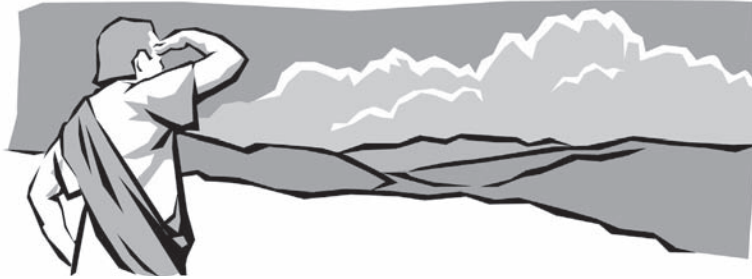


# Final Events

## (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11)



### SABBATH—AUGUST 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11; Genesis 3:15–24; Isaiah 13:6–9; Luke 21:34–36; Romans 1:18.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But we belong to the day. So let us control ourselves. Let us put the armor of faith and love on our chest. Let us put on the hope of salvation like a helmet” (1 Thessalonians 5:8, NIV).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** We know that Christ's second coming is real. Let us always be ready.

**IN THIS WEEK'S VERSES, THE SECOND COMING IS STILL THE IMPORTANT THEME (IDEA; TOPIC).** But the focus (place to put our attention) is changing. Paul is now more concerned about the believers getting ready for Jesus' return (and for the judgment). Verses in chapter 4 were encouraging. Paul wants the Thessalonians to know that when the end comes, the final result will be much more positive than they were expecting. Now that the Thessalonians understand better the facts about Jesus' return, the question is how to get ready for it.

The issue in the church then seems to have been “peace and security” (safety) with some members trying to figure out when the Second Coming would take place. Through prophecy (special messages from God about the future), the Thessalonians hoped to be able to figure out when the final events were coming so that they would know when to get ready. As a result, some could have lived then without any sense of feeling rushed.

Who among us today cannot relate? The longer we are here, the easier it is to lose that sense of pressing need. So, we, too, need to listen to Paul's words here.

**SUNDAY—AUGUST 26****THE TWO SIDES OF JUDGMENT  
(Genesis 3:15–24)**

**Read Genesis 3:15–24. List the different ways that God judged Adam and Eve, both positively and negatively, in these verses.**

The word *judgment* does not appear in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. But the verses are very much related to it. Paul wants the believers in Thessalonica to be aware that God’s judgment is not something that happens in heaven at the end of time. Instead, it is something that has real influence on their everyday lives.

Many people today are uncomfortable with the theme of judgment. They do not like to think about punishment. But the Bible example of judgment is broader than just threat, punishment, and death. For example, there is also a positive side to judgment. Simple everyday actions of mercy and kindness do not go unnoticed or unrewarded. (Read Matthew 10:42, for example.) God sees everything we do, whether positive or negative. And it all has meaning in the final end of things.

The two-sided nature of judgment is clearly seen in the earliest stories of the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, God judges the sin of Adam and Eve negatively. There are results of sin in childbirth, in farming, and in Adam and Eve being forced to leave the Garden. At the same time, God judges Adam and Eve positively. He makes Adam and Eve enemies of Satan. God also

mercifully clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins so they will not suffer greatly in the world now affected by sin with such things as harsh weather. Even more important, Adam’s and Eve’s skins were an example of the righteousness (holy life) of Christ that would cover their sin too.

In Genesis 4, God judges Cain negatively by sending him out of His land. But Cain also receives a positive judgment. God places a mark on him so that no one will kill him. At the time of the Flood, God judges the human race negatively by destroying it with the Flood. But God also judges the human race positively by giving it the ark (boat) as a way of escape (Genesis 6–9:17).

In Genesis 11, God mixes up the languages and scatters the people all over the earth, which is a negative judgment. Where is the positive judgment? It is found in Abraham’s call to be a blessing to “all peoples on earth” (Genesis 12:3, NIV). These “peoples” are the same people who were scattered at Babel years before (Genesis 11:9).



**God’s judgment has real influence on the lives of believers every day.**

**How does the truth of Christ as our Substitute in judgment make that judgment positive for us? Why must we always keep that important truth in mind when we think about judgment?**

### **MONDAY—AUGUST 27**

#### **SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED (1 Thessalonians 5:1–3)**

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1–3 and Acts 1:6, 7. What is the meaning of “the times and the seasons” (NKJV) in these verses?**

The words “the day of the LORD” are often found in Old Testament judgment verses. They describe a decisive, end-time action by God. This action is negative in that it is action taken against people who disobey Him (Isaiah 13:6–9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 30:2–12). In our verses for today, Paul joins this earlier understanding with the example of the thief that Jesus introduces in Matthew 24:43 and Luke 12:39.

