

God's Day of Shock & Awe

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the certainty of Christ's return and the importance of enduring trials with hope for eternal life.

Duration: 41:43

Scripture: Matthew 24:30, 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Topics: "Judgment Day"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the indisputable fact that Jesus is coming again. He describes it as the day of the Lord, a day of shock and awe promised by God. The preacher highlights that while the nations will mourn and realize judgment is coming, those who know the Lord will see it as a homecoming, a time of no more tears, sin, or trouble. The sermon also references a recent event of precision bombing in Baghdad, known as the night of shock and awe, to illustrate the power and magnitude of Jesus' coming with his angels in blazing fire.

Transcript

I'm so happy that Carol chose that song to sing because it's the perfect song as we open our verse, our Bibles to what I want to talk to you about. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians. If you don't have a Bible, ask the person next to you to look on.

Thank you, choir. 2 Thessalonians. That's after, obviously, 1 Thessalonians, but it's after Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians.

So, everybody have it, 2 Thessalonians, the first chapter. And we're going to read in the third verse. The name of this message is called, God's Day of Shock and Awe.

2 Thessalonians 1, verse 3, We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more. Look how a church was looked at in those days. We thank God for you, not because the meetings are good, or because there's a lot of people coming, or your building is nice, but your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

They didn't just love, they increased in love. Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about this church in Thessalonica, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. Persecution of Christians, very real thing back then.

Still is today in certain places. Boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials that you are enduring. All of this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering.

They weren't just suffering, they were suffering for the kingdom. God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you, and He will give relief to those who are troubled, and to us as well.

When? This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

This includes you because you believed our testimony to you. One night this week, the skies of Baghdad were lit up and with precision timing and precision accuracy, fifteen hundred cruise missiles landed on military and other strategic spots. The sky was lit up.

We've seen it over and over again on CNN or Fox News or whatever you watch. And the operation of that massive bombing to try to discourage even the making of war by the enemy, it was called by the military personnel of our country the night of shock and awe. A shock, everything coming down at once.

More landed in that one night than landed in the entire Gulf War back in 91. Shock and awe to tell people, lay down your arms, don't fight. And the reporters who saw it, the report that came said it was, it was awesome when you think of the power that modern weapons now have.

The ability, of course we're just using, our country's just using toys over there. We're using bombs that just take out one part of one building. But in the arsenal of our country and other countries unfortunately, are weapons that make what dropped on Hiroshima at the end of World War II in 1945, look like little toys.

In other words, now they're doing surgery over there but if a country just wanted to destroy another country, it would take less than probably three hours to take out a whole country. Just a couple hours, there'd be nothing left. Well that was this war, this war's night of shock and awe.

But God has in the Bible a day coming that he talks about, which will make anything in any war ever fought look like children playing in a sandbox. The Bible talks about a day, the day of the Lord, the ultimate day of shock and awe when the Lord Jesus, our Savior that we've been singing to, is revealed from heaven, coming down in blazing fire with his powerful angels. I don't want to get into today controversial aspects of prophecy because as most of you know, Christians disagree about what will happen in end time events.

There's pre-tribulation, post-tribulation, mid-tribulation, amillennial, premillennial, postmillennial views. And if you're into that kind of thing, you can study and find out that good Christians who have been used by the Lord to bless a lot of people disagree about how this whole thing will end. But as someone once said, and I agree with him, he said, I'm a panmillennial.

In the end, it'll all pan out. Come and say amen. What I want to talk now about briefly is the indisputable, unarguable fact of a day that we could live to see or if we die, we will still be part of.

At least our bodies are going to be, what's left of our bodies are going to be very involved in that day. This day of the Lord is called in the Bible the blessed hope. And it's a moment, it's a truth that's forgotten now

because most Christians don't want to talk about the end of the world.

But the end of the world is coming. Jesus is coming again. He came the first time, he's coming the second.

How many say amen? Nothing can change that. We don't know the timing. We'll learn about that in a moment.

But Jesus is coming again and everything on this earth that we're used to seeing is going to end. Now the hard part of this message is I'm going to talk about things that nobody has ever witnessed, including myself. No one who's ever been a human being has ever witnessed the coming of the Lord with his powerful angels in blazing fire.

