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**A1112 – March 20, 2011 – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**  
**Dual Imminence**

All right if you'd open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians. We've been working with the pre-day of the Lord rapture in one Thessalonians 5. That's pre-day of the Lord rapture not pre-tribulation rapture. The reason we say that is because that's what the Bible teaches. We will be removed from earth before the day of the Lord wrath comes on the earth. So far as tribulation is concerned Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world." Paul said, "We kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer tribulation." So, while most other views revolve around the category designated tribulation, it doesn't really fit what the Scriptures say about tribulation. And consequently the average Christian has a hard time reading the Bible and understanding what it's saying. I like to teach so as to develop categories that actually reflect biblical terminology. That way people can go home and read the Bible and understand it themselves. If you don't do that I've found that it discourages Bible reading. It's hard enough to learn this book as it is and it only makes things more difficult when you build categories that don't reflect biblical terminology. So, I'm trying to use biblical terminology and biblical categories so you can read the Bible for yourself and understand what it's saying. If you do this it also helps you talk to other Christians who don't share a special terminology. So we're using a terminology every Christian has access to, the day of the Lord.

Now I understand that everybody likes to think categorically and we have to have categories in order to think well, but I also think we have to be careful and not get overzealous with categorizing because when we do we tend to read those categories back into the text and then we miss nuances in the text. So, for example when it comes to the timing of the rapture, I like to say pre-day of the Lord rapture and not pre-tribulation rapture because the day of the Lord is a major category of Scripture. It's mentioned over 75 times in the

Old and New Testament under such terms as “day of the Lord,” “in that day,” “the day,” et.al., and so by training you in this category it encourages Bible reading rather than discouraging it .

But we do want to understand that people have built up the category called tribulation. Now what does this category mean to people? Well, it depends on who you are. Some people think it refers to the future 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Other people see it is just general affliction and persecution and difficulty that Christians face in the world. And other people see it as referring to Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in and around 70 A.D. So there's confusion over this term tribulation and what is meant and it's a confusion arising from the fact that the Bible uses the term tribulation in a number of different ways. So if you talk to people about tribulation, understand that you may have one meaning in mind and they may have another and then you're not communicating until an hour later you realize you're not talking about the same thing. So I'm trying to alleviate these difficulties by just using a biblical term, day of the Lord “In the world you will have tribulation” but “God has not destined us for” the day of the Lord.<sup>i</sup>

There's no question, exegetically, that the church will be removed from earth before the wrath of the day of the Lord begins. And we have done a lot of introductory work in 1 Thessalonians 5 to get this point across. Today we want to capitalize on all that we have learned. So we're going to review what we have learned and see how pervasive this truth is in the NT and then we're just going to walk through the passage and exegete, verse by verse and see the practical application of Paul's pre-day of the Lord rapture teaching, which is the same application that is made everywhere the NT touches this truth. Over and over you'll see the same application.

As far as review is concerned the day of the Lord is an ancient military term used of a great warrior king who was so powerful that he could consummate an entire military campaign in a single day. In the Scriptures it came to be used of God as a great warrior king who would catastrophically intervene in history to establish His purpose. So the fundamental idea is a catastrophic intervention by God to alter significantly the course of world history. To see one example turn to Isaiah 13:6, and again, I alert you to pay attention to the OT vocabulary used because Jesus, Paul and Peter are going to pick up this

OT vocabulary and use it in NT texts. I emphasize this over and over because you can't understand the NT if you don't understand the OT. We read the NT in light of the OT, not the other way around. Who were the authors of the NT? They were Jews. What was the word of God in their time? The OT. They were steeped in it. That's why they keep quoting it. And we read it and we say, hmm, what does that mean? And we don't know what it means, we don't have a clue what it means because nobody teaches the OT anymore. Well, we're NT Christians. No, we're not. The NT is built on the OT. It's not a total discontinuity. So watch the vocabulary. "Wail, for the day of the LORD is near!" Observe the word "near." And you say, how could the day of the Lord have been near when Isaiah wrote this 2700 years ago and it still hasn't come? Answer: it is near for the LORD. It is His day and it is near to Him, it is not necessarily near to us. For us a thousand years is a long time, for Him a thousand years is as one day. That is Peter's commentary on the nearness of the day of the Lord in 2 Pet 3, "Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day." People quote that to say, see, the days of Genesis are not literal 24-hour days, nonsense. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with the nearness of the day of the Lord. From God's perspective Peter says, "one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day." From our perspective we don't know when it will come; it is imminent, it will come as a thief! Isaiah then describes the character of the day. "It will come as destruction from the Almighty." Observe destruction. Paul is going to say that in 1 Thess 5. Verse 7 "Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. <sup>8</sup>They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor," note the language of birth pangs because you're going to see that in 1 Thess 5. Verse 8, "They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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." Observe that it's a day of darkness, that terminology of darkness and light that you find throughout the NT comes from the OT. "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. <sup>12</sup>I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken

from its place” Notice the heavens and earth, that’s the Hebrew expression for what? The universe. How does Gen 1 begin? “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and it’s a description of God creating the universe. So the day of the Lord is when God destroys the present heavens and earth and establishes another one. That’s also picked up by Jesus and Peter in the NT and related to the day of the Lord.

So let’s come to the NT, Matt 24. I said last week that I was still trying to work with the relationship of the timing of the rapture to the timing of the day of the Lord. In other words, does the rapture occur followed by a gap of time and then the day of the Lord begins or does the rapture occur and at the same time the day of the Lord begins? I think I have resolved this and I think that the rapture occurs at the same time the day of the Lord begins. What I’m saying is that the NT portrays two events as imminent, the rapture and the day of the Lord. Now, Dr Robert Thomas of the Master’s Seminary wrote a paper about 10 years ago on dual imminence in the Thessalonian epistles and his conclusions are included in his commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians. What he said was that the rapture and the 70th week of Daniel are both imminent. And in his position the 70th week of Daniel begins at the same time as the day of the Lord. So he links the 70th week of Daniel with the day of the Lord, so far as their starting point in time. Now I separate them because I think that the Scriptures separate them. It seems to me that the day of the Lord begins when Antichrist identity is revealed by God the Holy Spirit who is restraining his identity (2 Thess 2:3) but the 70th week of Daniel begins when the Antichrist signs a covenant with the leadership of Israel (Dan 9:27) and these do not occur at the same time. There probably isn’t a big gap of time between them but there is a gap of time between them. So his view won’t work, so far as Scripture is concerned, but I do appreciate that he noticed that the NT teaches dual imminence because that is a key observation that explains a lot of passages. It explains the Thessalonian epistles, it explains sections of Matthew 24, it explains 2 Peter 3 and it explains Revelation 2 and 3.

The difference between Dr. Thomas’ view and my view, Mr. Thomas, is that the dual imminence refers to the rapture and the day of the Lord, not the 70th week of Daniel. So, on your chart if you kind of slide the beginning of the day of the Lord right up to the very moment of the rapture I think you have the biblical picture that we will now see in the text. The rapture and the day

of the Lord occur simultaneously. When the church is removed the world is at that moment in the wrath of the day of the Lord.

Now, what I have here is a chart that shows on the left column the many *signs* revealed in Matthew 24:4-30 that precede and point to the coming of the Son of Man. On the right column I show that there are *no signs* in Matthew 24:35-44 that precede and point to the coming of the Son of Man.

<b>Not Imminent</b> Narrow Coming of the Son of Man to Earth	<b>Imminent</b> Broad Coming of the Son of Man to Judge
<b>Signs</b>	<b>No Signs</b>
Many False Christ's (Matt 24:5) Wars and Rumors of Wars (Matt 24:6) Nation against Nation (Matt 24:7a) Famines and Earthquakes (Matt 24:7b) Apostasy and Dissension (Matt 24:10) False Prophets (Matt 24:11) Increase of Lawlessness (24:12) Abomination of Desolation (Matt 24:15) Jews Fleeing to Wilderness (Matt 24:16-21) Great Tribulation upon Jews (Matt 24:21) False Christ's and Prophets (Matt 24:24) Sign in Sky (Matt 24:30)	No one knows day or hour (Matt 24:36) Like days of Noah (Matt 24:37-41) Like a thief in the night (Matt 24:42-44)

We said how can there be *signs* and *no signs* of the coming of the Son of Man? The resolution to the fact that there are *signs* and *no signs* is that two different comings of the Son of Man are in view. The first coming of the Son of Man that is discussed in Matthew 24:4-30 is the coming of the Son of Man on the narrow 24 hour day when His feet touch down on the Mt of Olives. This is what the OT refers to as “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” And this day is preceded by all the signs listed in the left column of this chart. And since there are many signs preceding this coming of the Son of Man it *is not imminent*. It cannot occur at-any-moment. These signs must precede it. However, the second coming of the Son of Man discussed in Matthew 24:35-44 is the coming of the Son of Man in the broad 7-year + day when He wages war against the earth to prepare the way for His narrow 24-hour day coming. For this you have *no signs* listed in the right column of this chart, but rather

