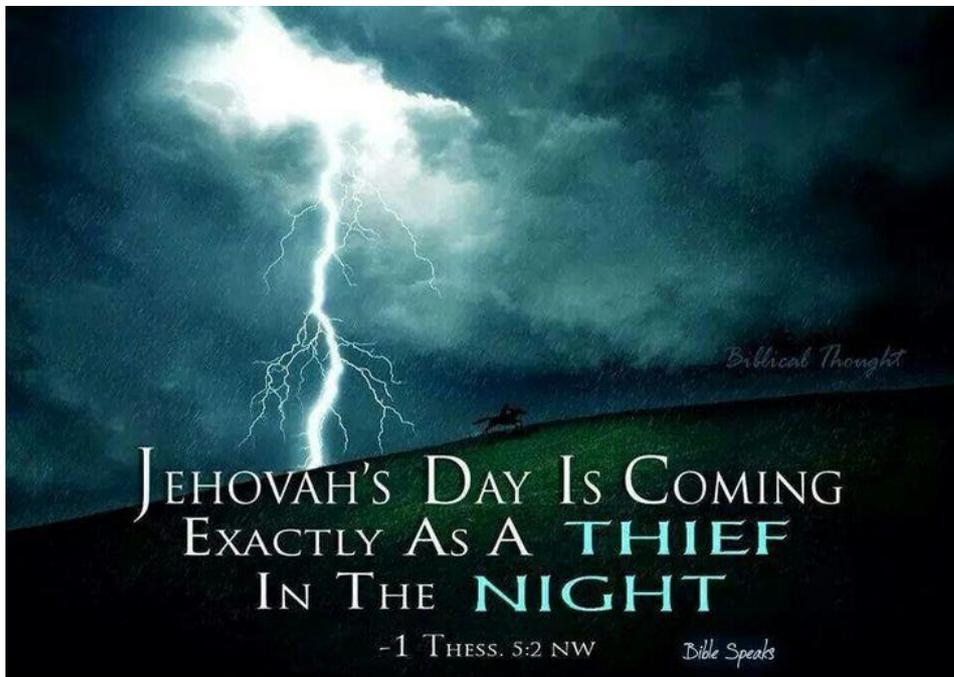


ARE YOU PREPARED FOR JEHOVAH'S DAY?



Imagine for a moment you are at home by yourself one afternoon. Your children are off at school or work and your husband or wife is also away for the day. They are off at work, shopping or running an errand.

It's a beautiful day. But then the sky and everything around you suddenly turns black. You check the lights. The switch is up but it's still pitch black and it's still the early part of the day.

Something's wrong! You reach for the phone to call your family to make sure they are safe but the phone doesn't work. You grab for your cell phone and it too doesn't work. You check and you have no running water, no electricity.

You're all alone, it's pitch black and there is nothing around you but dead silence. No sun, no wind, no sounds of birds chirping, nothing but still cold air. You sit thinking that the lights will come back on in a moment but they don't. So you sit there in the dark. For an hour, then 2, then 4 hours. What is now going through your mind?

You wonder, "is it here...? The end?" Matthew chapter 24 referred to a time where the sun would be darkened and the moon would not give forth light. "Was it figurative, or is it... is it... literal and is it happening to me right now?" Your mind starts to wander and worry, "Where is my mate, where are my children? Are they alright? Are they safe? What are they doing right now?"

Now let's jump into the lives of two more people in your area. They have experienced the same thing, complete darkness for hours. One man sits in the darkness of his home and he starts to think deeply. With the dead silence he starts to dwell on his life, his wife, his children, and he looks back at his spiritual record.

He bows his head in shame and he starts to tremble in fear. "This is it!" he says to himself. "I knew there would come a time when this would happen. When Jehovah would draw the line! When he would save the faithful and he would destroy the wicked." Where is my wife he wonders? "Where are my children? Are they OK? Are they safe?" I always meant to talk to them about this. To prepare them for this, "the what if's?" What if a disaster were to hit? What if we were to lose contact with one another?