So I want to stay on the indisputable facts and I want you to open up your heart and listen. This is the surest of all sure things. Jesus is coming again.

This is the day of the Lord that was promised. God's day of shock and awe. Let's just talk about the fact of it.

You saw it there in 2 Thessalonians. When will he pay back trouble to those who trouble Christians? When will he pay back to the godless, the people who curse him and that use Christ's name in vain and the people that mock righteousness and the people that glory in their sin and show off their sin? That won't happen here on earth. There is some judgment built into sowing and reaping.

But Paul tells us the payoff is in this day. When will he pay back trouble? In the day when Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his great angels, powerful angels. Now, Jesus talked about this, clouds of the sky, power, the great day of the Lord, the elect being gathered from the four winds.

And Jesus talked about it in Matthew 24, verse 30 and 31. Look up at the screen, please. Jesus said at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn.

The nations will not be celebrating. They will be mourning because they'll be saying, Oops, we were wrong. But it'll be too late.

They will see, not invisible, coming. They will see the Son of Man coming on the what? Clouds of the sky with power and great glory. Next verse.

31, please. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of the heavens to the other. So notice what's going to happen.

The nations are going to mourn and people will know judgment is coming. But to those of us who know the Lord, it's homecoming. It's we're going home.

No more mess. No more tears. No more trouble.

He's going to wipe away every tear. No more sin. No more devil.

No more temptation. No more pressure. No more trials.

No more trouble. Come on, let's put our hands together. The day of the Lord.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. That's what we live for. Brothers and sisters, for the last 50 years, people, I believe, my experience has been certain circles of the body of Christ have twisted this.

Listen, I know the Lord is wonderful. I know we have joy and we have peace. But look, no matter how much you enjoy the Lord, walking here on earth and being a Christian, it's a lot of trouble.

People act like heaven is here. And they talk about the joy of the Lord and His peace and yes, thank God for all of that. But they act like there's nothing coming that's better than this.

This is nothing. This is nothing compared with being with the Lord and seeing His face. Oh my.

Now we suffer. Now there are trials. Now there are troubles.

Now Christians are being persecuted. Now in China you can lose your life. Now in some Muslim countries you could be put to death for converting to Christ.

This is trouble here. Don't mistake this for heaven. This is not heaven.

How many say amen? So if you make a big thing about this, you're going to get disillusioned. Now we are pilgrims passing through. Now we have to endure things.

When we get to heaven, there's not going to be any endurance needed. And people twist that. And they make more of this earth than it's supposed to be.

In this world you'll have tribulation, Jesus said. Don't worry, I've overcome the world. But there's a better place coming and it won't be for 70, 80 years.

We're going to be there for 70, 80 billion years. And then it'll just begin. Oh praise God.

I can't wait to go home. Now John, the apostle, let's look at his witness to the same event. Notice in Revelation 1-7.

Listen, choir. See if you pick up some same words. Look, this is by the way what our sister was just singing.

And the choir was singing. Look, He is coming with the clouds. And every eye will see Him.

Even those who pierced Him. And all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be.

Amen. Look, He is coming. Every eye will see Him.

So if someone says, Oh Jesus has come, just nobody noticed. No, can't happen. Every eye will see Him.

There'll be a great separation then too. Let's look what Paul said about it. By the way, that verse is a prophecy.

But one day it's going to be a reality. One day some clouds will roll in and some sounds will be heard. And it'll be all over.

Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 15, verse 51. Listen, look at it. Listen, I tell you a mystery.

We will not all sleep. What does sleep mean there? Death. We will not all sleep.

But we will all be changed. In a flash. In the twinkling of an eye.

At the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised.

Imperishable. And we will be changed. Next verse.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When Jesus comes again He will bring with Him the spirits of those who have already been with Him. Like my father-in-law is with them.

My dad is with them. He will come with them. But they will not have their glorified bodies yet.

When He comes some Adam, some something of their former of their bodies will be raised and turned into a glorified body. That will happen first. Then we who are alive if He comes while we're alive we'll be caught up to meet them in the air and we'll be with the Lord.