Jesus teaches it will come like a thief in the night and like the flood in Noah's day. This is what the OT refers to as "the day of the Lord." And this day is not preceded by any signs. It will come like a thief in the night. And since there are no signs of this coming of the Son of Man it is *imminent*. Since the rapture is also imminent these two must occur simultaneously. I'm not saying the rapture is in Matt 24, I don't think it is, this has to do with Israel, but it does occur simultaneously and the application the Lord Jesus makes of this imminent day coming is in verse 42 and it's going to be the same application Paul gives us in 1 Thess and Jesus gives us in Rev 2-3. I'm telling you, this explains a lot. Verse 42, "Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup>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. <sup>44</sup>For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think he will." In other words, what is the practical application for the fact that this broad 7-year + day when Christ comes to wage war against the earth is imminent? It is that believers should be alert. Why? Because He could come at any moment. What do you mean "be alert?" We mean living our life for His glory all the time. If Christ could come at-any-moment then we should be living our life for His glory at-every-moment. If we knew at what hour He would break into the normal course of world history in this destructive manner, then we could wait until those signs appeared and then begin to live our lives for His glory. But since we do not know the day or the hour, since it will come as a thief in the night, then we should live every moment for His glory. So, while the rapture is not, so to speak, taught in Matthew 24 and 25, since it occurs simultaneously with the beginning of this broad 7-year day of His coming, this instruction to "be on the alert" is for us just as it was for the apostles. And Paul will reiterate this teaching in 1 Thess 5 as will Peter in his own way in 2 Peter 3 as will Jesus in Rev 2-3. The whole point is that there is one moment with two sides, the side for believers is the escape from the wrath, the side for the world is the beginning of the wrath.

Let's turn to 2 Pet 3. You can't get enough of this because it explains so much. Notice verse 7, "But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Notice Peter's subject. The destruction of the present heavens and earth. Scripturally there are three heavens and earth or universes. The first

universe is described in the Genesis creation account. It lasted until the Flood of Noah. The Flood destroyed that universe. The second universe began after the Flood and will last until the day of the Lord we've been studying. The day of the Lord will destroy the second universe. And the third universe will begin with the Messianic Kingdom and will merge into the eternal state. And Peter is discussing the destruction of the second universe by the wrath of the day of the Lord. He makes application in verse 9 to unbelievers and this relates to evangelism, this is not to be taken lightly or as just some detail of prophecy, this has practical ramifications for evangelism. Notice verse 9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." What is the Lord's promise to us? It is to rescue us from the day of the Lord. And some may say he sure is slow in keeping this promise, but the real reason for the apparent slowness is that he is being patient with unbelievers, giving people time to repent. So the apparent slowness comes out of God's grace. Why hasn't the day of the Lord begun yet? Because God is giving unbelievers more time to repent. But when this day of grace is over verse 10 describes what will immediately begin. "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." Now, is there any warning about when this will occur? No warning, it comes like a thief, just like Jesus said in Matt 24, so Peter picks up and says, when God is done giving unbelievers time to repent then sudden destruction will overwhelm them. Now the application for us. Jesus' application was "be alert" and Peter gives us a full commentary on what it means to "be alert." "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness," it's obvious how we ought to live. Verse 12, "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God," day of God" being equivalent to "the day of the Lord." Why do we look for and hasten this day? "because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" In other words, the destruction and removal of evil that is part and parcel of the present heavens and earth. Verse 13, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." That's the kingdom; the new heavens and new earth begin with the kingdom and extend into the eternal state. And this is what we desire, this is what we're looking forward to. A kingdom in which righteousness dwells, get out of all this evil and suffering. Verse 14, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for

these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,<sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you," aha, so Paul also wrote about this. Where did he write about it? Verse 16, "as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." Which is why I'm teaching you these things. He says these things are hard to understand. Well fine, but Peter also said they were hard to understand, so don't be dismayed. Jesus taught this, Peter taught this, Paul taught this, and what they all taught was that Christ is going to return for the Church at any moment, and at the same instant He removes His Church from Earth, He sends His day of the Lord wrath upon the earth.

