

I THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

“HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE END OF THE WORLD”

God's preview of what the end of the world may look like was perhaps best captured in the terrors of WWII. Have you ever thought about the events surrounding the maniacal and demonized reign of Adolph Hitler? Listen to a brief biographical sketch of this forerunner of the Antichrist.

The student of history who has read carefully the life of Adolf Hitler must conclude that the man was driven by strange powers of evil. His ideas about the weakness and wickedness of the Jewish race and the supremacy of the German race would have to be satanically oriented. A cursory reading of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, would convince most that the man was demon possessed¹.

In 1929, with the arrival of the great economic crisis, the Hitler movement became the strongest dynamic force in the history of Germany. In 1934 Hitler ordered the death of all radical leaders in his own SS. He actually murdered in cold blood every man he suspected did not agree wholeheartedly with all of his ideas. Such action is taken only by a person under Satan's control (John 8:44; 1 John 3:12). The *demon-prince* of Germany was at work.

The period of greatest catastrophe for the Jews commenced in 1933, with Hitler's rise to power. At his command more than six million Jews were put to death by the Nazis, an estimated nine billion dollars worth of Jewish property was plundered. Close to one million Jewish industrial and commercial enterprises were plundered or destroyed. In paroxysms of anger this demon-possessed man did what no ordinary human being would ever think of doing. Studies in philosophy and sociology will not help us understand why some persons behave as they do. The one Book that gives to man the true cause of such behavior is God's Word.

It has long been known, for instance, that Adolph Hitler² consulted horoscopes and that Nazi Germany had its Federal Commission for Occultism, the first time that a modern

¹ Lehman Strauss, *Demons, Yes-but Thank God for Good Angels*, p. 26-27.

² John Phillips, *Exploring the Future*, p. 227-29.

state officially recognized the existence of the occult and created a government department to oversee it.

People who had personal contact with Hitler often spoke of the strange hypnotic power he was able to exert. Hitler's former lawyer and his governor general for occupied Poland, Hans Frank, while sitting in his prison cell at Nuremberg, spoke of Hitler's disconcerting stare. He described it as "the stare of an insensitive psychopath." He confessed to the prison psychologist that in serving Hitler he had been "in league with the devil."

Deitrich Eckart, one of the seven founders of the Nazi party, initiated Hitler into occultism. Hitler then became a member of the powerful Thule Group in Germany, an occult society that included judges, lawyers, doctors, university professors, industrialists, surgeons, military men, and members of the nobility. The members of this secret society were Satanists who practiced the black arts and communicated with demons. Eckart was the reigning high priest. Hitler was the promised messiah whose coming the mediums had foretold. Initiation into the deeper mysteries of this powerful and widespread fellowship of occultists included committing atrocities as part of the ritual magic. Horrible rites opened Hitler's soul to possession by powerful demons. The whole story has been told in a remarkable book, *The Spear of Destiny*, in which much about Hitler and the Nazis, usually left untouched by more conventional histories, is explained.

The demons that controlled the demented soul of Adolph Hitler lured him and Germany into World War II and then abandoned both him and his country to their fate. Heinrich Himmler and many members of the dreaded SS also were initiates of Satanic cults. One of the secret aims of the Nazi leaders was to impose a new world religion on mankind once the war was won. In this religion the swastika would replace the cross, Hitler would be the messiah, and demons would guide the destinies of mankind.

Hitler and his fellow conspirators came close to succeeding. They failed because the time was not yet ripe in the counsels of God for the forces of Satan to triumph. However, the whole Nazi era was a dress rehearsal for the coming of the beast and the consequent baptism of unregenerate mankind into just such a religion.

How can we prepare for the end of the world? By understanding God's Word ! What will a believer be like who is prepared? They will be:

1. LIVING CONFIDENTLY v. 1-2 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.
2. ANTICIPATING APOSTASY v. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.
3. EXPOSING THEIR IDENTITY v. 4-7 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

4. PROTECTING THEIR SPIRITUAL LIVES v. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.
5. TRUSTING GOD v. 9-10 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.
6. HELPING OTHERS v. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Religious Deception is so surrounding us that it is increasingly difficult to discern. For the past year one of the best selling books in America is a book of False Doctrine. This book deceives people about true Biblical Christianity. Author Betty J. Eadie in Embraced By The Light, Goldleaf Press: Placerville, CA, 1992, (147) sets forth many false teachings. Note with me these errors taught in this book:

- page XIX - Joseph Campbell great mythologist "problems from lack of collective vision" [no, it is sin. all have sinned Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NKJV); Genesis 3: remember Satan in the Garden said to Eve, you need not obey rather you need extra knowledge...];
- page 5 - Out of Body Experience 1946 in arms of man with sparkling bright white beard [2 Corinthians 11:3-4;
- page 31 - "Existence before my life on earth --- Death was actually rebirth into a greater life". (Hebrews 9:27-28 tells us that Reincarnation is not true. It is part of Satan's lie in the Garden]; page 34 - "My children...were individual spirits with intelligence developed before their lives on earth." [no, Hebrews 9:26-27 says we live and die only once not endless cycle, etc of Hinduism]
- page 44 "Jesus Christ was the Son of God, though he himself was also a God" (Mormonism and JW error see Isaiah 43:10; 48:16; Zechariah 12:10 on the trinity)
- page 45 "All religions are necessary...no one church can fulfill everybody's needs....[This is Universalism, Jesus said John 14:6); Matthew 7:13-23];
- page 47 "We assisted God...in creation" [Colossians 1.15-16];
- page 52 "Spirit Brothers and sisters entered physical bodies for their turns upon earth." [no God created the first two humans in Gen 1-2 and then has given conception and put life in each who are born. There is no pre-existence of the soul in Scripture];
- page 55 "Each element, each particle of creation has intelligence in it...filled w/Spirit" (Gen 3. Panentheism);
- page 57 "Positive and negative energy" (I John is a refutation of this teaching called Gnosticism); page 62 - "Spirit in us...can ward off illness, heal." [no, this is the error of Christian Science, Theosophy and other cults];
- page 84 "Our prayers can help spirit (those who died) beings", Some "atheists" need time lingering in "tunnel" before coming to God (Universalism again, God says Hebrews 9:26-27)].

- page 93 "Memories passed on in cells" [we don't have repeated lives according to the Bible];
- page 119 "I made them (Jesus and angels) promise...they would take me back" [Jesus is answerable to the Father only in John 5,8]

Today's false gospel is spawning "Christians" who have been attracted to a "Christ" who has the attributes of Antichrist³. This widely-presented false "Christ" no longer calls sinners to repentance before a holy God but excuses ungodly behavior as a psychological problem resulting from traumas suffered in childhood.

- Instead of requiring his disciples to "deny self and take up the cross," he teaches them to love and accept themselves and to recognize their inherent "self-worth."
- Nor does this "Christ" promise the "meek" that they will inherit the earth, but offers "self-assertion" training.
- Instead of blessing those that "mourn," he warns against "low self-esteem" and promotes a new "positive self-image."
- And rather than promising heaven to the "poor in spirit," this false "Christ" offers to the financially poor the enticing gospel of a hundredfold return for gifts to certain ministries.

One area of Biblical study over which many good and godly Christians disagree is the realm of whether or not we as believers can enter and go through the Tribulation. I have come to the Biblical conviction that the church will be taken to heaven before the Tribulation, and then will return to the earth with the Lord to bring the Tribulation to a close (Rev. 19:11ff). Looking at the text of 1 Thessalonians with this perspective finds it filled with verses emphasizing the Rapture of the church. Second Thessalonians continues this idea and explains the 2nd Coming revelation of the Lord with the church when He comes to judge the "earthdwellers" at the end of the Tribulation.

Even though Christians differ on the exact details of prophecy, the powerful spiritual exhortations must never be lost. One godly commentator who holds a different view from my own well stated this Dr. Leon Morris⁴ in his excellent commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5: 1–3. When discussing whether believers will escape the Tribulation or be left on earth to pass through that terrible event he says, "The language of this chapter could be understood either way." Then he affirmed his own position that the church will go through the Tribulation. But listen to his gracious conclusion: "I fully recognize that other interpretations are possible, and suggest that it is not wise for any of us to condemn those who see such passages differently."

Because of Christ's indwelling presence we need to be able to have differing views on unclear doctrines without contentiousness. I believe we shall be delivered from "the wrath to come" (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9–10), and that the Lord wants us to live in the constant expectation of His coming. There are excellent defenses of the other positions, and godly men who hold to them. But I must lovingly disagree with them.

³ Dave Hunt

⁴ The Thessalonian epistles, The New International Commentary (Eerdmans, 1959), p. 152.

Each New Testament letter has a special message, or blessing, that is uniquely its own.

- Romans, for example, emphasizes the righteousness of God and shows that God is righteous in His dealings with both sinners and believers.
- First Corinthians focuses on the wisdom of God.
- 2 Corinthians on the comfort of God.
- Galatians is the freedom letter and
- Philippians is the joy letter, while
- Ephesians stresses the wealth that we have in Christ Jesus.

