhaps only 10 years from now](#)" because of this apocalyptic ice-age.³

But then it all changed and the scientists like Holden were swept along in the clucking frenzy. We went from an ice-age that would destroy nearly all life on earth to global warming that would cause a 20-ft. rise in sea level "[in the near future](#)," creating a disaster of unimaginable proportions over the face of the entire earth, as [Al Gore's](#) predictions went in [An Inconvenient Truth](#).⁴ Based on other wild predictions like the average temperature of the entire earth rising

² The best source I've found that details these predictions is [Jerome R. Corsi](#), "Holdren: Ice Age Will Kill 1 Billion," *WND* (10-9-2009), <https://www.wnd.com/2009/10/112317/>.

³ [Peter Gwynne](#), "The Cooling World," *Newsweek* (Apr 28, 1975): 64.

⁴ [Al Gore](#), *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Rodale, 2006), 10, 196, 208. Recently, USA Today published a piece reaffirming these predictions. [Doyle Rice](#), "Global Warming Could Be Far Worse Than Pre-

by as much as 20 degrees between the years 2035 to 2050,⁵ I have an acquaintance from Jr. High who bet me dinner to be eaten somewhere north of Florida because Florida would be totally under water by the time we turn 75. I'm planning on a good restaurant in Miami.

I remind you about these things because it is quite easy for non-Christians to mock what I'm about to tell you because they are obviously to enlightened and not prone to squawking and pecking around with the Jitterbirds when someone yells, “The sky is falling” like religiously crazed people are. Here's a partial list of end-of-the-world predictions.⁶

2000 B.C.	Zoroaster
634.	Romulus
389.	Rome
70 A.D.	Simon bar Giora
156.	Maximilla dn Priscilla--Montanists
365.	Hilary of Poitiers
375-400.	Martin of Tours
500.	Hippolytus, Julius Africanus, Irenaeus
800.	Julius Africanus and Gregory of Tours (yeah, Julius doubled down)

dicted, New Study Suggests,” *USA Today* (July 6, 2018), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/07/06/global-warming-double-what-models-predict-study/760748002/>.

⁵ Philip Shabecoff, “Global Warming Has Begun,” *New York Times* (June 24, 1988), <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/06/24/us/global-warming-has-begun-expert-tells-senate.html?pagewanted=all>

⁶ For many of these see Jason Boyett, *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse: The Official Field Manual for the End of the World* (Orlando, FL: Relevant Media Group, 2005). He is definitely not a pro-Christian humorist. See also the Wiki “List of Dates Predicted for Apocalyptic Events” and its bibliography. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events, last accessed Dec 10, 2018.

992-995. Various, Good Friday and the Feast of the Annunciation.
 1000. Pope Sylvester II
 1033. Various (oops, it wasn't 1000 years from Jesus' birth, but his death).
 1200-1260. Joachim of Fiore
 1284. Pope Innocent III (666 years after the rise of Islam).
 1346-1351. Various, The Black Death.
 1504. Sandro Botticelli, 3 ½ years after the Tribulation in which he was living.
 1524. London Astrologers
 1524-26. Thomas Müntzer
 1528. Johannes Stöffler, revised from earlier date of Feb 20, 1524.
 1585. Michael Servetus, 1,260 years after Satan's reign began (325, i.e. Nicea).
 1600. Martin Luther
 1656. Christopher Columbus, *Book of Prophecies* (1501), 7000 years after creation
 1697. Cotton Mather (revised date two more times; 1716 and 1736)
 1757. Emanuel Swedenborg
 5-19-1780. Connecticut General Assembly based on sky turning dark
 1792-94. Shakers
 1805. Christopher Love
 1836. John Wesley
 3-21 & 10-22-1844. Millerites
 1874; 1914. Charles Taze Russell, father of Jehovah's Witnesses
 1936, '43, '72, '75. Herbert W. Armstrong, founder—Worldwide Church of God
 1941, 1975. Jehovah's Witnesses ('75 = 6000 years since creation)
 1967. Jim Jones, founder—People's Temple
 1969. Charles Manson, Helter skelter
 1981. Chuck Smith, founder—Calvary Chapel
 1982, 4-29-07. Pat Robertson (predicted in 1976' year Carter is elected)
 1988, '89. Edgar C. Whisenant, "88 Reasons..." "89 Reasons..."
 4-23-1990. Elizabeth Clare Prophet
 1999. Louis Farrakhan, Gulf War is the Final War
 9-6-94; 9-29-94; 10-2-94, 3-31-95, 5-21-11, 10-21-2011. Harold Camping
 Mar 26, 1997. Marshall Applewhite, Heaven's Gate
 Oct 23, 1997. James Ussher
 July 1999. Nostradamus
 1999. Hon-Ming Chen, Timothy Dwight IV, others
 2000. Jerry Falwell, Tim LaHaye, Sun Myung Moon, Jonathan Edwards, others
 Aug 23, 2013. Grigori Rasputin
 Apr 2014-Sept 2015. John Hagee, The Blood Moons