What we should do to make sure we were safe both spiritually and physically? To make sure we had proper nourishment, both physical and spiritual! But I didn't. I never seemed to make the time to sit down with them and discuss these important matters. "Where are my dear brothers and sisters from the Kingdom Hall? Oh, I wonder how they are doing." You see, he hadn't been to a meeting for over 3 weeks.

"I got so caught up in work, and things, and anxieties. My car! My home! I had time to Bowl. I had time to play ball with the guys. I had time for extended vacations. But I didn't make the time to put that plan together for my family on where we should meet, where we would all go if this were to happen. I don't have light. I don't have water, I have little food.

I hope my family can make their way home. I hope someone can find me. I wish I would have made the time to plan better. I wish I would have provided more works to prove to Jehovah that I loved him." He bows his heads and starts to pray for the first time in many days. You see he often got so busy he forgot to do that too.

Across town there is another person. What is she doing? She too, sits in the silence, and is looking back on her life and the life of her family. She remembers the faithful and discreet slave speaking about a time when something like this might happen. When Jehovah would draw the line. When it would be too late for a person to go back and change their life's patterns. When the decision would be made whether each person would be saved or they would lose out on eternal life based on their deeds and what came first in their lives. She goes to a closet where she and her family had placed many things in, many months earlier and she pulls out a lantern.

She lights the lantern, sits back, opens up her Bible, and she starts to read and reminisce about what she and her family have done with "their" time over the years.

She reflects on the words of 1 Thess. 5:6 where it was written "Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." She is also reminded of the scriptures in Matthew 24 where Jesus warned his followers to "Keep on the Watch." and to "prove yourselves ready?" "Did I do that?" She asks herself. "Did we do it as a family?"

She is able to nod her head yes in the faint light of the room.

When the faithful slave continued to remind them to keep spiritually awake she and her family listened and followed closely to what was recommended. They read the daily text together and discussed it over dinner as a family. They didn't miss a day. They read the weekly Bible assignment as a family at the completion of their regular weekly family study.

She smiles when she thinks of the words written at Hebrews 10:24, 25, where they were commanded to not forsake the gathering together with their spiritual family. Oh how she and her family loved their congregation. "We did just so" she reasons. "We made every meeting we could unless we were sick, we never missed a circuit assembly and NEVER missed even one day of a District Convention. How could we?" she says out loud.

She then starts to think deeply and does a self-evaluation about the fruitages of the spirit and what role they played in her life. Did she display them to a reasonable degree in the congregation? Within the family arrangement? And in the territory she was assigned to preach in?

She reasons in her mind, "I know I displayed 'love' towards the friends and my family. I was active in the ministry and showed love toward those in the community. I started Bible studies! I brought some in the truth and even pioneered with my husband and children when I could buy out the time even though it was a challenge for us to do it as a family. I found so much joy in serving side by side with the faithful older sisters in the congregation." 'Kindness'..... I cared for those who got sick in the congregation. I even prepared meals for them!"

In regards to the fruitage, peace "I remember that time I had that problem with that sister in the congregation but we were both quick to heed the council in Matthew where we were told to go and attempt to make peace with the other person. I remember having to read that scripture at Matt. 5: 23, 24 many times that day I got the courage to approach her to make peace with her.

But I realized that Jehovah wouldn't accept my worship if it wasn't pure and it wouldn't have been pure if I had held on to that resentment I had against her."

"And in regards to my husband, we both read Ephesians together many times when we couldn't find anything else nice to say to each. We'd pick up the Bible and read this out loud and it always broke the ice for us to make peace with one another." She turns to her Bible and reads the scripture. Read Eph. 4: 25-27, 32.

"We have had troubles just like everyone else but we love each other and we have worked hard for each other for over 25 years now and I have to say our marriage is stronger than ever."

At that moment she hears a noise at the front door. She lifts her lantern and walks towards the door. Tears run down her face as she sees her teenage son and daughter walk safely through the door. Minutes later her husband arrives home safely and joins them.