What is the special blessing in the message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians? It is the message of the return of Jesus Christ and how this vital doctrine can affect our lives and churches and make us more spiritual. Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians ends with reference to the coming of Jesus Christ, and each reference relates the doctrine to a practical aspect of Christian living. Here is a summary:

- 1:10—salvation and assurance
- 2:19–20—soul-winning and service
- 3:11–13—stability in Christian living
- 4:13–18—strength in sorrow
- 5:23–24—sanctification of life

Jesus Christ both unites and divides. Those who have trusted Him as Saviour are united in Christ as God's children. We are members of His body and "all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). When Jesus Christ returns in the air, we shall be "caught up together" (1 Thes. 4:17) never to be separated again.

Paul was never ashamed to ask Christians to pray for him. In at least seven of his letters, he mentioned his great need for prayer support (Rom. 15:30–32; Eph. 6:18–19; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Thes. 5:25; 2 Thes. 3:1; Phile. 22). Paul and the believers in Corinth were helping each other (2 Cor. 1:11, 24).

- *Romans 15:30-32 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,³¹ that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.*
- *2 Corinthians 1:11 you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many. The greatest help we can give to God's servants is "helping together by prayer." The word sunhuperon translated "helping together" is used only here in the Greek New Testament and is composed of three words: with, under, work. It is a picture of laborers under the burden, working together to get the job accomplished. It is encouraging to know that the Holy Spirit also assists us in our praying and helps to carry the load (Rom. 8:26).*
- *Ephesians 6:18-20 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for*

all the saints—19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

- *Philippians 1: 19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,*
- *Colossians 4:3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,*
- *1 Thessalonians 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.*
- *2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,*
- *Philemon 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.*

FELLOW BELIEVERS AT YOUR SERVICE⁵

Paul said, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-6, sco). God has given a variety of gifts to His church.

Using Our Gifts

Some of the gifts were of a temporary nature; others are permanent. The temporary ones were miracles, hearings, and tongues. The permanent ones are these:

1. Prophecy (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 14:3), the ability to preach or proclaim God's truth to others for edification, exhortation, and comfort.
2. Teaching (Rom. 12:7), the ability to teach the truths of God's Word.
3. Faith (1 Cor. 12:9), the ability to trust God without doubt or disturbance, regardless of one's circumstances. People who are especially prone to anxiety would do well to get to know individuals gifted in this way, and follow their example.
4. Wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8), the ability to apply spiritual truth to life. Believers gifted this way are also good models for the anxious.
5. Knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8), the ability to understand facts. It is the academic side of comprehending biblical truth.
6. Discernment (1 Cor. 12:10), the ability to distinguish truth from error-to discern what is of God and what is satanic deception.
7. Mercy (Rom. 12:8), the ability to manifest Christ's love in acts of kindness.
8. Exhortation (Rom. 12:8), the ability to encourage, counsel, and comfort others with biblical truth and Christian love. Those prone to anxiety need to be humble enough to listen and value what these gifted individuals have to say.
9. Giving (Rom. 12:8), the ability to provide for the Lord's work and for others who have difficulty meeting their own material needs. It flows from a decision to commit all earthly possessions to the Lord.

⁵ MacArthur, *Anxiety Attacked*, p. 69-71.

10. Administration (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28), the ability to organize and lead in spiritual endeavors. It is also known as the gift of ruling or government.
11. Helps (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28), the ability to serve faithfully behind the scenes, assisting the work of the' ministry in practical ways.

All spiritual gifts are designed to edify the church (I Cor. 14:26). My gifts are not for my benefit, and your gifts are not for your benefit. We must edify one another "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Fellowship is an interchange of mutual care and concern through the agency of our spiritual gifts. Some of the ways that interchange manifests itself are when we:

1. Confess our faults to one another (James 5:16).
2. Edify one another (1 Thes. 5:11; Rom. 14:19).
3. Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).
4. Pray for one another (James 5:16).
5. Be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32).
6. Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21).
7. Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9). * Serve one another (Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10).
8. Comfort one another (1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11).
9. Restore one another (Gal. 6:1).
10. Forgive one another (2 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).
11. Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16).
12. Teach one another (Col. 3:16).
13. Exhort one another (Heb. 3:13; 10:25).
14. Love one another (Rom. 13:8; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11).

WE ARE TO BE ENCOURAGING FAITHFULNESS: Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?"

WE ARE TO BE ENCOURAGING OBEDIENCE: Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you

WE ARE TO BE ENCOURAGING PURITY: 1 John 2:28-3:3 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

