

**TITLE: THE 2<sup>ND</sup> COMING – DON'T BE IN THE DARK**

**TEXT: 1 THESS 5:1-13**

**INTRO:** I am amazed at how many predictions have come & gone regarding Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. In 1179, John of Toledo predicted the end of the world would come in 1186, based on the alignment of many planets. He was wrong. Pope Innocent III predicted Christ would come in 1284. He computed this date by adding 666 years to the date Islam was founded. Christ didn't come. Ellen White (7<sup>th</sup> day Adv.) – several predictions, incl. 6/27/1850. Nope! People have always (and will always) try to predict the day (or year) of Christ's return. Apparently this had begun at latest by the time Paul wrote 1 Thess 5. But instead of providing a date, Paul provided the proper attitude.

**I. "DARKNESS" REGARDING THE 2<sup>ND</sup> COMING (v. 1-3):**

Paul makes a play on the word "darkness" in v. 4-5. Darkness can mean "not knowing" (being "kept in the dark"), or it can be a reference to wickedness (**1 Jn 1:6** - "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie...").

A. (v. 1-2) "Darkness" of not knowing

"But of the times (length/space of time) & seasons (a fixed time; specific occasion/moment)" – of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming (cont. from ch. 4 – it's important to Paul now to talk about the issue of *when*). You don't need me to write about the *time* He's coming back, because you already know that nobody knows when (they knew this by Christ's teaching – **Mt 24:36; 25:13**; cf. **2 Pet 3:10**).

B. (v. 3) "Darkness" of thinking you know

So when they (prognosticators) shall say "Peace & safety," (in essence this is what people say today when they claim to know the day of Christ's return – every day up to that day will be peace and safety. But not on that day! And that day is unknown. So when people think Jesus is coming back on a certain day 5 years from now, they'll think they can live however they want until that day, then repent (maybe)!

**II. "LIGHT" REGARDING THE 2<sup>ND</sup> COMING (v. 4-8):**

A. (v. 4-5) He says, "But you aren't in darkness, that that day should overtake you." This can't refer to not knowing the day, since *nobody* knows. But rather, true darkness in regard to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming isn't not knowing; it's not being prepared! You are children of **light & day**, not **night & darkness**. This is spiritual night/darkness (wickedness, anything outside the light).

B. (v. 6-8) Result of this light in us:

(v. 6) Don't sleep like others (spiritual indifference; not acknowledging God & the truth). People then were the same as people today – they live day after day with a complete ignorance of God and what's coming. But we are to **watch** (awake, vigilant) & **be sober** (not drunken; clearheaded, calm, discreet, watchful)!

(v. 7) He equates sleeping (spiritually) & drunkenness, both happening at night. He is contrasting darkness & light, night & day, sleeping & watching, drunken & sober.

(v. 8) Those of the day (Christians) – be sober (v. 6). How? "Putting on the breastplate of faith & love..." A breastplate & helmet are for protection (against the sudden destruction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming - v. 3). Faith (obedient belief & trust in God), love (proper attitude towards others), hope of salvation (focus on the final reward at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming) (these 3 – **1 Cor 13:13**).

**III. COMFORT REGARDING THE 2<sup>ND</sup> COMING (v. 9-13):**

A. (v. 9-10) Reason for comfort

(v. 9) He's contrasted darkness & light; night & day; sleeping & watching; drunken & sober; **now** wrath & salvation! A comforting statement: God has appointed us to (placed us in) wrath. This isn't His desire, and certain not the destination He's chosen for His followers. But rather salvation by Jesus Christ who died for us.

(v. 10) In order that, whether we wake (live) or sleep (die), we should live with Him. \*Here Paul returns to the topic of **4:13-18**.

B. (v. 11-13)

(v. 11) So comfort yourselves & edify one another! They need to rely on each other, not just Paul. So Paul turns the topic briefly to their own leaders.

(v. 12-13) Know & esteem (account, consider) very highly the leaders of the congregation (elders):

1. They labor (feel fatigue, be wearied) among you. The office of an elder is a good "**work**" (**1 Tim 3:1**).

2. They are over you (preside, rank, rule) in the Lord – today this can only refer to elders (since there are no apostles).

3. They admonish you (warn, exhort), just like a shepherd with the sheep (feeding the flock – **1 Pet 5:1-2**).

"Be at peace among yourselves" – specifically regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. But this would apply to anything in the church. As long as we are children of the light (v. 5), we shouldn't let anything trouble us. God's promise of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ is sure. If we remain faithful, we will be partakers of this glory whether we are living or already dead when He comes. This should cause us to be at peace with *everything* in this life.

**CONCLUSION:** So many have wasted their time trying to guess when the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming (or end of the world) will be. Those people who have truly believed in a prediction of this day have been known to sell their possessions and give them to their "church" shortly before the day (2 Pet 3:10-11). Then they all gather at their church building and wait...and wait! They waste time and money on a fruitless endeavor, looking foolish before, during, and after the predicted day. Paul says that we are NOT in this darkness. Christians are not in the dark. We don't worry; we watch! And we do this by putting on faith, love, and hope, and working until He comes (**Mt 24:46**).