

# 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

## September 11, 2022



### **INTRODUCTION**

If someone tells you a big secret, are you more likely to keep that secret or let it slip?

Why is it sometimes hard to keep secrets?

Sometimes it's wrong to keep a secret and other times it's wrong to tell a secret. How can you know the difference?

God wants us to know Him fully, and that is an incredible thing. But God does keep a secret from us. Jesus is going to come again, and literally no one besides God knows when that will happen.

Why do you think God keeps the timing of Jesus's return a secret?

How does the anticipation of Jesus's return make you feel—scared, excited, confused, uncertain, or something else?

### **DISCUSSION**

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-3.

Look back at our verses from last week's study in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, along with these 3 verses at the start of chapter 5. What can we know about Jesus's return?

Why are those details enough? Why don't we need to know anything about the time and season Jesus will return (5:1)?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that Jesus will return? How might your confidence in Jesus's return impact the way you live each day?

Questions about the details of Jesus's return aren't new—even the very first disciples asked these questions (Acts 1:7). The words used for times and seasons refer to dates and circumstances. Many people throughout history have looked at the state of the world around them and assumed Jesus would return. Think about it—that even happened in the last few years of the pandemic. Some

people were thinking, “Surely, Jesus is about to come back!” But the thing is, Jesus told His disciples that He did not even know these details Himself (Matthew 24:36). Only the Father knows. So, we can recognize the signs and take them as a reminder, but it isn’t productive to try and figure out what is known only to God.

>READ ISAIAH 10:3-4 AND MALACHI 4:1.

**How did the Old Testament prophets use the phrase day of the Lord?**

**How did Paul use day of the Lord here in 1 Thessalonians 5?**

In chapter 4, Paul wrote that we should encourage each other with the truth that Jesus is coming back again. Then in chapter 5, he said Jesus is coming like a thief in the night.

**How is that encouraging?**

>READ LUKE 12:39-40.

**How did Jesus use this same analogy to encourage us?**

The phrase day of the Lord was used throughout the Old Testament to refer to the day when God would save and justify the faithful and punish the unrighteous. Paul used it to refer to the second coming of Christ. The imagery of a thief is not uncommon in the New Testament and is often used to describe a sudden and unexpected moment. But this should be a welcomed event for the people of God because it represents the day of their salvation. Its sudden nature means that the specific time and date are not something believers should devote much time trying to figure out in advance. Even though we can’t know the time, we should still be prepared.

**What does a teenager who stays ready for Jesus’s return look like?**

**What does a teenager who is not ready for Jesus’s return look like?**

**Who are the people Paul referred to in verse 3? Why do they think they have peace and security? Do you know people like this?**

**What is the danger in not being prepared for the day of the Lord?**

**Can you be ready for Jesus’s return while also looking for peace and security in worldly things? Explain.**

Jesus's return will be like labor pains for a pregnant woman—when you came into this world, your mom probably didn't have much of a choice about when that would happen. Even with all the advances of modern medicine, birth often begins suddenly and then there is no escaping it. The people Paul referred to in verse 3 were unbelievers—those who failed to see the importance of the day of the Lord because they have chased comforts in this life. But even Christians sometimes fail to see the importance of being ready. Jesus urges us to be ready because can't know for certain when He will come (Matthew 24:24).

### **GOING DEEPER**

**Where, besides Jesus, have you looked for peace and security (for example, material possessions, impressing people, standing out at sports, band, cheerleading, or something else)?**

**How are we doing, as a group, at encouraging each other to be ready for Jesus's return? How can we do better?**

### **APPLICATION**

**What do "you yourself know very well" about Jesus's return (v. 2)?**

**What would change in your life this week if you lived like someone fully prepared for Jesus's return?**

**Who are the people in your life who are seeking peace and security outside of Jesus and His gospel message? What are some ways you can help them become ready for the day of the Lord?**

### **PRAYER**

Ask God to help you better understand the urgency of telling people about Jesus so they can be ready for His return. Confess to God the things that distract you from living in expectation of Him and ask Him to give you renewed focus on the things that really matter.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage. We will pause our study of 1 Thessalonians and study the importance of worship in the life of a disciple of Christ:*

**September 18, 2022 --- Hebrews 10:14-18**

## COMMENTARY

**1 Thessalonians 5:1.** Although Paul was still writing concerning the coming of Christ, he shifted his focus away from how the Lord will come to what that coming will mean for different people. Evidently the Thessalonians had been taught concerning the return of Christ, for Paul began by saying, about times and dates we do not need to write to you. He then went on to reinforce what he must have talked with them about. The “dates” and “times” can be translated as epochs and crises. This phrase refers to a time period and to the conditions of a particular time. Both are secrets, hidden with God (Acts 1:7), not known by anyone else, even the angels or Jesus (Matt. 24:36).

**5:2.** Paul declared, The Lord will come like a thief in the night. This possibly refers to the “times” in verse 1. The imagery is taken from Jesus’ teaching in Luke 12:39-40: “If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” The suddenness and surprise of Christ’s coming was well understood. A thief does not call up and ask if he can stop by at 2:30 in the morning. He just comes ... when most people are sleeping.

**5:3.** Paul expanded on Christ’s return by using the imagery of a pregnant woman’s labor pains. Just when everyone is thinking things are fine, when no one seems worried or concerned, when life is going well, then Christ appears. But the contrast is even more dramatic. People are saying and thinking peace and safety, while destruction is actually what happens. The people who will be caught by surprise are the unbelievers, the great masses of people throughout the world. It is not clear whether they are feeling secure and well economically and politically, or whether they feel “safe” spiritually, believing there is no God to worry about.

Whatever the source of their security, it will be suddenly and irrevocably shattered: they will not escape. The destruction is not physical death, but the spiritual separation and judgment which Christ brings. Christ the judge has come at last, and the verdict is hopeless ruin, the loss of all that gives purpose. Like a woman in labor, the judgment comes upon the unbelieving world suddenly, inevitably, with pain. There is no reversing the matter.