There are three examples of Jesus’ return: (1) the day of the Lord, (2) a thief in the night, and (3) labor pains of a pregnant woman just before giving birth to her child. They all show the same point: the second coming of Jesus will be sudden and unexpected for the wicked. The end time is not the time to prepare for the end. The time to get ready is now.

Verse 4 makes it clear that Paul is not scolding the Thessalonians. They already know that the day of the Lord will come like “a thief in the night.” It

is others who cry “peace and safety.” They are the ones who will be surprised by the coming destruction.

In Acts 1:6, 7, the disciples of Jesus are asking Him about when the final events of earth’s history will happen. But Jesus does not satisfy their curiosity about these things. The time of the end is not for them to know. We can see that the wording “the times or seasons” (NKJV) means that people are trying to figure out when the end will take place. Trying to figure out the time of the end causes disappointment if the guessed time passes and Jesus has not returned. The other danger of setting a time is that some people place Jesus’ coming so far in the future that they stop living for Him now.

**What ideas in Luke 21:34–36 are also found in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11?**

According to Luke 21:34, many people try to escape from spiritual responsibility by using alcohol or having a good time. Others may forget about getting ready for the end by worrying too much about life’s problems. The suddenness of the end means that the time is coming when there will be no escape for those who worry too much, those who are too lazy, or those who live only for the pleasures of this life. In the verses that follow Christ’s words in Luke 21:34–36, there is escape only for those who “watch.”

**How do we keep the right balance between doing the right things to**

**get ready and not going too far?  
Bring your answer to class.**



The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

## TUESDAY—AUGUST 28

### THE BELIEVER'S ADVANTAGE (1 Thessalonians 5:4, 5)

In the opening verses of the fifth chapter, Paul lists the condition of those who are not ready for Jesus' second coming. The Thessalonians already know that the Second Coming is certain. But they do not know when it will come. The surprise will be very terrible for those who are not ready. Some are not ready because they do not believe in the Second Coming. Others are not ready because they think they can delay getting ready until they think the end is near.

In the late 1950s, a young man heard a preacher say that Jesus was coming in 1964 and that the church had better get ready. The young man decided that because it was still a number of years away, he would not bother getting himself ready until 1962. In other words, the preacher's plan was to make people aware that Jesus' return was near.

But the young man thought he had plenty of time to get ready. Such delay is dangerous because you do not know if you will live through today. The good news is that we do not need to know when Jesus is coming in order to be ready now.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 5. What is the spiritual meaning of metaphors (word-pictures) like light and day, darkness and light? What parts of your life could be described as light, and what parts could be described as darkness? Think through what your answer might suggest.**



The Bible is a lamp that shows us the way.

In these verses, Paul begins a series of comparisons with day/night and darkness/light (a ruin/rescue comparison is also suggested in verse 3). He is saying that unbelievers will be surprised by the events of the end. But believers will not be surprised. Why? Because they live in the light. The Bible is “a lamp that shows me the way. . . . A light that guides me” (Psalm 119:105, NIV). Prophecy is given so that we can have enough information to help us to be

spiritually ready for whatever happens to us in the future.

Getting ready for the Second Coming involves investing serious time in studying the Word of God (Bible). Getting ready is the act of laying (putting) up treasure in heaven. Getting ready is about a daily surrender to the Lord.

There are many temptations in today's world, from TV or movies to mood-changing drugs. So, with these verses Paul is begging us through the halls of time: keep away from temptations. Put the Word of God first in your life. Then you will not be surprised by events, no matter how unexpected they may be.



Getting reading for Jesus' coming means laying up treasure in heaven.

### WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 29

#### CONTINUOUS WATCHFULNESS (1 Thessalonians 5:6–8)

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8. How does the drunken/sober example help us to better understand what it means to get ready for the second coming of Jesus?**

Paul begins verse 6 with “therefore” or “so then,” depending on the trans-

lation. He has established that true followers of Jesus are children of the light and of the day. In today's verses, Paul continues the example in order to encourage these followers to be more and more ready for Jesus' return. Verse 7 may be different. But verses 6 and 8 encourage the Thessalonians to be awake, sober, and ready for the challenges ahead.

Paul begins with the difference between asleep and awake. Because believers “belong to the day” (ESV), they should not sleep. The night is for sleeping. Paul is using a metaphor (word-picture). Here sleep means spiritual laziness or lack of interest (in verse 10 it means death). The wording “let us not sleep” means “don't [do not] even start” sleeping. Paul knows that the Thessalonians are already awake, but he encourages them to be more and more watchful.

