

The revelation of a secret coming of the Lord Jesus for His own in chapter 4 fills out the picture Paul had given them while with them. Even though only a few weeks old they were aware of the times and seasons prophesied in the Old Testament. Perhaps some Jewish believers among them also helped them with this from their Old Testament scriptures. They knew of the coming of the Messiah to reign. They had no need of a revelation of this from Paul. They knew that the Day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night. People on earth will not be ready for it. In fact they will apparently be enjoying a wonderful time of worldwide peace and safety. Something extraordinary will have happened to bring this about. Peace and safety has been the dream of mankind but an impossible dream until now. Not World Wars, nuclear weapons, the United Nations or police actions, such as the current war on terror, are successful for long before another threat arises. I suppose this period of peace and safety comes through the first horseman of Revelation 6 when the Lord opens the first seal. He allows a great and powerful warrior/leader (later called the Beast) to take power over the whole earth, enforcing peace. He will use the power of the god of this world, Satan. Now that the Holy Spirit has been taken out of the way, 2Thessalonians 2:7, he acts to show God he can bring peace even if God couldn't. But it won't last, and soon the terrors of the tribulation period burst upon them. This is forecast by the Lord Himself as recorded in the four gospels and The Revelation.

Paul says the Thessalonians won't be surprised by it. Why? Because they won't be here to experience it. We won't either. They certainly knew of it and that it is coming upon the world, so even if it was in their future, Paul didn't need to tell them that they wouldn't be surprised by it. No. Rather Paul in assuring them simply points out they are not "children of wrath." They will not experience the wrath of God poured out on this poor, wicked world during those seven terrible years of the seventieth week remaining of Daniel's prophecy. And poured out it will be—seven bowels full,

Revelation 16:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials [bowels] of the wrath of God upon the earth.

He says "ye are all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness." "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." These verses clearly assert "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" will be gone when the times and seasons forecast in the Old Testament resume their course. As Paul shows in Romans 11 all unfulfilled promises and judgements are

only being held in abeyance and will yet come to pass.

This destruction will come suddenly but is sure! As sure as labor comes to a woman with child. It comes at the time when the wickedness of the world has reached full term. It will be unescapable! Painful! And there will be no "C-sections" or epidural shot to relieve it! But at the same time God will save out a remnant of Judah to inherit the land in the kingdom of the Messiah.

Jeremiah 30:3 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. 4 And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. 5 For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6 Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

What grace!

But back to our destiny. What are we to do in the meantime, while we are still here awaiting the rapture? And, seven years later, to reign with Him. Sleep?

Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Not sleep! We are to watch and be sober. Keep the "word of His patience." What is that? It means that it is not now His time to reign. It means that "my kingdom is not of this world." It is spiritually night in this world. We are not children of it. We are lights in it. Therefore do not let it lull us to sleep. We have armor to protect us while walking in this hostile place. Faith, Hope and Love. Our fearful and unbelieving hearts protected by the breastplate of faith and love. Our minds protected from fearful thoughts by the hope of salvation as a helmet. We are secure. Our future **bodily** salvation is secure. We are **appointed** to obtain it **by** none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. We are safe whether we are alive and remain or have died, asleep in Jesus. We are even secure if we have failed to watch and be sober and He finds us sleeping when He comes for us. Are we like His disciples who repeatedly fell asleep in the garden when He asked them to watch with Him and to pray? But despite that we shall live together with Him. What grace! What a blessed promise! What a blessed Hope! Soon! The Lord is near. Watch, be sober and pray. Watch and be ye ready!

By Ron Canner, October 19, 2005.