Really, it makes no sense to have the church enter this day of the Lord wrath at all. The whole purpose of this day is to burn and destroy the present heavens and earth, exterminating all sinners from it so that He can bring in the first stage of the new heavens and new Earth characterized by righteousness. So, why would the church enter into this day of the Lord wrath at all? There is no reason. We are not destined for this day. Therefore, Peter says, since we are not of that day, we should not live as if we were of that day. Our lives ought to be totally different from the lives of those who are still in unbelief. They are not alert, we should be alert, they are not godly, we should be the godly, they do not walk in the light, we should walk in the light, they walk in darkness, we should not walk in darkness; the application is all in phase 2, experiential sanctification. How should we live? If we are phase 1 justified then how should we live in phase 2? We should live as sons of light, sons of the day, we should be alert. This is our testimony to the world that hopefully through our lives people will see the truth of the gospel and will repent and be saved from the destruction that is coming upon the world at any moment, the same moment that the Church is raptured.

Now let's see some more things this explains by turning to the Book of Revelation. I taught the whole book for almost two years and I still had questions when I got done. It's a hard book, the hardest because it's the last and it presupposes you know everything up to that book, which I didn't, still don't, probably never will, but one thing that I never understood was, why seven letters to seven churches? Why Rev 2-3? I've never seen anyone answer



this question. People say, well, that's what the Lord showed John, that's why? Yeah, but why did the Lord show John? I know Rev 1:19 gives the structure of the book. "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." Yeah, a three-fold outline, I know that, but why? Why is it so important to put these church letters in there? Why not just go straight into the day of the Lord judgments? What is the purpose of them? I finally answered that question: because the end of the church is the beginning of the day of the Lord judgments.

The entire Book of Revelation is arguing for dual imminency and I'm going to show you explicitly from the text that the rapture is imminent and the day of the Lord is imminent. Most people say the rapture isn't even in the Book of Revelation, maybe 3:10 they say, but I'm going to show you more than that. Turn to Rev 1. This book is about the revelation of Jesus Christ or the coming of Jesus Christ. And so people think, yeah, and He comes in Rev 19 and He does, that's true, but that's just the narrow coming, the personal, bodily, physical coming, but that's not the only coming in the book. If that were the case just write Rev 19 and be done with it. Why include the letters to the churches and all the day of the Lord judgments that result in the revelation of Jesus Christ? The answer seems to be that John viewed the end of the church at the rapture as initiating the day of the Lord judgments. Notice verse 1, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place," notice that word "soon." That was written almost 2000 years ago. You say soon. But we've seen this before haven't we. It's a watchword for the day of the Lord. It stands with another word in a word pair, the word "near" down in verse 3, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near." You say "near?" Are you saying 2000 years ago is near? I don't think so. The usual explanation from people in our camp is that it means swiftness, quickness, in other words, not near in time but when it occurs it will happen swiftly. I used to believe that too. I used to explain it that way. But that's not what it means. The OT use of the Hebrew analogs, Jesus' teaching in Matt 24 and especially Peter's commentary on this idea teach us what it means. From God's perspective it does mean soon, for Him a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day. So it's only been two days since He revealed this to John, for us it's been 2000 years, so for Him it is soon, for us it's not, what it means on the

human side is that it is imminent, that these things can happen at-any-moment. This explains everything in the book. This explains why the seven letters to the seven churches are given in Rev 2-3 with warnings throughout them that He is coming soon, to be ready, to hold fast, etc...and then it is immediately followed by events in heaven, Rev 4-5 which are preparatory for the judgments of the day of the Lord that fall upon the earth in Rev 6-18, eventuating in the narrow day of the coming of the Son of Man in Rev 19. And the whole point is that the rapture of the Church and the beginning of the day of these judgments occur simultaneously. From God's perspective they are both "soon!" And therefore Christ's exhortations to the seven churches are to live every-moment as if He could come at that moment.