We will get an imperishable body because this body could never last for eternity. My goodness! Some of us are breaking down after 40, 50 years. How would we ever make it a million? Right? So God has to give us a different body.

My wife and I need an imperishable body to go on through all eternity. It will look like our body. It will be recognizable.

We'll know each other in heaven. But it will be a glorified body even like the body Jesus had when He was raised from the dead. Oh, how many want that other body? I want that body.

I want that body. And every sick person will be healed. Every deaf person will hear.

Everybody eventually gets healed either now or then. But everybody will be healed. By His stripes we are healed.

No one is going to go maimed and limping or blind or deaf into heaven. All the hearing aids will drop off in a second. Hallelujah! Notice, we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.

Notice the timing in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, the last trumpet. Alright, let's look at one other place Paul says. Again, 1 Thessalonians 4. This is 16-18.

Notice the similar signs. And I'll bring this part to a close. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command.

We've heard that before, haven't we? With the voice of the what? Archangel. And with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds. There are the clouds again. To meet the Lord where? There, in the air.

We're not meeting Him in Jerusalem. We're not meeting Him in downtown Brooklyn. Praise God.

We are meeting Him in the air. How will we get there? God will take care of that. Gravity means nothing to God.

We will be caught up to be with Him. Rapture, up. And so we will be with the Lord how long? Forever.

What's the best thing about heaven? Not streets of gold. Not pearly gates. With the Lord.

With the Lord. None of us have ever been with the Lord. What you call the presence of God, what you call the fullness of the Holy Spirit, what you call an encounter with God, nothing.

What you call joy, nothing. What we call peace, nothing. Those are little atoms, little bubbles that He's given us to make it through here on earth.

Now we will be with the Lord. We are not with the Lord now. Then we will be with Him and see Him as He is.

You will see His face. You will see His glory. Not limited.

You will see the glory of the Lord. Come on, let's put our hands together. I'm looking forward to that day.

The glory of the Lord. To see His face. Notice similar signs.

Caught up to meet Him in the air and so shall we be forever with the Lord. His immediate glorious presence. Now, what's the timing of this, Pastor Cimbala? How does this work? In other words, what will be the signs and how will we know when this happens? Okay, I'm glad you asked.

1 Thessalonians 5, verse 1. Next, look at it. I'll read it for your choir. Now brothers, sisters too, about the times and the dates we do not need to write to you for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a what? A thief in the night.

What does that tell us right there? No warning. Thieves do not call ahead and say, look, when are you going to bed? I want to hit your house tonight. Look, I'll be there about 2.30. Would you leave something out in the kitchen for me? No, no, thieves just come at a moment that you think not.

That's why Christians always are supposed to be what? Alert and awake. You can't say no, not now, because it's in a moment you think not. Look at the next verse.

While people are saying peace and safety, destruction, now this is ominous, this is God talking, the God of love is talking. So listen up everyone. Destruction will come on them suddenly.

Who's the them? I'll tell you. As labor pains on a pregnant woman and they will not escape. Nobody will escape.

And every Christian will say, oh thank God I trusted Jesus. Thank God I endured that trial. Thank God I held on to Jesus.

I didn't get that raise. In fact, I got demoted because I was a Christian. Who cares? Because now it's payoff time.

Oh brothers and sisters, please listen to me. Don't listen to the teachers who tell you the payoff is here. The payoff is not here.

If this is the payoff, then this is a pretty sad salvation. The payoff is when Christ comes. I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, you may be also.

That's where the payoff. All the choir practices these people went to, all the rainy nights, all the babysitters they had to find, all the hours they had to stand. God knows he has a record.

And all these girls with their high heels, all the times they had to stand in Jamaica where you broke the world's record for standing. And your voice is all going to be rewarded. Nothing here.

Nothing here. We don't even mention your name. The reward's not from me.

It's from Jesus. And it'll spread out over a couple billion years. And then some.

On and on. World without end. It's not here.

If you're living to get noticed here and get blessed here with the total blessing, you will be frustrated all your life. And if you believe these people that say, oh, when you're a Christian, everything is just hunky-dory. It's just like walking in the park and you just never have a problem.

