

THE DAY OF THE LORD
1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2—"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

INTRODUCTION:

When perilous times occur many ask why it is that God seemingly allows bad men to prosper and to go unpunished.

There are many who see God as a Super Pacifist—too loving, too gentle, too kind, too good, too meek and too mild to judge and punish the world and its inhabitants for their callous disregard for His standards, His righteousness, and His way.

However, there is coming a day when God will deal with the unrighteousness of all men! That will be when He reconciles accounts in the time period known as *"The Day of the Lord!"*

Three phrases in these verses need careful consideration.

1. Time and Seasons.

This phrase is found only three times in the Bible, and refers primarily to God's plan for Israel.

"times" = "a space of time or interval" "an individual opportunity"; "by implication delay."

"seasons" = "an occasion, that is, set or proper time"

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

*Daniel 2:20-21 20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21 And he changeth **the times and the seasons**: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:*

*Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know **the times or the seasons**, which the Father hath put in his own power.*

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God has a definite plan for the nations of the world, and Israel is the key nation in His plan!

2. The Day of the Lord.

In the Bible, the word **"day"** can refer to a 24 hour period! In Genesis it is clear that it is talking about a literal 24 hour period!

But the word **"day"** can also refer to a longer time during which God accomplished some special purpose.

The phrase **"day of the Lord"** is referring to a particular special period of time. We'll look at that more closely in a moment.

3. Thief in the Night.

Jesus used this image in His own teaching.

It describes **the suddenness** and **the surprise** involved in the coming of the Day of the Lord.

In Revelation 3:3 Jesus used this image to warn believers not to be caught napping. To the Church in Sardis Jesus said: *Revelation 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, **I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.***

Luke 12:37-39

Now we can put these three concepts together and discover what Paul wanted to teach the Thessalonians.

He had just told them about the coming of Christ for His Church!
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

He now reminds them of something that he had, no doubt, previously taught them! **(Vs 1-2)**

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What he reminds them of is about this matter of “*the day of the LORD*” that will be a period of intense suffering and tribulation on the earth following this Rapture of the Church!

These times and seasons that relate to Israel and the nations of the earth do not apply to the Church or affect the truth of the Lord’s coming for the Church! He may come at any time, and this will usher in the Day of the Lord!

Paul emphasis here was simply that believers were “*in the know*” while the unbelievers were living in ignorance of God’s plan!

The suddenness of these events will reveal to the world its ignorance of divine truth!

I. THE DEFINITION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD!

The Term “*the Day of the Lord*” occurs 25 times in 23 verses, including the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi, Acts, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Peter.

The Day of the Lord is not a term which applies to a twenty-four hour period. It refers to a whole schedule of events that begin immediately following the rapture of the Church.

John Walvoord wrote in his commentary on “*The Thessalonian Epistles*”, p 76,

"The Day of the Lord is a period of time in which God will deal with wicked men directly and dramatically in fearful judgment. Today a man may be a blasphemer of God, an atheist, can denounce God and teach bad doctrine. Seemingly, God does nothing about it. But the day designated in Scripture as the ‘day of the Lord’ is coming when God will punish human sin, and will deal in wrath and in judgment with a Christ-rejecting world. One thing we are sure of, God in His own way will bring every soul into judgment."

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The Day of the Lord begins with the seven-year period of judgment known as the tribulation period.

Isaiah 13:9-11 (Mark your place here!)

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD! (3 Things)

A. Darkness.

Vs 2 -says “*the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*”

I believe there is an implication here of some very dark times right before that day!

(Zephaniah 1:14-18; Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:18-20)

This period will include times of both **literal, physical darkness** as well as **deep spiritual darkness!**

Literal physical darkness will occur in the tribulation as stated in **Revelation 8:12** where the celestial heaven is darkened by 1/3 and in **Revelation 16:10** when total darkness descends upon the Antichrist and his kingdoms!

Consider the terror and paralysis of darkness!

Spiritual darkness is seen in **2 Thessalonians 2:7-12!**

But listen to **verse 4-9** of our text! WE are not in darkness!

B. Destruction.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 "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 will be a time of **cataclysmic destruction!**

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While the world is scrambling for **peace, safety, security and freedom from terrorism, the greatest devastation that the world will ever experience is yet out on the horizon!**
(Go back to Isaiah 13:6-8, 13)

Everything on earth will be affected—The seas, fresh water, vegetation, islands, and mountains all will be affected!

Joel 1:15—"Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

Ezekiel 7:25—"Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none."

C. Despair.

The author, H. G. Wells (1866-1946) is quoted as saying that *"Despair is a frightful queerness ... that there is no way out, or around, or through the impasse. It is the end."*

*Luke 21:25-26—"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth **distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.**"*

Revelation 9:6—"And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

John 3:36 declares "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

There is no greater horror or nothing more despairing than the hopelessness of that fact—the wrath of God abiding on you!

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How sad it is that men should hear the Gospel over and over again while constantly turning away from it and rejecting it and go out facing a hopeless future having the wrath of God hanging over them!

Revelation 6:15-16 "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:"

Great fear will grip all unbelievers! Every unbeliever will be struck with a maddening terror! No unbeliever is going to escape the judgment of God and they can sense it. It is a period when all unbelievers must face the fierce wrath of the Lamb of God, whom they have rejected, denied, cursed, disobeyed and disbelieved!

**V. THE DEFINITION...THE DESCRIPTION...
THE DEFINITIVE NATURE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD!**
It is going to happen! **(2 Peter 3:3-10)**

The May 1984 National Geographic showed, through color photos and drawings, the swift and terrible destruction that wiped out the Roman Cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in A.D. 79.

The explosion of Mount Vesuvius was so sudden, the residents were killed while in their routine: men and women were at the market, the rich in their luxurious baths, slaves were at toil. They died amid volcanic ash and superheated gasses. Even family pets suffered the same quick and final fate.

It takes little imagination to picture the panic of that terrible day. The saddest part is that these people did not have to die.

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Scientists confirm what ancient Roman writers record—weeks of rumblings and tremors preceded the actual explosion. Even a plume of smoke was clearly visible from the mountain days before the eruption. If only they had been able to read and respond to Vesuvius's warning!

There are similar "*rumblings*" in our world: warfare, earthquakes, the nuclear threat, economic woes, breakdown of the family and moral standards.

While these things are not exactly new, they do point to a coming day of Judgment!

People need not to be caught unprepared. God warns and provides an escape to those who will heed the rumblings.

Matthew 24:36-39

The Day of the Lord is Eminent.

"Rising above others. . .exalted; distinguished"

Matthew 24:21—"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The Day of the Lord is Imminent.

"Likely to happen without delay. . .impending."

IV. THE DELIVERANCE FROM THE DAY OF THE LORD!

1 Thessalonians 5:9—"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,"

John 5:24—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment); but is passed from death unto life."

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Conclusion

The Day of the Lord is a day of Darkness, Destruction, Despair, and it is Definite!

But, you don't have to be afraid of the day of the LORD!

You don't have to live in fear of having to go through the day of the LORD!