Let's look at Rev 2:16; I'm trying to show you the double-edged side of this event, when the rapture occurs, at the same moment the day of the Lord begins and the purpose is to stimulate godly living. This is one of the letters, one of the seven letters that Christ wrote to one of the seven churches in Asia Minor. It's the church of Pergamum and the church of Pergamum was the church of compromise. They allowed false doctrine, false teaching to be propagated from the pulpit. So Christ is condemning them in verse 14 and 15 for allowing this compromise to go on. Pick up in verse 15, "So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans." Jesus doesn't like false teaching in His Church. So what's His exhortation? It's this double-edged truth. Verse 16, "Therefore repent; or else I'm coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth." Now look at this, this is double sidedness in the same verse. He's telling the believers to repent and if they don't He's going to come to the believers quickly, there's the word we saw in 1:1, exact same word, it means imminency, I'm coming at any time, you need to repent because you don't want Me to catch you compromising with false doctrine do you? If I do then you're going to be ashamed when I come. There are only two responses by believers when Christ comes for us. 1 John 2:28: confidence or shame. Every believer will go to the judgment seat either with confidence or shame. It's just like a father standing outside his kid's room and he stands there for a minute and listens and they don't know he's there and he listens and then the dad suddenly opens the door and there are only two responses: the kid drops what he's doing and looks at you like, what, or they just keep doing whatever they were doing. It's the same way with Christ. He's standing right there door of His universe about to break in and when He does there are only two

responses. You don't want to be standing there compromising do you? But notice the rest of the verse. I'm coming to you quickly, anytime, that's the rapture, "and I will make war against them," not you, "them, with the sword of my mouth." What's that all about? It's the day of the Lord judgments. It's amazing how clear this is when you see it.

Again in 2:25, this is to the church of Thyatira and this is the church of tolerance, they tolerated everything and everyone. But there were a few who were faithful, at the end of verse 23, "I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 but I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them – I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast till I come." In other words, His coming is in view again and He says, therefore continue, persevere until I come. And the whole point is that He can come at any moment and so you better be holding on to what you have at every moment. In other words, the Christian life is not a joke. Jesus Christ is coming back soon and I mean by that what the Scriptures mean by that: that is, it is imminent.

Now come down to 3:3. This is to the church in Sardis, and Patricia Sardis was the church of complacency, they were sitting up on the high ground. Sardis was practically an impenetrable fortress, they were rich, they could sit back, sip their wine and take it easy. They weren't living the Christian life. They were complacent. And he says in verse 2, wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it and repent." Repent about what? Not being alert. What did Jesus say and Paul say? They all say, "Be alert!" These people were asleep. He says wake up! Middle of verse 3, "Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief and you will not know what hour I will come to you." Ah, the thief analogy again. In other words you won't be ready when I come. I come at any moment and you're lying around doing nothing, complacent Christians and when I come you're going to be taken by surprise. All Christians will have one of these two responses at the judgment seat of Christ. One is confidence - because you're responding to the word of God, living the Christian life. The other is shame - because you're not responding to the word of God and you're not living the Christian life. And these Christians were not living it, they were not taking seriously the fact that the

Lord Jesus Christ could come at any moment. They were going around living like the world doing whatever, screwing around. Now, I've given you four or five passages in Revelation that show this, we could multiply this over and over, read the rest of the letters to the churches, read Rev 22:7, 12 and 20. You'll see it over and over and over.

The Lord Jesus Christ is standing right outside the door of history so to speak, waiting to break in and he's listening to everything that's going on in your life. He knows exactly what you're doing. Now when He breaks in that door and he comes to retrieve his church what are you going to be doing? And when He returns to rapture us from the earth His day of the Lord wrath will fall upon the Earth. The wrath has already come and the world will not escape. That's why it's so urgent to repent today. There is a new urgency to the gospel since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This urgency was not there before the cross. That's why Paul in Acts 17:30 says, "having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to man that all people everywhere should repent." The end of time has come. There is no more time. Time has run out. That is the whole point of the New Testament. Live every day as if today is your last day because there's no more time.

Now, I honestly have to say that I have not had this level of theological breakthrough in my entire tenure at this church. This is a huge breakthrough that opens up hundreds of Scriptures and is explaining so much. I am indebted to two scholars primarily. Each of which has contributed one of two points that is crucial. One helped me to understand that the day of the Lord begins before the 70th week of Daniel. The other helped me to understand dual imminence. And both of these ideas are critical to understanding the tremendous impact this teaching should have on every believer in Jesus Christ. And so far I haven't convinced either one of these scholars, they're both professors at seminaries, to also accept the other one's contribution. Each one holds one of the two points and has contributed one these two ideas but neither one of them accepts the other one's point, yet. I'm going to convince them. But as far as I know I'm the only one holding this position.