Are you kidding me? These people were being persecuted, going through trials and had to have endurance and they were commended because they held on to Jesus during the mess. We read on Thursday. You should come this next Thursday.

We read from Thursday a letter from Pliny, from a historian, a writer, a governor in Bithynia who writes to Emperor Trajan. And Emperor Trajan, during his reign, Christians were killed maybe at the most of any Roman Emperor. There was the fiercest persecutions throughout the Roman Empire.

And Pliny the Elder writes to him. He's called Pliny the Elder and he writes to him and he says, I'm killing the Christians like you said. I'm killing men and I'm killing women and I'm killing boys and I'm killing girls.

But where does this stop? Do I just keep killing them or should I cut down on killing them? We read it. It's a historical document. You think that those people got their reward in this earth? Come on.

Stephen being stoned, do you think that's a sweet life? Oh, you got it. Sometimes when you're a Christian you got to put up with junk. You got a husband who's not a believer who torments you.

You got kids who curse you. You got family members who turn against you. You get laid off during times of recession just like everyone else.

The payoff isn't here. God's watching us. Our reward is in heaven.

Our citizenship is in heaven. We're not Americans first. We're Christians first.

We're not black people or white people first. We're Christians. So remember that.

Don't be a baby and cry about something when you got billions of years of joy coming. Paul says it's not worthy to compare what we go through now with the glory that's waiting for us. These light afflictions are working for us.

A glory that transcends anything we could imagine. So brothers and sisters, I'm encouraging you with these words. Hang in.

Don't give in to the devil. Come on. Somebody give me a witness.

Don't give in to discouragement. Don't give in to depression. Wake up! Jesus is coming soon.

If He could go through the garden of Gethsemane and the cross, can't you and I put up with a little nonsense here for a few years? This is not heaven. That's a totally warped view of Christianity. Pretending like it's all here and then when people have a little trial and tribulation and go through a little bit, they get all down and where's God and where's God? He's in heaven.

Where do you think He is? He's going to take you home soon. Oh, no wonder John said even so come quickly, Lord Jesus. Like a thief in the night, no warning.

They will not escape. Ominous promise. Let me close.

Ominous promise from God. Who are these people who will not escape? Because Jesus, when He comes a second time, He's not coming to save anybody. He's not dying on a cross again.

He's coming to reward and take His children home and He's coming to punish those. Who are these others? Look at half of our text up here. Look at half of our text.

Notice, all this is evidence that God's judgment, 2 Thessalonians 1, 5-7a, it really is. And this is the evidence, this is evidence that God's judgment is right and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God. Why? Because you went through it and didn't quit for which you are suffering.

Suffering. It's part of Christianity. Suffering.

But if we suffer with Him, we will also, I know you don't mind a little suffering. Come on, lift your hand up. Don't be an American.

Be a Christian about this thing. This other teaching is geared to Americans. We're trying to sell something that will be good.

We're afraid to tell people that when you serve Jesus, sometimes it gets hard. It gets hard. It gets hard to do God's will sometimes.

Sure, He has grace, but it's hard sometimes. Obviously, they were suffering. Look at the rest.

God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you. All people who have troubled Christianity are going to get paid back by God trouble for trouble.

When will this happen? When Jesus comes. Don't you pay back them trouble. And He will give relief to you who are troubled and to us as well.

Keep going, Michael. Look at this next passage. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels.

He will punish those who do not know God. They could have known God. They didn't want to know God.

They rejected the knowledge of God because God, God's laws and God's character contradicted their sinful ways. So rather than yielding to God and His righteousness, they said there is no God, which was merely justification for the way they wanted to live. Most people who say I don't believe there's a God.

You know what they're really saying is I can't accept that there's a God who would tell me I can't do what I want to do. Only the fool says in his heart there is no God. But did you know choir, did you know congregation that the words there is is not in the Hebrew in that psalm? Those are added.

Literally it says the fool has said in his heart no God. No God. Nobody tell me I'm wrong.

Nobody tell me I can't sleep around. Nobody tell me I can't live the way I want to live. I don't want that.

