

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

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The Day of the Lord

Related Topics: Times and Seasons; The Day of the Lord; Watchful; Light/Darkness; Knowledge/Ignorance; Readiness; Soberness

1 Thes 5:1 1Now



The word "now" tells us we are coming to a transition.

If you are new, we want you to know that the subject matter of this morning's study might strike some of you as odd or extreme, but we find ourselves looking at it not as a stand alone topic, but as a subject within the context of a letter written by a man named Paul to new followers of Jesus in a city in Greece called Thessalonica.

We have spent our last two weeks together studying the subject of the Rapture, the coming of Jesus FOR His Bride, the Church.

In this event Jesus is going to interrupt human history. In the smallest measurable increment of time (1 Cor. 15:52), He will HARPAZO (catch away, snatch, with violent force, remove) the church from the earth. And at the speed of light, transform the body of the believer, in which this corruption puts on incorruption and this mortal put on immortality.

That is the blessed hope of the Church. Paul told them to comfort one another with those words. As we move into Chapter 5, Paul is going to build on the theme of Eschatology begun in 4:13.

He is going to deal with different elements of that same theme. Remember in 1 Thes 4:13-18, Paul instructed them concerning the fate of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus.

They fully expected that Jesus would return in their lifetime in the mid 1st century AD. But some who had come to Christ had died and Jesus had not yet come. There was a great concern as to what would happen to them when the Rapture occurred. They were worried that those who had died before the Rapture would miss out on the glories of meeting the Lord and receiving glorified bodies.

Paul relieved them by saying that the dead in Christ were actually preceding them into the presence of the Lord.

Absent from the Body = Present with the Lord

So, Paul begins Ch.5 with the little Greek word de´ or now

NOW - The KJV translates it as BUT in order to emphasize the contrasts

The last chapter closed in dealing with the subject of those who had DIED in Christ. In this chapter Paul is going to give a very needed and necessary word of exhortation to the those those who are LIVING in Christ.

(needful for you and me today)

In the close of Chapter 4, Paul addressed the ignorance of the readers. But now, he addresses their knowledge.

1 Thes 5:1b-2a 1you have no need to have anything written to you. 2For you yourselves are fully aware

This clearly indicates this subject matter was already known by the Thessalonians.

CRUCIAL:

They did not need further instruction, but they did need fatherly encouragement to live according to the truth they already knew.

Metro – You and I need the same challenge. That is the need of most believers today. The bulk of contemporary church culture is looking for some new truth or new conversation. What we need most is to be refreshed and reacquainted with old truth and the need for a renewed spirit to obey what we already know!

In the previous chapter Paul told them about the coming of Jesus for the Church before the Great Tribulation, but now Paul addresses the truth that the coming of Jesus for His Church will begin a day of judgment for the unbelieving world.

NOTE WELL:

The change in subject from hope to judgment indicates that the Day of the Lord is a distinctly different subject from the Rapture of the Church and that the two are not to be confused.

The BIG IDEA in this chapter is the IMPACT that eschatology should have on everyday life! Challenges the believers to be morally and spiritually READY to meet the Lord whenever He comes.

1 Thes 5:1 1Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers,

TIMES = Chronos which is a period of measured time

We get our word chronology from it, which is the arranging in order the sequence of events that have occurred in time past. We also get our word chronometer from it. Which is a watch that has been certified as keeping track of time with an extraordinary degree of accuracy.

BIG IDEA:

TIMES are non-descript. They are simple ticks of the clock that turn into hours and the hours turn into a day and the days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months and the months years and the years turn into decades, etc. We measure time on those terms. Jan. 1 is a marker in that progression of ticks. When that succession of markers hits Dec 31 we know the amount of time that has elapsed, a year. Left to themselves those markers have no personality or definition. They simply mark time, that could be a week, it could be 1,000 years.

Paul says that there are also SEASONS

SEASONS = kairos

Chronos deals with the quantitative aspect of time (ticks on your chronometer)

Kairos, the seasons, deals with the characteristics of those periods.