Paul then encourages them to be sober rather than drunk. In the world in Paul's time, soberness was a word-picture for deep thinking or reasoning. By his use of it, Paul wants the Thessalonians to be thoughtful and careful in studying the Bible. Some use the Bible for date-setting and for trying to figure out mysteries God has not made known to them. Paul wants believers to be serious about studying the Bible in order to get ready for the time of the end. The sober/drunk comparison may also point back to the kind of spiritual control Paul has encouraged in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12.

The daytime is connected with being awake and sober. It is at night that people sleep, and it is often at night when they get drunk. But in verse 8, Paul



changes to the example of a military guard. Guards need to be awake and sober at all times, day and night. This is because soldiers need to be very careful when they are on watch duty. In the same way, Paul expects Christians to be very careful when they are getting ready for the Second Coming. Just as soldiers do, Christians should put on all of their spiritual equipment before taking their posts.

**Read Paul’s words in these verses as if he were writing to you alone. How would you put his words into action? That is, what should you do to change your life so that you are doing what Paul says?**

### THURSDAY—AUGUST 30

#### ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11)

As we have read in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, Paul has used examples to show the two sides of judgment when Jesus returns. In our verses for today (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11), Paul shows the difference between anger and salvation. Believers can have faith in the last days because in Christ there is promise that they are “children of the light” (NIRV).

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:8–11. What is the important message in these verses? What is the hope that Paul is talking about? Why can we claim it for ourselves? How is the gospel shown in these verses?**

Many people today feel that the Bible

shows God’s punishment only as a part of the culture of Bible times rather than the present truth about God. But that is a false idea. It is true that, in the Bible, God adjusted His truth to the limits of human language. But the understanding of God’s punishment is not limited to the Old Testament only. It is everywhere in the New Testament too. Even Jesus speaks of it (Luke 21:23; John 3:36). And Paul writes about it (Romans 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:10), and the visions of Revelation mention it (Revelation 6:16, 17; Revelation 15:1). So, we cannot ignore this understanding. It must show us something very important about God and the plan of salvation, or God would not have bothered to share it with us.

We cannot go deeply into the matter here. But we must be clear that God’s anger is not like our anger. God is just. His anger against sin is just. God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8, 9). The Bible understanding of God’s punishment shows a nation that needs justice for lawbreakers who abuse others and make them suffer. Those who are stubborn about being wicked will be punished and destroyed. We have all broken the law of God. So, we all should be punished for justice’s sake. But the life, death, and resurrection (return to life from the dead) of Christ gives us hope of salvation.

That is the good news about God’s justice that shines through 1 Thessalonians 5:8–11. God’s purpose for us is not punishment or justice but grace<sup>1</sup> and salvation. And in Christ, God has given the protection from destruction in the judgment. This is why

1. grace—God’s gift of mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.

Paul thought that God’s justice was a reason for encouragement rather than fear (1 Thessalonians 5:11). In Christ, we never need to face God’s punishment because, on the cross, Jesus faced it for us.

Talk about good news!

### FRIDAY—AUGUST 31

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “There is need of watchfulness. Our own hearts are evil. We are surrounded by the weaknesses of the flesh. And Satan is set to destroy us. We may be off our guard, but our enemy is never lazy. Knowing that Satan is a tireless worker, let us not sleep, as do others, but ‘watch and be sober.’”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 5, page 409.

“Some seem to feel that they must be good and must prove to the Lord that they have changed before they can claim His blessing. But . . . Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are—sinful, helpless, dependent. We say that we are children of the light, not of the night nor of darkness. Then, by what right do we have to be unbelieving?”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, page 150.

“Most of the people who claim to be Christians . . . are living for the world. Their faith has very little control over their pleasures. They claim to be children of the light. But they walk in darkness and are children of the night and of darkness.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 404.

“People of the world, who act as though there is no God, are much involved in selfish interests. But they will soon experience sudden destruction. And they shall not escape. . . . Dancing . . . and pleasure-seeking, drinking and smoking . . . having sex outside of marriage. . . . They go as an ox to the slaughter.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*,<sup>2</sup> page 26.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In class, ask the question, If Christ were to return tomorrow, would you be ready? Discuss the answers and the reasons given for them.
- ② Go over your answers to the question at the end of Monday’s lesson. How do we keep the balance between getting ready for Jesus’ return and living “normally” in society?
- ③ Has the Adventist focus on the end of time been a positive or negative influence in your life? How have your views on the end time changed over the years? Why is an understanding of the plan of salvation so important for a clear understanding of last-day events?

**SUMMARY:** In 1 Thessalonians 5: 1–11, Paul encourages all Christians to be faithful in getting ready for the second coming of Jesus. When we accept the gospel, we become children of the light. As we live out the gospel in faith, hope, and love, we copy more and more of Jesus’ character (who Jesus is). If we are ready to die in Christ today, we will be ready if Jesus comes today.

2. evangelism—the act of spreading the gospel to the world.