 FUTURE: June 9, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2026, 2129 (various);
 2239 The Talmud

300,000.	Peter Tuthill. WR104 will supernova
(within) 500,000.	Nick Bostrom, Asteroid
(within) 1,000,000.	The Geological Society, Supervolcano
(within) 100,000,000.	Stephen A. Nelson, Astroid
(within) 500,000,000.	Anne Minard, Supernova
(within) 600,000,000.	Various, The Sun
(within) 1-5,000,000,000.	Various, The Sun

While I could have made this list a lot longer, I wanted to impress upon you just how often these kinds of predictions have been made. And not just by crackpots. By otherwise solid orthodox theologians. Like I said, date-setting seems to be in our nature.

No One Knows

Last week we looked into the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, or what the church has called for millennia—the [Blessed Hope](#). Hope was the theme of [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#). Hope and comfort in the face of death, because the promise to those who know the Lord Jesus is that they will not die, but only sleep, and will be raised to new life in the Age to Come.

Our passage today is parallel to that one. In fact, you can see the same basic structure, at least at the end of our passage today, beginning with Christ's death, moving to our resurrection, and ending in our comfort:

4:13–18

- (1) “Jesus *died* and rose” (4:14)
 (2) “the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive ... will be caught up *together with* them.... And so [resurrected] we will be with the Lord forever” (4:16–17)
 (3) “Therefore *encourage each other*” (4:18)

5:10–11

- (1) “he *died* for us” (5:10)
 (2) “whether we are awake or asleep we may live *together with* him” (5:10)
 (3) “Therefore *encourage one another*” (5:11)

We also find a chiasm here, just as we did before.

- A. Therefore *encourage one another* with these words. (4:18)
 B. *sudden destruction* upon them (5:1-3)
 C. children of *light*, and the children of the *day* (4-5)
 D. *sleep* (5b-6)
 E. **but let keep awake and be sober.** (6b)
 D'. *sleep sleep.* (7)
 C'. us, who are of the *day* (8)
 B'. no *wrath* for us. (9-10)
 A'. *Therefore encourage one another* (11)

So if the passages are similar in overall content, what is the difference? Is Paul just going to repeat himself for emphasis? No, he has something else that he really wants to communicate. In fact, more than one thing. The first and most basic point is the reason we began the way we did. “*No concerning the times and seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you*” (5:1). Here is where you need to begin thinking about the last parallel from last week. That is how Paul is taking his “word from the Lord” (4:14) directly from Jesus’ *Olivet Discourse*.

Recall that the Olivet Discourse is divided into two questions. **Matt 24:4-35** deals with the question, “**When will Jerusalem be destroyed?**” **Vv. 36ff.** deal with the second question, “**When will you coming again in glory?**” Perhaps thinking the two questions had the same answer, Jesus corrects his disciples misunderstanding. The Day of the LORD will not come in the same way as the destruction of Jerusalem, in precisely this way: “**But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only**” (**Matt 24:36**). These are the very first words Jesus tells them about his Second Coming in Glory. **No one knows** and no one can know. If Jesus himself doesn’t know it, believe me, neither can you.