On one hand you can't deny that the day of the Lord begins before the 70th week of Daniel begins. They start with different things occurring with Antichrist. And you cannot deny that both the day of the Lord and the

rapture are imminent events. There are no signs that precede either. And what it means is that it is very serious how you are living your life right now. The moment that Christ returns for his church is the moment that the wrath of the Lamb comes upon the world. In that case how ought we to be living? Like Jesus said, alert, like Paul said as he gave the full commentary on what it means to be alert, that is to live godly lives, to live like Jesus said in the letters to the seven churches, expecting his any moment arrival, repenting if need be, and now living as Paul tells us to live. The application is always the same. It is always a stimulant to godly living.

Now come to 1 Thess 5. Verse 1 in the NASB says, **Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.** The times and the epochs being the changes and alterations in kingdoms. He relates back to Daniel 2:21 and Acts 1:7 where the same expression is used of changes and alterations in kingdoms. In the fact that God the Father is sovereign over the rise and fall of kingdoms. And Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they have no need of anything to be written to you regarding God's kingdom program.

Verse 2 begins with an explanatory *gar*, so he's explaining why they have no need of anything to be written regarding God's kingdom program. **For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.** The implication is that the day of the Lord relates to a major change in God's kingdom program. And indeed it does. Combining what is taught in the book of Daniel about the four successive Gentile kingdoms; Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece and Rome being totally destroyed and replaced by one final Jewish kingdom, with the Old Testament teachings on the day of the Lord found in Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Malachi, one concludes that the day of the Lord is the means by which God brings about the great change in kingdoms from Gentile dominion to Jewish dominion. And he says **you yourselves know full well**, the verb "full well" meaning "with exactness, with precision, and the verb "know" being in the perfect tense, meaning they had come to know it in the past when Paul was with them. And he had covered the topic of the day of the Lord to such an extent that it could be said that they knew it with exactness, with precision. Now, later there will be false teachers come in and they will deceive the Thessalonians and so in 2 Thessalonians Paul will have to correct this false teaching concerning the day of the Lord. But at this time he says

you yourselves know with exactness that the day of the Lord will, just like a thief in the night. The comparative particle “just like,” means in an identical fashion. So just as a thief comes so the day of the Lord will come. They are exact parallels. How a thief comes in the night will tell you how the day of the Lord will come.

The primary characteristic of how a thief comes in the night is unexpectedly. The whole point is that you are asleep and suddenly, without notice, without warning, but totally unexpectedly, the thief breaks in and steals. And so how will the day of the Lord come? It will come while the world is asleep, it will come suddenly, without notice, without warning, but totally unexpectedly, the day of the Lord will break forth and destroy those who are not alert and prepared. The one who is alert and prepared is the one who is clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that is, he is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 3, **While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" Then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.** This is a key verse in the New Testament and it describes the general conditions globally when the day of the Lord comes. **While** and it should be translated “when,” when they say this. **they** being contrasted to the brethren in verse 1, so **they** are non-brethren, making them unbelievers, the unbelieving world. While unbelievers **are saying, "Peace and security!" Then destruction will come upon them suddenly.** The word translated **safety** is *asphaleia* and refers to security. The world wants world peace and security very desperately and this verse is signed that at the moment they achieve it it will already be too late. They will already be in the wrath. They cannot escape. This is very serious. Dr. John Walvoord said you can use this in evangelism and I agree with him completely. It's a very serious warning. The moment the world thinks that it is attained world peace **Then destruction will come upon them suddenly,** but it's more powerful than that. The Greek word translated **then** is weak, the original is much more powerful, “at that time” In other words at the exact time the world is saying peace and safety the destruction will come, they are already in the day of the Lord and there is no escape. Why is there no escape? Because the rapture is the only escape. Once the rapture has happened the escape hatch is closed and there is no escape. Paul says **destruction will come upon them suddenly.** **Suddenly** is an adjective