EXAMPLE: Sept – Nov are really nothing more than impersonal markers of CHRONOS, but there are physical

and cultural and even economic characteristics of those months that mark and define those impersonal ticks of the clock. On THIS SIDE of the equator we actually give those ticks of the clock a NAME — FALL. There are physical and environmental characteristics Weather/Leaves. Cultural characteristics like return to school and re-focusing of time/energies/resources.

INTERESTING:

This word KAIROS would often be used to refer to an “opportunity” which represents the best time to do something. The moment, the season, when circumstances are most suitable.

In agrarian societies this season called fall is generally a time of harvest. On a Biblical level it refers to the spiritual, moral, economic, social, and political characteristics of a CHRONOS that make it RIPE for an event, good or bad. Paul uses it here to refer to the PERSONALITY of a period of time that makes it ripe for God to act, in blessing or judgment.

EXAMPLE:

Genesis 6 - God looks at the entire earth and it is filled with corruption. He sees fallen angels mingling with fallen humans. He sees that the thoughts of men were only wicked continually and thus the world was RIPE for God to act in judgment

In His Olivet discourse (Matt 24-25), Jesus said that prior to His SECOND COMING the earth would look just like the days of Noah. In that same discourse, Jesus gave the spiritual, the moral, the geo-political, and the environmental characteristics of the planet that would precede His coming in judgment. There will be wars, rumors of wars, spiritual deception, proliferation of WMD, etc. He said that it would be so bad on the earth that if he didn't return there would be no flesh left alive.

We are the first generation to have ever lived that has the capacity to eliminate itself. We have entered into a season that the Bible has defined clearly. We see it in the news every day. We see it in the spiritual, moral, cultural state of the world, the geopolitical state of the world, the tensions in the Middle East.

Those are the PERSONALITY traits that mark where we are on the timeline of God's dealings with mankind. That mark the CHRONOS as RIPE for God to act. Specifically, in the context of 1 Thes. 5 Paul tells us that the SEASONS refer to the PERSONALITY of a period of time that makes it ripe for God to to judge.

1 Thes 5:1-2 you have no need to have anything written to you. 2For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

CRUCIAL:

He essentially says that each of the readers (you yourselves) personally possessed specific knowledge that made writing to them about that subject unnecessary.

What subject were they already knowledgeable about?

They knew full well that the day of the Lord would come like a thief in the night. Again, the ministry of Paul to these men and women in a short period of 3 Sabbaths, and this letter of Paul to these believers, stand as a radical rebuke to a church culture that wants little or nothing to do with prophecy or eschatology.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

KEY INSIGHT:

The word DAY is used in the Bible in various ways. Sometimes it is used to refer to daylight, meaning the hours between dawn and sunset. Sometimes it is used to refer to a twenty-four hour day. The Jewish day began at sunset and continued to the next day at sunset. That also is referred to as a day. Sometimes the word DAY is used in the Bible as a period of time, just as we use it in English.

EXAMPLE: In our vernacular we say, "Back in the day"

We use it referring, not to a single day, but to an extended period of time in our life (our youth or High School/college days or place of employment.)

KEY INSIGHT:

In 1 Thessalonians 5 the term Day of the Lord is used in the sense of an extended period of time, but that extended period of time has the characteristics of a twenty-four hour day. A twenty-four hour day begins at midnight and continues until the next midnight at which time another day begins. So, The Day of the Lord is not a single day

It is an extended period of time that will last roughly 1,000 years. That DAY will begin when God interrupts human history and I believe that He will do that by removing His Church.

CRUCIAL POINT HERE:

As midnight marks the end of one day and marks the beginning of another day, the catching away of the Church marks the end of THE DAY OF MAN and the beginning of the DAY OF THE LORD. The DAY OF MAN has covered at least 6,000 years in which man has been unable to govern himself, but at midnight, so to speak, the Lord comes for His Bride, and so ends the DAY OF MAN and THE DAY OF THE LORD begins.

The event of the Rapture will set in motion a sequence of events; the Holy Spirit will be removed in regards to His restraining work (the craziness we see in the world is certainly the restrained version), then the man of sin is revealed, and He confirms a covenant with the nation of Israel (Dan. 9). I believe that is precipitated by horrific events in the Middle East after which the world clamors for someone to step in and resolve the insanity surrounding Israel and Jerusalem. In the middle of that 7 year covenant the anti-Christ steps into a rebuilt place of worship in Jerusalem and demands that he be worshipped as God.