Unlike ch. 4, the language in **1Th 5:1** comes from this “Second Coming” part of the Olivet Discourse (with the exception of the analogy of a pregnant woman):

24:36	Time unknown	5:1–2
24:43	Coming like a thief	5:2, 4
24: 37-39	Initiation of the Day of the Lord	5:1-3
24:37–39	Unbelievers unaware of impending judgment	5:3
24:8	Judgment comes as pain upon an expectant mother	5:3
24:37-41	“Peace and safety”	5:3
25:10-13	Inescapable for the unprepared	5:3
24:43	Believers not deceived	5:4–5
24:45-46	The faithful at his coming	5:4-5, 8
24:37–39	Believers to be watchful	5:6
24:49	Warning against drunkenness	5:7

In other words, what Paul is talking about here is clearly the end of the present evil age. This is as apocalyptic as it gets.

Rapture Return and A Thief in the Night

This matters immensely for interpreting correctly. Why do they have no need for Paul or Silas to tell them about the times and the seasons? Because exactly as Jesus says, **no one knows that day or hour**. I need to point out something before continuing with **1Th 5:2ff**. If Paul is taking his language from the Olivet Discourse, and the parallel part of **1Th 5:1** is **Matt 24:36**, then Jesus' "day and hour" is parallel to Paul's "times and seasons." This is important, because those who want to predict the coming of Christ will often point out that Jesus said "day and hour," but said nothing about "the month or year." In fact, this is Reason #1 in Whisenant's *88 Reasons why the Rapture Will Be In 1988*.

REASON #1 It is evident that in the minds of most Christians today, Matt. 24:36 is believed to prohibit anyone from being able to see the day of our Lord's 2 return approaching. Matt. 24:36 states that "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." In looking at this statement, you can easily see that it is impossible

to know the exact day and hour of the Lord Jesus' return. If Jesus arrived at one particular instant of time, there are 24 time zones around the world, and each time zone has multitude of Christians in it. How are you going to identify that particular instant in each time zone on earth? Also, there are always two days existing on earth at the same time; only at the exact second that the earth passes through the international date line does only one day exist on all the earth. All other times, there are two days existing on earth at any one moment; one day is coming and the other day is going. So you can see the problem in trying to tell all the Christians covering the earth at any one instant of time the exact day or hour of our Lord's return. However, this does not preclude or prevent the faithful from knowing the year, the month, and the week of the Lord's return.⁷

How does Paul answer Mr. Whisenant? “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1Th 5:2). How does a thief come in the night? Secretly. Unexpected. In other words, the Day of the LORD will come exactly as Jesus said, “no one knows.”

But just here, we have another problem of interpretation. When I was little, a frightening movie came out, and I'm not talking about *The Exorcist*. It was a Christian movie

⁷ Edgar C. Whisenant, *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988* (Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988), 2.

called “[A Thief in the Night](#).” A movie that became so popular in the 1970s that they created a sequel called “[A Distant Thunder](#)” some six years later, leading the way for the “Left Behind” series some 30 years later. *Thief* tells the story of Patty, a young woman caught up living for the present with little concern for the future. She meets and marries a young man and her life seems great, until one moment she awakens to find her husband gone and the radio reporting millions of people have mysteriously disappeared.⁸ The Thief in the Night is Jesus’ Secret Rapture!



We saw last week that the language of being “[caught up](#)” from [1Th 4:17](#) is often taken as “the” proof-text for [the Rapture](#), even though that entire event is one of the noisiest things in the Bible, even if it is talking about the Rapture. Rapture Fever continues with

the same people on into their interpretation of 1Th 5. “A Thief in the Night” language comes from [5:2](#). It is [very important](#) to see that this whole passage is interpreted by many as referring to the Rapture rather than the Second Coming.

⁸ From the Summary of the movie at IMDB.

One thing that is strange about it, and there are many,⁹ is that the “thief in the night” language is used by Peter.

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, 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” (2Pe 3:10). According to almost everyone who takes Thessalonians as referring to the Rapture, they say Peter is referring to the end of all things. But the language demonstrates that Paul is talking about the same event.

