



DAY 6

Friday, December 7

(Candle of Hope)

I THESS 4:13–5:11

“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:8

Cloud Rider

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For the Lord himself will come down from heaven...

In the crush of dark days, hope is wrung out of us like water from a dish rag. Day after day passes. Nothing changes. The world continues on infested with sin. Family and friends die without the slightest hint we are any closer to the day of our deliverance. Grief and despair creep into our souls and we wonder, “Where are you God? Will you ever bring about all that you promised?”

Paul reminds those who belong to Christ not to be ignorant like grieving men who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Using the language of war, he declares the assurance of our victory over death (4:14, 16) and the godless (5:3). The desire of our hearts soon will be met, “We will be with the Lord forever” (4:17).

What initiates this final deliverance in 4:16? It is the sound of a trumpet, the voice of the archangel and the command of God as he comes down from heaven. Such a trumpet blast always preceded God’s people in battle, declaring that war and victory were imminent (Numbers 10:9). It is the archangel who led the heavenly host into battle against the enemies of God in scripture (Revelation 12:7). As the Lord descended from his throne in heaven on behalf of Israel to war against those who opposed him, he consistently did so riding upon the glory

cloud (4:17). So too will Jesus, God incarnate, ride the clouds delivering his people, the new Israel, into the eternal land which he has promised (Matthew 24:30).

For this reason, Paul exhorts us not to lose hope as we put on our battle gear, the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of our salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8). As surely as the child-king who came into the world 2,000 years ago lived, died and was raised again, our salvation is guaranteed by the one who shall ride the clouds in cosmic battle and bring us into our eternal home. With such words, let us be encouraged and build one another up (4:18, 5:11) as we celebrate the coming of the Bethlehem babe, the Cloud Rider, the Warrior-King.

RESPOND:

DO: Find a cloud animal in the sky and imagine the day when Christ will take us home forever.

PRAY: Pray that Park Street Church remains a faithful witness until the day when He comes again.

