Nevertheless, Christ will be coming again in the clouds and will raise His people from the dead and gather them together with His living saints “and so we shall always be with the Lord.” Don’t miss this last phrase, and very important part of the text. When Jesus returns for His Church and gathers us together, we shall never be separated from Christ again, but rather, “and so we shall always be with the Lord.” This is the primary reason why verse 13 explains that Christians “do not grieve as those who have no hope,” and the main support of that statement. Why should we not grieve without hope? Because we have the hope that we will ultimately be rejoined with our deceased loved ones and better yet, united with them and Christ and never again separated henceforth.

D. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words – I suppose of all the comforting words that we Christians possess, none are so profound as these, verses 15-17, which tell us of our ultimate future beyond the grave and describe our eternal destiny with closure and finality. Not only do we “not grieve as they who have no hope,” but on the contrary, we have great hope that our future lies in the hands of the powerful and sovereign God who has purposed to save us from sin and death, and cause us to stand in His presence without fault and with great joy, when He comes again to finally deliver His people from this sin cursed and fallen world which we now live in. Moreover, it is at this point in history that His people will be eternally united to Him, as we are glorified together with Him on that day. There could be no greater hope then to have a sure victory over that great enemy death which has plagued us with its woes since we have fallen into sin. On this basis then, Paul states, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” These promises are in fact a very comforting and reassuring truth that can give us hope and encouragement, even in our darkest trials and our bleakest day. We are therefore to actually speak this truth to grieving and downcast Christians when so needed, that things will not always suffer and grieve, but that a brighter and everlasting Day is soon approaching, and this Day will come with power from the God who is all-powerful and has promised to bring it to pass with glory, might and finality. Even our Lord Himself, on the night before He was crucified, encouraged with this truth.

John 14:1-3 - 14 "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 – 1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. NASU

A. Concerning the timing of these great events mentioned in 4:15-17, Paul explains that they had ample knowledge. He states, “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.” The words here for “times and epochs” clearly speak of the timing and order of these events. Paul again employs that tactic he had used with several times earlier in this letter where he calls them to account of their own knowledge saying “you yourselves know full well.” He wants them to recall the truths he had formerly taught them, and here specifically, “that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” Even Paul himself did not know the day or the hour of Christ’s return, and he points out here that this truth is plain. It was surely taught by Jesus Himself.

Matthew 24:36 - 36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. NASB

Acts 1:6-8 - 6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; NASB

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This should cancel any fancy notions by people setting dates of Christ’s return, which is usually a ploy to garner a following and the financial benefits derived thereof. On the contrary Paul explains, that God has designed the Second Coming of Christ to overtake the unbelieving world unawares stating, “that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” He goes on to explain however in verses 3-5 that Christ’s coming will not overtake Christians in this way because, although we do not know the exact day or hour, the season of His coming will be very apparent to those discerning Christians who know full well the signs of His coming and of the end of the age. The main focus of Jesus telling us this was to cause us to be on the alert and be ready for His return, expectantly waiting and busy about His business with the treasure and talents He has entrusted to us. See comments on verse 4-5 for a more extensive explanation.

Matthew 24:36-37 - 36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” NASB
Matthew 24:42-44 - 42 “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.
43 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.” NASB

It is significant that Paul equates the parousia or coming of Christ with the Old Testament terms “the day of the Lord.” By doing this Paul makes it clear that the events spoken of in the Old Testament concerning the Day of the Lord will happen at the Second Coming.

Isaiah 13:9-13 - 9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger. NASB

Joel 2:1-2 - Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near, 2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations. NASB

Joel 2:30-32 - 30 "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. 31 "The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 32 "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the Lord has said, Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls. NASB

Obadiah 15 - 15 "For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. NASB

Zepheniah 1:14-18 - 4 Near is the great day of the Lord. Near and coming very quickly: Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and battle cry, Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 And I will bring distress on men. So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the Lord; And their blood will be poured out like dust, And their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the Lord’s wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. NASB

2 Peter 3:10 - 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. NASB

Note well here the severity of the full scope of events described in these passages. It is obvious that the full scope of these events cannot all happen immediately upon the Second Coming of Christ, for the whole earth will be destroyed and this will not take place until the end of the
Millennial Kingdom. This is made clear in the chronology of events given in Revelation 20:1-15. Therefore the Day of the Lord actually has its inauguration at the Second Coming, but its full consummation is not completed until the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father having subdued all His enemies, including death, the last enemy to be destroyed according to 1 Corinthians 15:26.

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 - For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. NASB

The chart below depicts this concept by viewing a chronology of events spanning from before the Second Coming of Christ until after the consummation of the ages and the Eternal State have begun. Notice the boxes in the upper right explaining the inauguration and consummation of the “Day of the Lord.”

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