“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” (1Th 5:3). His focus is not on the elements, but the people. The metaphor changes from a **thief** to a **pregnant woman**. The first is something you do not expect. No one stays in their home all day long sitting in a chair with a shotgun pointed at the door waiting for a thief to break in. No, you

⁹ **Going Deeper.** We’ve already seen the parallel with “day and hour” vs. “times and seasons.” Another is that when you have a seven year Tribulation followed immediately by 1,000 literal years, followed immediately by a great battle and the Second Coming, it’s pretty easy to predict even that Coming. But they also take Jesus as referring to the Rapture (rather than the Second Coming) and following Great Tribulation in the entirety of the Olivet Discourse, with perhaps a couple of verses referring to the destruction of the temple in 70AD (cf. Scofield Study Bible). There too, as we have seen, Jesus says no one knows. But we’ve also seen how they turn that language, including sometimes saying, “He didn’t know then, but he knows now.” At some point, the whole system get so complicated and full of so many patches to fill up the holes that it is better to dump the system and think freshly about the texts.

go out and do things with your life. A pregnant woman is a little different. These women know that at some point they will go into labor. But often, when that first pain hits, they were not consciously expecting it.

Jesus used these same metaphors, and they are deliberate. What both images have in common are **things very unwelcome**. Robbery, theft, perhaps great danger; potential danger (especially in an age when so many women died in childbearing), horrible increasing growing pain.

Just here, it is important to note *who these metaphors are being applied to*. There are two basic parts of our passage. **The first three** verses focus on **unbelievers**. It is to them that these metaphors are applied. Beale says, “**In all likelihood, the pictures of the thief and the pregnant woman suggest, not only the unexpectedness of Christ’s return, but also, for those who are not ready, the undesirability of his coming, since they will be judged. Finally, the pregnancy metaphor suggests both unwelcome pain and the inevitability of the coming judgment from which no unbeliever can escape.**”¹⁰

This really starts to get at the point of raising the issue of the Second Coming here. Jesus talked about the days of Noah. People are eating and drinking, marrying and giving

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 145.

in marriage, and suddenly they were all destroyed (**Matt 24:37-39**). Here we have more information. Everyone is running around thinking they are at peace and living safely. Security and thieves; peace and birth pains. But the outcome is the same, “**sudden destruction ... they will not escape.**”

What a terrible thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. People will cry out for the rocks to fall on them, but they will not escape. Vengeance is his. He will repay. This is the part of **the Day of the LORD** that people don't want to remember. This is a day of judgment, justice, vengeance, vindication, and enthronement for eternity of God and of his Christ over the entire fallen universe. Those who have not bowed their knee will wish they had never been born. This is God's wrath.

But you...

Do not be surprised

But now, recall what was said earlier in this letter. “**Wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come**” (**1Th 1:10**). And remember a second verse related to it in the already/not yet: “**But wrath has come upon them at last!**” (**1Th 2:16**).

The contrast throughout the Bible is between those who **do not know God** who are destined for wrath because of their rebellion and sin and those **who do know him** and are forgiven and saved. This same contrast begins again anew in **5:4**.

“**But you...**” **Vv. 4-11** change the focus from “people” and “them” to “you.” Christians. Thus, the second section of our passage begins here and goes to the end. The thing about both thieves and labor pains is that **you can do things to prepare** yourselves for them. **Only Christians** can do this, not because they are the only people who can prepare without knowing any dates, but only because Christians *believe* there even will be a Second Coming, although as we have seen, everyone has an apocalyptic bent built into them, they can’t help it.

“**But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief**” (**1Th 5:4**). You do not have to be surprised. Not because you have figured out the secret rapture clock, but because **you can live your life prepared**. In fact, this is your calling. We will see what this means in the second half of this second section. But first, the key to this is **darkness vs. light**. “**For you are children of light, children of**

the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness” (5).

What does this mean?

It is a way of talking about being in Christ or being in the world. We are all born in “darkness” and grope about in darkness. Darkness is a way of talking about the kingdom of Satan, the Prince of Darkness Grim. It is a way of talking about the deep confusion over absolutes, especially moral absolutes: right and wrong, good and evil, 50 Shades of Grey that pervade this planet.

This is **opposed to the light**. “*Light* throughout the Old and New Testaments represents either an attribute of God (or Christ) or his revealing activity; sometimes the two notions merge.”¹¹ Christ called himself the Light. He reveals truth. He is truth. His people know right from wrong. This is exactly where Paul takes this now.