Nobody tell me there's something evil. Nobody tell me there's something good. I decide what truth is.

No God. But that's the fool who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. How do you obey the gospel? By believing.

By believing in the good news that Jesus gave his life. Now notice what the destruction is that they'll endure. Look at the next verse.

If you want to get a picture of hell from a different viewpoint. Because there is a hell. They will be punished with everlasting destruction.

That word means ruin. They will be ruined forever. These are the stakes.

You know they might have lived in ease and laughed at Christians and mocked believers and persecuted the church while on earth. But when the Lord Jesus is revealed he will trouble those who trouble us. And now notice they will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out.

This is the worst part. Could you play Kareem O the glory of his presence and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power. You know what's gonna happen to people who don't know God even those who go to church and who really don't know God don't serve God because going into a church doesn't make you a Christian just like going in a garage doesn't make you a car.

A building has no power. Think of all the Baptists and all the Presbyterians and all the Lutherans and Pentecostals in good standing with their church who are gonna find out on that day oh it was more than about going to church on Sunday. Too late.

Who lived a double life. Christ was not the center of their life. They didn't walk with him.

They weren't looking for his appearing. They were never saying even so come quickly Lord Jesus. They were saying something else.

Let's eat and drink and be merry. And my job is not only get to heaven with my wife and my children and with my grandchildren but my job is to make sure that none of you miss and the Lord say to me you never told them about heaven. Never taught them about the day of the Lord.

All you taught them about was how to walk with me and you did your best on that but you never gave them the facts of spiritual life pertaining to eternity. We'll be somewhere one billion years from now. We will either be together in heaven one billion years from now or some of us will be away from the presence of the Lord.

Notice the joy of heaven let me close is enjoying his presence where the Bible says there's fullness. His presence that makes heaven. What makes meetings so wonderful or a devotion time in the Bible so

wonderful or when you pray or when you talk to other believers or when we sing like when Carol was leading you and I walked in you could feel the presence of the Lord.

But the real presence of the Lord that's just the manifest presence that he gives us here on earth to keep us moving. We're talking now about seeing him the way he is being in his immediate presence and the glory of the Lord. You know you hear people say oh when the choir was singing I felt the glory of the Lord.

That's okay. You felt nothing compared to what you're going to feel one day. Who are not born again not even a twinge of the Lord.

No peace. No peace to the wicked. They will be cut off forever.

See if you're here on earth even if you don't serve the Lord and know the Lord you're enjoying some of the blessings and the light that God still has coming upon this planet earth because he has his children here. But when Jesus is revealed he will go with his people. Father I want those that you have given me to be what? The glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

So one billion years from now nothing abused sexually. And all of us are in a fight. No I'm not in a fight.

Yes you are for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against what? Principalities and powers. Chevy's in a fight. Esther's in a fight.

These choir members are in a fight everyday. Come on don't you ever get tested and tried? Come on choir lift your hand if you've ever been tested or tried. Look at them.

Look at them. Why do you think they sing so hard? They're hanging on for dear life. I don't want to go away from Jesus.

I want to be with Jesus forever and ever. Come on wave your hand if you feel the same way. So we go through some trials.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. This is just we're passing through. I walked into when Jesus shall appear in blazing fire with his angels of power and he will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.

And he will bring comfort to those who have been troubled. And we will be caught up to meet him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

You don't need that I should write to you for you already know that the day of the Lord shall come like a thief in the night. And when they say peace and safety and everything's fine you don't have to worry. Then in a second it'll come.

And the goats are separated and the wheat and the tares are separated. So God is going to separate the real the genuine. If you're here today and you say Oh Pastor Sembela I am in you have a chance to make sure you go to heaven.

You got a chance to make sure you spend eternity with the rest of us who are Christians. No sin is worth throwing away eternity. No sin.

No lie. Anybody else? Give them the courage to act on their convictions. Don't let them be proud and self-conscious that others might look at them.

Lord help them to stand right now. Those who need prayer and need to call on your name. You're rich in mercy to everyone who calls upon you.

So help them Lord. This is about eternity. God's day of shock and awe.

Everyone who's standing and we Christians are going to be.

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