From that moment forward there will be 1,260 days until the return of Jesus to the earth at which time He establishes His rule upon the earth for 1,000 years. The millennium will end with another night of judgment (Rev. 20:9-15).

At the end of verse 2 Paul says that the extended period of time known as THE DAY OF THE LORD comes at an unexpected time. It will come like a thief in the night. Because of that Paul is going to exhort these Mid-First Century Christians to be awake and sober (v.6). Remember from our study of the Olivet Discourse, in the parable of the 10 virgins, that even the five wise virgins who had oil in their lamps were SLEEPING and had to be awakened!

As we move through these verses we don't want to miss the radical distinction that is made. Paul sets an unmistakable distinction between the Christian and the person who is not. He frames it with the words they and them set in contrast to us and you and we.

1 Thes 5:3-10 3While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

An unmistakable distinction between the Church and an unbelieving world!

1 Thes 5:3 3While people (KJV = They) are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

This is not the Church making this declaration! The world at large is declaring "peace and security." This is a global consensus of unbelieving men and women, unbelieving political entities, perhaps an almost Global Government.

Peace and Security — And isn't that what mankind around the world is longing for?! It isn't wrong to want it. We pray for those in political authority. But here's the deal, even if they are Christians, it is their job to work towards world order even though they know that in the end this man driven pursuit of peace will result in a tyranny that the world has never conceived of. Peace and security are noble goals, and they are things that will exist in the Millennium. But without the Prince of Peace man has never achieved them! So, they declare peace and security as they perceive it and measure it.

1 Thes 5:3 3While people (KJV = They) are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman,

Sudden = unexpected, sudden, unforeseen

This word is used only one other time in the New Testament. Luke uses it.

Luke 21:34 "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

1 Thes 5:3 3 ...then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

There are signs of approaching labor. During your first or second pregnancy the Braxton Hicks contractions might be mistaken for onset of labor, but by the third kid you know what's up. But there comes this unexpected moment when your wife says, "Woe! My water broke." When that happens IT IS ON! There is no way out of what is going to follow. The labor WILL progress. The labor WILL get more painful. The labor WILL culminate in a delivery. SHE WILL NOT ESCAPE! THAT is the picture Paul paints for the unbelieving world.

1 Thes 5:3-4 3...they will not escape. And this is beautiful. 4But you....

Paul sets the Church in contrast with those who don't believe in Christ. By the way, there are a lot of professing Christians today who have a problem with the Bible because it is so politically incorrect in the distinctions that it draws between those who believe and those who do not. The Holy Spirit inspired WORDS. The Holy Spirit is the One who marks these distinctions. The ONLY thing that distinguishes between the believer and the unbeliever is the grace of God experienced through faith in Christ.

There really is an US and THEM. The Bible declares time and again and Paul underscores it here. There are only TWO categories of humans. Those who are IN Christ and those who are OUTSIDE of Christ. Those who are ALIVE to God through Christ and those who are DEAD in trespasses and sins.

1 Thes 5:4-6 4But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

This exhortation can only be consistent with the position of the imminent coming of Jesus for His Church. It is totally inconsistent with a Post Tribulation Rapture because Jesus is returning exactly 1,260 days after the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.

"So then", can be translated as "since all this is true," or "since this is surely so."

CRUCIAL:

Paul now begins to draw moral consequences from the principles he has just stated.

KEEP AWAKE = to stay awake, be watchful, to be in constant readiness be on the alert, 'keep one's eyes open'

"Keep Awake" is in the present tense meaning continuous action, habitual action, reflective of a lifestyle.

Who has had a better opportunity than US to be ALERT and WATCHING? We can watch the world through the eye of global satellite telecommunications. Shame on us if we aren't!

BE SOBER = be free from every form of mental and spiritual 'drunkenness', be self-controlled.

QUOTE: Ignatius – Early in the second century A.D.

Ignatius wrote to Polycarp (2.3) "be self-controlled, like an athlete of God."

So Paul is not talking about merely avoiding drunkenness, but being "in training," avoiding all kinds of excess.