They circle around each other in the dimly lit room and hold each other tightly as tears of joy run down their faces. You see, as a family they had planned on what they would do and where they would meet when this day came. And here they were, safely united together.

In this closet where she went to earlier to grab the lantern there is also a first aid kit safely packed away in case any one of them got wounded. They had also placed plenty of water and food in that closet that would last them many days.

How happy they were that they listened to the advice provided them by their Elders who followed so closely the direction they were given by the faithful and discreet slave. As a family they remained focused, united and active in the ministry. They were present at all the meetings. They always kept up with their family and personal study.

They communicated openly and honestly with one another and displayed great love towards one another. They had a disaster plan that they worked on together. In this plan they knew exactly where they would meet and they knew exactly where the food was and how much there would be to sustain them.

They headed to that closet that held their food supplies, grabbed a few things, and they ate a quiet meal together as a family in the dimly lit room.

Before this meal they bowed their heads to Jehovah and the father began to provide an emotional prayer of thanks to Jehovah for all the direction that he had provided them throughout the years through the congregation meetings and assemblies they attended. And he prayed about how thankful they were for the spiritual family they had become through the hard work and efforts on the part of each family member.

He thanked Jehovah for the fact that they had all made it home safely from the chilling events that they had all experienced that day. Each family member joined in with an "Amen," ate the meal and they waited patiently as a family to see what would happen next.

Friends, which person are you most like?

The one that always had the best intentions but he allowed things to get in the way of planning for his and his families safety and their secure future? Or are you the one that made sure that all family members were cared for spiritually, emotionally and physically? The one who listened intently and did "just so" when they were directed by the faithful and discreet slave and the local elders? (Silence)

Friends, you don't have to answer that question right now. Look around you. It is still light. We can still see. Complete darkness hasn't hit yet. We still have time left to make adjustments in our lives although time is running out.

Have some of you shortchanged yourself when it comes to personal study? Do you work late to try and provide a more comfortable lifestyle for your spouse and your family and yet you leave no time to sustain yourself spiritually? If you're single have you worked those long overtime hours to have that nicer car, home, or to take those nicer vacations? If so save your soul and make the necessary changes!

Study God's Word daily. Ponder on the things read, meditate on them. Be ever present at all the meetings! Encourage those around you by your attendance at every meeting and allow yourself to be encouraged by being here, listening to their heartfelt comments.

Is there anyone here tonight that you have a strained relationship with? If so, correct it and make peace....tonight! Or call them tomorrow, but make peace! If you are at odds with your mate or your children, put down the sword, or those harsh words and make peace. Hold on to each other tightly.

As family heads if it's not already part of your daily or weekly routine, make family worship part of your daily and weekly custom. Train your young ones to honor Jehovah by your example. Train your teenagers that the only safe place to put their future in is in the hands of our heavenly Father Jehovah. Save and protect your spouse and your children. We hand them off to Satan's world each day for 6-8 hours when they go off to school and work.

Are we doing enough at home to combat what is thrown at them when they are away from the home? Hopefully we can say "yes". If not, make those adjustments.

Become skilled communicators, teachers, and make sure your home is a safe haven for all family members. A place to worship Jehovah peacefully...as a united family!

And when disaster strikes and it will do you have a plan in place? Where will you and your family come together? Will you have food to eat, water to drink, first aid supplies to assist those that might be hurt in both your family and here in the congregation? If you say "no" or "I'm not sure" to any of these questions correct them now, put them in place as soon as possible while you still have light and you can see. While you still have time and can still plan. The curtains are closing on this system and its getting ever darker. Jehovah's Day is coming as a thief and it will not delay! Which one of these roles played out tonight will you play? Based on what you are doing today and what you will do moving forward will determine the outcome.

Are you prepared for Jehovah's Day?

(Contributed)

(See also: w07 12/15 p11 -15, jd chap 3 p29 – 41, it-2 p22, bhs chap 19 p197 – 206, it-1 p594 – 595)