Be Awake, not the Walking Dead

“So then let us not sleep, as others do...” (6). Earlier he said that “**sleep**” for the Christian is what the world calls death. Now he uses this same phrase for unbelievers. In other words, they are a form of **the walking dead**. Why?

¹¹ G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 146.

Think about the walking dead: a zombie. Zombies are creatures that walk but don't know right from wrong. All they know is the passion of eating ... human brains. They are mindless rotting disgusting cannibals who don't care about your morality. They bite and devour and consume one another. This is why they exist. The next time you see almost anything having to do with politics on American TV, you'll see what I mean.

Be Sober

But here, the thought is **not about hatred or murder**. He talks about being “sober.” “... **but let us keep awake and be sober**” (6). Sobriety is both the **center of the chiasm** and the way the last section of our passage begins (see **vs. 8**). Sobriety has to do with **drunkenness**. Wine has this ability to impair us in a way that is analogous to a zombie. After too much, you just don't care what you are doing. Notice it (and sleep's) relationship to the night: “**For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night**” (7).

There is an old 80s tune that popped into my head as I was thinking about this part. I could only remember a few words and couldn't remember the singer. But I knew this

song might just be the world's anthem here. I was finally able to figure out enough of the lyric to find it. It is a song by Laura Branigan called "Self Control."

Oh, the night is my world
City light painted girl
In the day nothing matters
It's the night time that flatters
In the night, no control ...
You take my self, you take my self control ...
You got me livin' only for the night ...
I, I live among the creatures of the night
I haven't got eh will to try and fight
Against a new tomorrow, so I guess I'll just believe it
That tomorrow never knows ...
I must believe in something, so I'll make myself believe it
That this night will never go

The Apostle himself couldn't have said it any better, except that where Branigan is celebrating this, the Apostle is horrified by it.

Put on the Armor

So what does it mean to be sober, to live in the light, to not be surprised? The image changes again, this time to **war-**

fare. In the movie 13th Warrior, a film adaptation of a Michael Crichton book (ironically for this sermon called) *Eaters of the Dead* where Herger, one of the main warriors refuses to drink alcohol while the king and others are planning for a battle that night. The Antonio Banderas character asks him, “You don’t drink tonight?” “No, we do not drink tonight!” Let the dawn come, but tonight we fight. One does not numb his mind when he needs to be keenly alert for a stealth attack of the enemy.

Enter Paul’s imagery of the clothing of a warrior. “**Having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation**” (1Th 5:8). Notice several things here. **First**, breastplates and helmets. These are defensive weapons. They are the same defensive weapons mentioned in **Ephesians 6:17** (though, it is the shield of faith, breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation with hope not mentioned). There, the enemy is clearly defined as supernatural: Satan. Though not mentioned here by name, let us not forget that Satan has just been discussed by Paul.

Second, the **three doctrines** mentioned are **faith, love, and hope**. These are the same three discussed in 1 Corinthians 13. “**So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**” The reason? Simply because on

that Day, faith and hope will be fully realized, with no more need in our lives. One does not hope for what he already has. One does not have to have faith in what he clearly sees. But one must always love.

Finally, this image is taken from the prophet Isaiah. “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak” (Isa 59:17). Who is the “he?” Why, it is **the Arm of the LORD!** “Behold, the hand of Jehovah has not been shortened from saving ... his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate...” (59:1, 16).

This is all part of the Servant section of Isaiah. In Ch. 53. “To whom as the Arm of the LORD been revealed?” (53:1). “He grew up before him like a young plant... he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows ...” In other words, the Arm is Christ at his First Coming. In Ch. 63 he becomes **a mighty warrior** stained crimson in the blood of his enemies (63:1). He trod down the winepress alone (3), the day of vengeance in his heart (5), the LORD’s arm

brought salvation (5). But it is the same warfare clothing in both cases.¹² The same that Paul tells you to put on.