1 Thes 5:4-5 4But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

The difference between us and the rest of the world should be as plain as night and day! Look down your street, look at the people at the grocery store, look at the crowds in the stands of an NFL game. They have no idea what is taking place in regards to their own souls and the future of the world they live in. They look at the Middle East and think – Dang! Oil prices are going to go through the roof! The U.S. should drop Israel and protect it's oil interests! They are absolutely clueless that the world is going to change in a moment!

1 Thes 5:7- 8 7For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

NOTICE – Faith – Love – Hope.

Genuine FAITH results in the Love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. The Bible says that LOVE is the trademark of the believer and evidence of our faith. (BY this shall all men know...) Faith WORKS through love (Gal. 5:6). Real faith produces the HOPE of salvation.

By the way, the Hope of salvation does not = "I hope I'm saved." If you have the breastplate of faith you are not "hoping" you're saved, you are saved (by grace through faith!) The HOPE is the HOPE of what awaits us as those whose sins are forgiven. Paul wrote to Titus and described the coming of Jesus for His Church as the BLESSED hope. Real faith produces the HOPE of HEAVEN.

1 Peter 1:3-5 According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

NOTICE THE CONNECTION between the HOPE of Salvation and what follows:

1 Thes 5:9-10 9For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus

Christ, 10who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

How PLAIN and CLEAR, in the first half of the Great Tribulation we are told that:

Revelation 6:15-17 15Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

That is the Old Testament view of DAY OF THE LORD - a day of wrath.

- Isaiah said it was a day of wrath
- Zephaniah said it was a day of wrath
- Revelation 6 says it is a day of wrath.

That extended period of time the prophets called THE DAY OF THE LORD begins with the coming of Jesus for His bride!

1 Thes 5:11 11Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

The prophecy of Isaiah 13:9-11 speaks for itself:

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." In other words, there will be a great and dramatic judgment, manifest in the physical world, which will interfere with the light of the sun, moon, and stars. God will put down the proud and deal with the sinners. It is a time of judgment.

The same thought is found in Zephaniah 1:14-16:

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers."

This passage continues in the same strain. The Day of the Lord, according to the Old Testament, is a time of God's judgment and a time of God's dealing with the world in its sin. The Day of the Lord is also a time of deliverance and blessing for Israel. The millennium—the whole kingdom reign of Christ on earth—in which Christ personally directs the government of the world, is also included in the Day of the Lord.

In Zephaniah 3:14-15, by way of illustration, there is a picture of Israel's blessing in that day, obviously following the time of judgment:

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more."

The passage here sets forth the praise and joy and rejoicing of Israel in the millennium. The Day of the Lord,

as revealed in the Old Testament, indicates first a time of wrath and judgment upon a wicked and Christ-rejecting world which is followed by a time of peace in which Christ shall be in the midst of the earth and will rule over the earth and bring blessing to the nation Israel. The millennium will end with another night of judgment (Rev. 20:9-15).

The Day of Wrath

The truth concerning the coming of Christ for His church is revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4. The question which is answered in 1 Thessalonians 5 is "What relationship has the coming of Christ to the Day of the Lord?" In verse 1, accordingly, Paul writes: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." The word time here is a translation of the Greek word from which we get our word chronology. Of the time, the general chronology, and of the seasons, the particular time—he states he has no need to write unto them. In other words, they had already been instructed, first, concerning the general time when Christ would come and, second, concerning the particular time. In a word, it is this: the general time can be known, but the particular time cannot. That is the point of his message. In verses 2 and 3 he says: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." The Day of the Lord is described as a day of wrath, which is a very important point. Compare this passage with the sixth chapter of Revelation which is about the time of the beginning of the great tribulation. This portion of Scripture is also similar to what Isaiah and Zephaniah said about the day of judgment in the Day of the Lord. Is not this the same period? Revelation 6:12-14 states: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." This is exactly the same thought and is also a warning of judgment upon men. In Revelation 6:16-17 we learn that the wicked cry out and say "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Isaiah said it was a day of wrath; Zephaniah said it was a day of wrath; Revelation 6 says it is a day of wrath. In other words, the picture we have here of the great tribulation—the time of trouble on the earth—is identical to the picture of the Old Testament revelation of the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

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