that modifies the noun **destruction** and so actually the text reads “At that time sudden destruction will come upon them,” it’s a kind of destruction, it’s a sudden, unexpected, without warning kind of destruction, just **Like labor pains upon a woman with child**. And let me capitalize on this analogy because it is once again describing the imminency of this event. The labor pains in the Greek is usually translated “birth pangs,” and is usually used in conjunction with the day of the Lord, as here. And it’s in the singular and not plural so it’s birth pang, not birth pangs or labor pains, birth pang. Since it has the definite article it means “the birth pang,” and refers to the very first one. Now, when a woman has the very first birth pang it is distinct from any other pangs she may have had during the pregnancy. It’s a much greater convulsion of the womb than anything that came before and once it occurs she is going to have a baby. There is no turning back at this point, the pain is going to intensify and the interval between convulsions is going to shorten until a baby is born. Now, one of the elements of the first birth pang that Paul is drawing on is the fact that it is sudden or unexpected. You can’t put a time marker on when it will occur. I’m sitting here the last 3 weeks waiting for Robin, people say is it coming, when is it coming? I don’t know. Soon, quickly, it’s imminent, it can come at any moment and Paul is seizing that idea and saying the day of the Lord is imminent, it comes suddenly and nobody can put a date on it.

The second idea he’s capitalizing on is the fact that it’s a severe pain. I realize that half of the human race has never experienced a birth pang. But probably almost half of the human race has experienced a birth pang. The other half can only get a glimpse from watching the other half undergo them. And I’ll spare you the images. But the Bible goes into great detail to describe the whole world as convulsing like a woman’s womb. So if you don’t like those images of women having birth pangs then go out and tell your friends about the Lord Jesus Christ because if they don’t believe in Him terrible birth pangs are going to come upon the world. Take Japan and spread it all over the world. Where do you go when you have a 30 foot wall of water coming at you? The destruction coming is unimaginable. Birth pangs are not pleasant and therefore the destruction that comes upon the world will not be pleasant at all but it will be on par with the greatest suffering and travail the human race has ever seen.

Third, the Greek text does not say “upon a woman,” but “in the womb,” the image is of the writhing, uncontrollable convulsions of the muscles in the womb that help the baby move through the birth canal. Jeremiah says, “Ask now and see, If a male can give birth, Why do I see every man With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, there is none like it;” you better believe it. The extreme suffering of this period is exactly what the whole world is going to face when they say two words, “peace and security!” At the time they utter that sudden destruction will come over them just like the birth pang in the womb, convulsion like judgments will begin to fall on the earth in increasing intensity and the final expression says **they will not escape**. The Greek says *ou me*, double negative, in no way, it is impossible to escape. Why is it impossible to escape? Because the escape has already occurred. What is the only way to escape the day of the Lord? To be raptured. If you missed that there is no escape. Just as if you had missed getting on the ark before God shut the door, there was no escape, so if you missed the rapture, there is no escaping the day of the Lord. Sudden destruction will come upon you and you will not escape. The end of the world as we know it will have come.

Verses 4 and 5 are going to tell us why we are not going to be overtaken by the day of the Lord. And it's very important to understand why we will not be overtaken by this day that is coming upon the world. For number one, observe in verse 3 that we are not saying this, they are saying this; and the destruction is not coming upon us, the destruction is coming upon them; and it is not us who will not escape, it is they who will not escape. Verse 4 begins the contrast, **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day**. Notice the language darkness and light. Where does the language darkness and light come from? The OT day of the Lord passages. The day of the Lord begins with a period of darkness and then is followed by a period of light. Paul bases our exclusion from this day on what? The fact that we are sons of light and sons of day; we are not in darkness. It's all positional truth. We are sons of light and sons of day by virtue of faith alone in Christ alone and his righteousness imputed to us at the moment of faith in Him. This has nothing to do with experience or how you live your life or whether you're watching for Jesus Christ to return expectantly or not, it has everything to do with the fact that you are by position a son of light and a son



of day. On that basis you are excluded from the day of darkness, that is the day of the Lord which will come like a thief.

Verse 6, now he begins to give application, how we ought to live in our experience since we hold this position. It's an inferential conjunction, inference, **so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.** The world sleeps, the world is not alert to Christ's coming, the world is going along its merry way to darkness and destruction; we are not sons of darkness so we are not to live as sons of darkness. We are sons of light and sons of the day; therefore we ought to live like sons of light, sons of day. Therefore, **let us be alert and sober** or self-controlled, live a disciplined godly life, be alert. What did Christ say in Matt 24 to the apostles? Be alert; be watching for the any-moment coming of Christ. Peter gave us great commentary on this, so does Paul, be alert, be sober, self controlled, live a godly life, your experience should conform to your position. Since you are a son of light by position you ought to walk in the light. This all comes into the fellowship passages of John. This is wonderful and vivid application.