What's interesting is that people seem to have this idea that when God judges, he puts *off* love and puts *on* hate, that he puts *off* righteousness and puts *on* justice (or bigotry, masochism, misogyny or things like that. But no, it is with *this* armor that the Messiah defeats his foes. And it is with this same armor that you gird yourself, staying sober, ready for battle with the enemy, as you watch during the long night as children who belong to the Day and the Sun of Righteousness.

So what is **faith**? Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see. Not just any hope, but the hope of the sure and certain coming of Jesus Christ. That is our **hope**, rooted as we saw in the resurrection. And what about **love**? It is with love that you treat others as you want to be treated. It is with love that you put God and neighbor above your own self-interests. In other words, when you are thinking upwardly and outwardly and forwardly into the future, you are not looking inwardly at your own navel, gazing in on yourself. It is this kind of narcissism, vanity,

¹² Kline notices the parallels with Isaiah 61 and the priestly clothing of Christ as well. Cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 47-48.

and self-importance which now seems to define most 21st century Americans that is the definition of drunkenness in our passage.

The only way you can fight the enemy is with **the right clothing**. Imagine a **hockey goalie** going into a game with a soccer uniform or an Army Ranger going into the battlefield in a decathlon outfit or a basketball player putting on football pads and trying to play his sport. Firefighters have specific equipment built for the job, as to police officers, ballerinas, bankers, and so on. Our uniform is faith, hope, and love not doubt, unbelief, and self-serving mirror-gazing. This defensive armor prevents blows and bullets going to the **head or the heart**, thereby saving your mind and your emotions and you will, thereby allowing you to be fully able to watch and be ready. So if you want to know how to be prepared, have faith in Christ, have hope of his coming, and love God and your neighbor.

It is interesting that he uses the language “**having put on...**” This aorist participle is a verb that says **it is already on a Christian!** This differs somewhat from the imperative command in Ephesians to put it on again and again. This is the same difference that we saw earlier between **definitive sanctification** and **ongoing progressive sanctification**. I think

it is best explained as the doctrine you have already believed and the union with Christ you hereby have because of it.

Hence, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him” (1 Th 5:9-10). Dispensationalists often take “God has not destined us for wrath” to refer specifically to the wrath of God against the world during the Great Tribulation, and in fact this becomes a major reason in this reading of this passage, why we must be Raptured out prior to the Tribulation. But there’s nothing here about a Great Tribulation. Vs. 9 is thinking about future final wrath and future final salvation that come at the Day of the LORD. For that is what he has been talking about (see vs. 2, 4, 8). This is about the end of all things, and the Judgment of God that comes on the Last Day.

And yet, he died (past tense) for us, such that this doctrine of his death and your faith in it takes us backwards to the eternal life that any Christian has *now, already*. So again, the past provides the foundation for the future. Doctrine matters. History matters. What will be rests upon what already has been. And because of this, he returns to the original use of sleeping and waking (that is being alive or dead

physically). It doesn't matter if we live for Christ or die in the LORD, for in either case, those who are Christians live in him. And by "live" he means resurrection to eternal life in new bodies fit for a new heaven and earth for all eternity.

The conclusion is the same as last week, "Therefore encourage one another" (11). But it adds a thought that was not present at the end of Ch. 4. "... and build one another up, just as you are doing." These words are not meant for you alone, but for your brother or sister struggling in their own faith, hope, and love. It is your duty as their sibling in Christ to help them by building them up in this truth about the coming of Christ and your resurrection to eternal life if you believe in the Lord Jesus.

The Sound the Hare Heard

If you do not believe in him, then you have no business believing there will be anything but **wrath** for you. That is what the text says. And yet, there can be **comfort** for you, if you believe right now that what we have said about the future is true, trust that Jesus died for you, hope in the salvation that he will bring you on that last Day because he forgives you of your sin, and join his church so that you might be comforted by others. Trust in the dates that are firm in

the past: his birth, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. We know when those happened. Don't let future dates drive you to madness or even to unbelief when people foolishly get it wrong.

