

Explore the Bible: April 24

Returning • I Thessalonians 5:1-11

By Cyndi Grace



Grace

A most amazing statement was made as Jesus ascended to heaven. It is found in Acts 1:10-11, *While He was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven" (CSB).*

Throughout the Bible, whenever an angel gave a message it was fulfilled exactly. This is wonderful news to those of us who follow Jesus. He IS coming back! There WILL BE an end to all the evil in the world. We will live with Him for eternity.

We just don't know when. That is why the Apostle Paul clarified for the Thessalonians the need to be ready. He likened Christ's return to a thief in the night. A thief does not make an appointment so you can be ready to defend yourself. He comes when you least expect it and usually in the dark of the night while most are sleeping. You must prepare.

Jesus spoke similarly in a parable found in Matthew 25:1-11;13, *At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. When the*

foolish took their lamps, they didn't take oil with them; but the wise ones took oil in their flasks with their lamps. When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. In the middle of the night there was a shout: 'Here's the groom! Come out to meet him.' Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' The wise ones answered, 'No, there won't be enough for us and for you. Go instead to those who sell oil, and buy some for yourselves.' When they had gone to buy some, the groom arrived, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. Therefore, be alert, because you don't know either the day or the hour.

Clearly, Jesus (our bridegroom) will return! We don't know when, but we MUST be ready. The delay of His coming must not lull us into apathy.

In these 2000-plus years since Jesus' ascension, many have predicted His return. All have been wrong. We don't know when, but we are given signs for which to look. Jesus, in Matthew 24: 3-44, listed several and some would agree the signs are coming harder and more quickly than in the past.

Paul, in our Scripture this week, also uses the analogy of birth pangs. Having had two children, I well understand this. The closer to the actual birth of the child, contractions come harder and faster than they were at the beginning. Just about the time it becomes too much to bear, there is a sweet cry confirming new life has begun.

So, what are we to do in the waiting? We stay alert and shine! Paul said, *For you are all children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness" (I Thess. 5:5 CSB).*

The world needs light. It needs hope. If the church doesn't shine, then those in darkness will continue to flounder –

blinded by the enemy. Paul had restated Jesus' statement, *You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14 CSB).*

Because of this, we must live differently than those who live in darkness. We must be self-controlled. We must remain faithful even when all is crumbling around us. We cannot act like we have no hope and grumble and complain like the rest of the world. We must remember this is not our home but we have been left here to be light to so many who are stumbling in the darkness.

How are we doing? Are we light givers, showing a better way? Are you shining at work? In your home? How about at Wal-Mart? (ouch) or your local congregation? Our "city on a hill" is being watched. What are they seeing?

Jesus is coming again. That is wonderful news for Believers. Let's spend this time waking others to go with us!

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