Verse 7, **For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.** In other words bad things happen at night, you are not of the night, therefore do not live like you are of the night. This is so simple. The world is not alert the world is not self-controlled. The world is asleep at the wheel and the world is drunk behind the wheel.

Verse 8, **But since we are of the day, let us be sober,** let us be self-controlled, let's not be asleep here as if we think everything is just going to go on day by day and the Lord Jesus Christ is not going to come for a long time. No, that would be living asleep at the wheel and drunk behind the wheel. The Lord Jesus Christ can come at-any-moment. And we ought to be living like it.

Verse 8, **having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.** It reminds us of the armor of God at the end of Ephesians except it has differences. The importance is not the differences, Paul may have used variations, but the point is that we are to be self-controlled in life and the way we do this is by putting on the armor of God. Each day we put on the armor of God and Paul says in Ephesians we put it on by prayer. And what it means is we have this equipment, we are soldiers and we have equipment to put on. Why? Because we're in a battle that's why.

If you didn't notice there are bullets whizzing by. The church of Jesus Christ is under attack. It's the world under the influence of Satan and the demons that is attacking us. And we are not to give up any ground, we have the high ground in Christ, we are seated in Him in the heavenly places and we are daily to put on the armor of God and defend the high ground. The point is that as we put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation, we are doing battle with the world system and we are victorious. The world lulls us to sleep, it distracts us, it deceives us into not living as if Christ is coming back at any-moment.

Verse 9, the reason is given. It's a causal *hoti* clause. Why should we live this way? Why should we who are of the day live as the day? Why should we be self-controlled having put on the armor of God? Because God has not destined us for wrath, obviously the wrath of the day of the Lord. We are not appointed to that, but rather for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, that's the pre-day of the Lord rapture. Here it is again, one event, two destinies in Christ appointed for salvation, out of Christ appointed for wrath. Both are imminent. Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, that's the rapture when we get our resurrection body, phase 3 of sanctification, it's complete, our final sanctification has occurred and we are resurrected through our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 10, **who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with him.** But it's more powerful than that, it says, "whether we are awake or asleep, at once we will live with him." Meaning at the very moment of the rapture we are resurrected, that is we will live with him, we are meeting him in the air, he just got done talking about that 4:13-18.

Verse 11, the only two imperatives and the whole passage, **Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.** The first command, to encourage one another means to come alongside one another as fellow believers in Christ and carry one another as each one needs to be carried. Sometimes we do the caring and other times we need to be carried. This is all to live a godly life. The second command is to build up one another and this has to do with building something, this is a construction project and it literally says "build into the one." And I think the point of this expression is to build unity in our congregation. We all need to be on the same page theologically and we need to be exercising our spiritual gifts in the bond of peace to build unity. The Holy Spirit calls us out to be a

unit in Christ and we should make every effort to preserve unity in the bond of peace. So we have been given the diversity of gifts to bring about unity in Christ. They were already doing this; Paul commands them to continue doing this.

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<sup>i</sup> Once this category was firmly established people began to argue about the timing of the rapture; whether it's pre-trib, mid-trib or post-trib. Each of these views has the church going through at least part of the tribulation 70th week of Daniel. Now I suspect, and it's only a suspicion, but I suspect that the reason they want the church to go through part of the 70th week of Daniel has little or nothing to do with the exegesis of the text and everything to do with a faulty view of man's depravity and justification by faith alone. What do I mean? What I mean is that they somehow think that the church is not worthy to go and be in God's presence and that going through a portion of the 70th week of Daniel will purify the church, making her worthy. So the real issue, I think, is that deep down that area we are still clinging to the idea that man has to be found worthy, that somehow it has to do with my heart, and that the 70th week of Daniel will somehow purify my heart, sort of Protestant purgatory if you will and make us worthy to step into the father's presence. And of course, that's a false theology. God doesn't consider the condition of my heart, no it's not clean, we are still sinners, man is not found worthy to step into his presence. It's Jesus Christ that is clean and it's Jesus Christ that is worthy and we are standing in him. Our righteousness is at the right hand of the father and we are looking up and out to his righteousness, not down and in to our own hearts. Our justification sits at the right hand of the father on high and not in our hearts down here. And so really, I suspect that one of the major reasons people are trying to bring the church into the 70th week of Daniel has nothing to do with the exegesis of the biblical text, but everything to do with a false view of human depravity and the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

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