Allow me to return to [Chicken Little](#) one last time. This story is actually quite ancient and goes far beyond the borders of medieval Europe. Perhaps the earliest telling of it can be traced all the way to the Far East, where 2,500 years ago the Buddha told a slightly different version of it, with a hare rather than a chicken¹³ (this should surprise no one, either with its storytelling, for we were all once part of the same small family before we spread over the earth, or with its wisdom since God gave a form of wisdom and discernment to all mankind; Chicken Little stories is *not* what makes us Christians).

In that story, the hare manages to frighten all the animals of the forest, including deer, boars, elk, buffaloes, wild oxen, rhinoceroses, tigers, and elephants. You can imagine the terrible sound when they all came running to lion, who roared such a loud roar that all the crazed creatures came to a sudden halt. Lion thought to himself, *The earth is certainly*

¹³ See Ken and Visakha Kawasaki, "Duddubha Jatake: The Sound the Hare Heard," in *Jatake Tales of the Buddha: Part III* (1998), <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/kawasaki/bl142.html#jat322>.

not coming to an end. There must have been some sound which you have misunderstood. If I don't act quickly they will be killed. I must save them!

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“The earth is collapsing,” they all cried, “run as fast as you can!”

“Who saw it collapsing?” he answered. One by one they blamed someone else, for none of them had actually seen anything. Finally, they found the culprit—the hare. The little rabbit said, “It was in the forest in a palm grove mixed with belli trees. I was lying there under a palm at the foot of the tree, thinking, ‘If this earth were destroyed, what would become of me?’ At that very moment I heard the sound of the earth breaking up and I fled.”

“Come, take me there so we can see exactly what happened,” Lion reasoned calmly. Placing the hare on his back, he raced with great speed to the grave. “Now, show me the place you meant.”

“I don't dare, my Lord.”

“Don't be afraid.” The hare pointed to the very spot where the fruit had fallen on a palm leaf. Having carefully ascertained that the earth was not breaking up, he placed the hare on his back and returned to the animals. “Don't be

afraid,” and he reassured all the animals so that they returned to their usual places to resume their routines. Those animals had placed themselves in great danger because they listened to rumors and unfounded fears rather than trying to find out the truth themselves. Truly, if it had not been for the lion, those beasts would have rushed into the sea and perished.

In this story, the Buddha is the Lion, teaching his disciples that crazy monkish practices like lying naked on thorns or sitting around a blazing fire under the burning sun are nothing but the sound of the hare. For us, the Lion is not the Buddha, but the Lord Jesus who has told you exactly what is to come, that no one knows when it will happen, but that you must and can always be prepared for that Day, by living holy lives and putting on the full armor of God, so that that Day not surprise you like a thief.

That Day will come, and it will come sooner today than yesterday. But don't listen to Chicken Little's of our age, be they Christian or their pagan counterparts. John MacArthur has this great little section in a sermon he preached on the Peter version of our text today. I'll leave you with his words:

We shouldn't be running around signing all kinds of crazy documents that assume that we can perpetuate the planet. It's ridiculous. The call of Christians in light of this short-term planet with a very limited life, this disposable universe, is to focus on godliness and to focus on holy conduct and to keep your hope bright for the destruction of this universe that it might be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells ...

So, I think we want to start a new document. The society for the eager destruction of this universe. We'll get a whole bunch of people to sign it. We know it's coming to an end. We want to live holy and godly lives so that when it does come to an end, we'll enter into the reward the Lord has prepared. We know it's coming to an end and we know that the only reason it hasn't come to an end yet is because God is patient and His patience is for salvation. And so we want to use the time we're here to preach the gospel. I just can't believe that people who call themselves Christians are jumping on the green bandwagon. And the new message of Christianity is to reduce carbon footprints.

Folks, there's going to be a huge carbon footprint in the future of this universe, and it's going to be a big one from God in one great holocaust. In the meantime ... we're supposed to subdue everything in this earth to use it for the benefit of man and to give God thanks for putting it all here for us [thereby being good stewards] ... And when that day comes we'll be so blessed to escape the horrors of this sin-filled universe and enter into

the new heaven and the new earth where righteousness and righteousness alone dwells. Let's get our perspective right as Christians.¹⁴

¹⁴ John MacArthur, "The End of the Universe, Part 3," 2 Peter 3 sermon (9-28-2008), <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-362/the-end-of-the-universe-part-3>.

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