

THE DAY OF THE LORD

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1–11



...the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

In verses 1-5, Paul is addressing two main themes...

1. Priority of what has been revealed to us
2. Identity

Priority of what has been revealed to us: Paul tells us that the priority of the “day of the Lord” is **not when it will happen but rather that it will indeed happen**. It was not a priority of Jesus’ ministry to reveal to us a date and time of His coming, but rather to reveal that He will come back again and no one knows when it will happen.

Identity: In 4–5 Paul makes certain to show who we are in Christ. He uses language like “brothers and sisters,” “not in darkness,” and “children of the light.” **So then Paul urges us that we shouldn’t be surprised by the Lord’s coming, but rather expectant and hopeful of it.**

In verses 6–11, Paul points us to our duties because we are in Christ. While we are expectantly looking ahead to His coming, we also have work to do in the present time. Paul calls us to equip ourselves with faith, love, and hope as a “breastplate” and “helmet” to defend from anything that would hinder our trust in the Lord. Paul again addresses our identity and who we are in Christ and because of Christ. Verses 9–10 give us a beautiful picture of our reconciliation through Jesus. Paul knows how often we forget our identity in Christ and exhorts us to encourage and remind each other of the hope we have.

Challenge: To put on faith, love, and hope by reminding ourselves daily of who we are in Christ.¹

¹ <http://www.socc.org/sherwood-oaks-blog/1-thessalonians-51-11/>

OPEN IT

1. What days or events do you most look forward to? What is it about those events or moments that create such anticipation?

EXPLORE IT

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

2. What did Paul not have to tell the Thessalonians about?

3. How will the Day of the Lord come?

4. How does Paul describe the two types of people who live in the last days?

5. What should our understanding of the last days lead us to do for others?

GET IT

It is needless or useless to ask about the particular time of Christ's coming. Christ did not reveal this to the apostles. There are times and seasons for us to work in, and these are our duty and interest to know and observe; but as to the time when we must give up our account, we know it not, nor is it needful that we should. The coming of Christ will be a great surprise to men. Our Lord himself said so. As the hour of death is the same to each person that the judgment will be to mankind in general, so the same remarks answer for both. Christ's coming will be terrible to the ungodly. Their destruction will overtake them while they dream of happiness and please themselves with vain amusements. There will be

no means to escape the terror or the punishment of that day. This day will be a happy day to the righteous. They are not in darkness; they are the children of the light. It is the happy condition of all true Christians. But how many are

speaking peace and safety to themselves, over whose heads utter destruction is hovering! Let us endeavor to awaken ourselves and each other, and guard against our spiritual enemies.²

6. Paul makes it clear that trying to determine the “times and seasons” is futile for the Christian. What then does he desire for the Thessalonians to know about the end of days?

7. What causes prophecy to be an area that produces disagreement instead of unity?

8. What benefits can come with the Christian’s knowledge regarding God’s plans for the end of the world?

9. What duties and goals should we have in light of the information God gives us in the text?

In general terms, the Day of the Lord (abbreviated DOL) refers to a special or unique time when God’s power and holiness are unveiled, bringing terror and death to His enemies. The DOL is a prophetic term that primarily speaks of the supernatural outpouring of God’s judgment on Israel, the Gentile nations or both. DOL never refers to a literal day but is used figuratively to refer to a period of time much as John uses hour in the phrase “the hour of His judgment has come” (see note Rev 14:7).³

The DOL is not a New Testament concept but has its roots in the Old Testament, being found some 16 times in the NASB (Isaiah 13:6, 13:9, 58:13; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14 {There are some 19 references to the DOL in this short book.}; Malachi 4:5). In addition, the Day of the Lord is abbreviated many times with the terms “the day” or “that day,” so there are far more than 16 mentions in the OT, making it a very important concept.⁴

The phrase the Day of the Lord is not limited to future, final wrath, but sometimes refers to imminent historical judgments, which occurred during Old Testament history. These historical Day of the Lord judgments were usually preceded by some preliminary judgments of lesser severity. They acted as warnings by providing sample previews of the far more devastating judgments to come when the Day actually arrived.⁵

² <http://www.christnotes.org/commentary.php?com=mhc&b=52&c=5>

³ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_51-3.htm#5:1

⁴ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_51-3.htm#5:1

⁵ MacArthur J. Revelation 1-11. and Revelation 12-22. Moody or Logos

10. How does the promise of God unveiling His power and wrath upon every unbeliever, as well as His love and grace to believers, at some point in the future make you feel?

11. Read Matthew 24. What are some of the events that Jesus tells us will characterize the last days?

12. Why are the examples of a thief (5:2) and labor pains (5:3) good analogies of what will happen on the Day of the Lord?

13. What is the difference in emphasis in these two illustrations? How are the two illustrations similar?

While they are saying peace and safety — *The majority of mankind will be preoccupied with the things of this present evil age and will exhibit no anticipation of and no interest in preparing for the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord used similar terms of comparison to describe the days before His return, declaring that on one hand they would be like the days of Noah or on the other hand like the days of Lot.*

For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27)

It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building, but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:28–30).

Instead of anticipating and preparing for the coming Day of Judgment, unbelievers will be wrapped in a fatal, self-deceiving sense of security, saying peace and safety. This speaks of their false sense of security. And of note, the verb “saying” is in the present tense which denotes that they will be continually and repeatedly assuring themselves that there is peace everywhere and that everything is safe and secure. Deception can be a dangerous and deadly disposition!

14. What causes unbelievers to not see the signs of the times? How can believers help to show them the judgement that is coming upon them?

15. As you watch the ignorance and indifference in the world around you, how is it similar to the word “sleepiness” in verse 7?

16. How can believers keep from falling into this same trap as unbelievers?

Let us be alert (gregoreuo) means to be watchful or to refrain from physical sleep. Later this word came to be used in the moral and religious sphere and in this context was used to call for one to be on the alert (quick to perceive and act), in a constant state of readiness (being on the lookout especially for danger or opportunity), and vigilant (alertly watchful especially to avoid danger; this word suggesting intense, unremitting, wary watchfulness; keenly alert to or heedful of trouble or danger as others are sleeping or unsuspecting). The present tense calls for saints to be in a continual state of alertness in light of the imminent return of our Lord. ⁶

17. How does the mention of sobriety and drunkenness help us to distinguish whether we are living as children of light or children of darkness?

18. What does it look like to live your life “on alert” at all times?

⁶ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_56-7.htm

19. How does clothing ourselves with faith, love and hope help us to live not only for this life but also for the one that is to come?

20. Who do you know around you that lives “with eternity in mind”? What are they doing that makes you think this of them?

God wills not our destruction but our salvation. He has no intention that we should become the subjects of His wrath, fall under its punitive action, when the day of "sudden destruction" falls upon the unsaved. He cherishes no angry purposes toward His redeemed children; the divine wrath against sin was diverted from us when by faith we were united with "the Son of his love" Wrath is the destiny of Christ rejecting souls. ⁷

21. Paul reminds us that we will obtain salvation instead of wrath on the Day of the Lord. In what ways does this produce rejoicing and comfort in all believers?

22. Paul says that eternity involves “living with Him.” In what ways can you begin to live with God in deeper and closer ways today?

⁷ Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996