

The Day of the Lord

I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction:

- Many today are asking, “Where is God, and why is He not actively working in our universe?”
- The Day of the Lord will answer their question, though probably not in a way they would like!
- The day of the Lord is not one literal day, but refers to a period of time. It is actually a fairly lengthy period of time spanning several years.
 - The rapture is never mentioned in the OT (Paul mentions it as a mystery in I Cor. 15), but the Day of the Lord is predicted in both OT and NT.
 - Bible references clearly show this cannot be just one literal day
 - It is a unique period characterized by judgment
 - It is also a time where God vindicates His name (Isaiah 2:12- “For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.”)
 - A time when God “steps in” and intervenes in human history. Where he “grabs the reins” so to speak. It is God’s way of bringing history to a close, leading into the Eternal State. Human history as we know it will come to a screeching halt! (II Peter 3:10)
 - So for those who ask, “Where is God?” What they fail to realize is that firstly, He most definitely is working, but more importantly when He does step in it will be in judgment! So today is an age of grace and mercy, but that day will be a time of judgment!
- See Revelation 6:12-17
- God wants this day to be unexpected, but He wants His people to be prepared for the unexpected.

I. The times and seasons- v. 1-4

- a. The times and seasons speak of generalities and specifics
 - i. We do not know the specific day or hour
 - ii. We can examine the age and signs and see where things are headed!
- b. “The times and the seasons” (5:1) is not a reference to the rapture, but to the events following the rapture. The rapture begins the Day of the Lord.

- c. Acts 1:6-7, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 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."
- d. Paul wrote that, "ye have no need that I write unto you" (5:1). There are several reasons for saying this.
 - i. We will not be here on earth during the day of the Lord because the rapture will take place first (cf. I Thess. 4:18). Paul included himself then, but excluded himself and his readers here
 - ii. It is not God's will for us to know the precise time of the rapture. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (5:2).
 - iii. This same simile was used by our Lord in the Olivet Discourse and in the book of Revelation referring to the Tribulation.
- e. Chapters 4 and 5 must be understood **chronologically**, and in light of the fact that Christ's return is in **two phases**
 - i. His glorious appearing at the Rapture (in the air, unexpected)
 - ii. His Second Coming/Revelation at the end of the Tribulation (the world in turmoil/ Battle of Armageddon)
- f. V.2-3-The world situation at the beginning of the day of the Lord will provide a false basis for peace
 - i. UN, EU, Ecumenicalism?
 - ii. V. 1-3- sudden, and unexpected- It would appear that the rapture ends the day of grace, and begins the day of the Lord! Either at once, or at least very soon.
- g. V. 3- People will be lulled to sleep by political and social conditions. Perhaps consumed with entertainment (pop culture, celebrities, etc.), technology, and current events they will not be bothered with Bible prophecy!
- h. This day will sneak up on many! V. 2
 - i. In addition to "a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2), another simile found often in Scripture is that of a woman with birth pangs ("as travail upon a woman with child" – 5:3).
 - ii. Labor pains suggest unexpectedness, and inevitability

- iii. V. 3- false peace- The world will be entering into the tribulation but they will think they are entering some golden age (or “the age of Aquarius” or “the new age” or “the new world order,” etc.). Cf. II Thessalonians 2:11 (strong delusion)

II. **The Day of the Lord- v. 1-4**

- a. The day of the Lord so comes: With this phrase, Paul is referring to a familiar Old Testament idea. The idea behind the phrase is that this is Gods’ time. Man has his day and the Lord has His day
- b. Not a literal day-
 - i. It does not refer to a single day, but to a season when God rapidly advances His agenda to the end of the age. The day of the Lord “Is a familiar Old Testament expression. It denotes the day when God intervenes in history to judge His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His kingdom.” (Hiebert)
 - ii. Notable passages- Isaiah 13:9-11, Zephaniah 1:14-16, 3:14-17
 - iii. When we examine the biblical data, technically the day of the Lord is anytime God intervenes directly or indirectly in human history to judge or to bless. It is a supernatural or providential intervention, in which God usually uses secondary causes and means (men, kings, armies, and the forces of nature).
 - iv. Some Old Testament passages that refer to the day of the Lord describe historical judgments (events that already happened) that have already been fulfilled in some sense- foreshadowing the future day of the Lord!
 - v. It is not a 24 hour day- Illustr- day of grace; the phrase “back in my day...”
 - vi. The days of creation are literal days because we are given numbers, and specific times of a day!- Context is king!
 - vii. Jewish day began at sunset, and continued to the next day at sunset.
 - viii. Symbolically the day of the Lord also starts out in darkness, has a period of daylight, and ends in darkness
 - ix. Paul here in I Thess. 5 is referring to only the beginning of the day of the Lord; the Tribulation where God’s wrath is poured out onto a wicked, sin-loving world that has rejected the Gospel!
 - x. Who will be there?

1. Sinners (atheists, mockers, worldly, immoral, proud, careless, procrastinators) seemingly go unpunished now, but God will deal with sin directly and dramatically! “they will not escape.” This ought to make us tremble for those whom we know! We ought to weep, sow in tears, and try to warn them!
 2. The church will not be here- Paul changes from “we” to “they”
- c. What will happen?
- i. The day of the Lord will also be a time of blessing when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom
 1. Tribulation is the judgment phase
 2. Millennial kingdom is the blessing phase. God’s promise to Abraham, and to David will be fulfilled. He will save a remnant of Israel, and they will dwell in the land He gave to them.
 3. The millennium will end with another time of judgment (II Peter 3:10)!

III. The Hope of Salvation- v. 8

- a. Those in Christ will not be around- we are not appointed to wrath- v. 9
 - i. Church age saints will be raptured
 - ii. There will be people getting saved during the tribulation- especially Jews.
- b. V. 6-11 applies the truth to believers even though we will not be there! All prophecy needs application
- c. V. 5- Children of light- these are ready for the return of Jesus.
- d. Watch and be sober- v. 6
 - i. Paul used a different word here than for the sleep of death mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:13
 - ii. Sleep here speaks of ignorance, inactivity
 - iii. Sober doesn’t mean dull and without pleasure. It has in mind someone who knows the proper value of things, and therefore doesn’t get too excited about the things of this world. The person who lives his or her life only for fun and entertainment isn’t sober.
 - iv. Spurgeon’s illustrations in his sermon Awake! Awake!

- v. A city suffers under the plague, with an official walking the streets crying out, "Bring out the dead! Bring out the dead!" All the while, a doctor with the cure in his pocket sleeps.
- vi. A passenger ship reels under a storm and is about to crash on the rocks, bringing near-certain death to the hundreds of passengers – all the while, the captain sleeps.
- vii. A prisoner in his cell is about ready to be led to execution; his heart is terrified at the thought of hanging from his neck, terrified of death, and of what awaits him after death. All the while, a man with a letter of pardon for the condemned man sits in another room – and sleeps.
- viii. Christians are sleeping as the world drifts towards this awful day! There is a great need for soul-winners! Man's greatest failure is succeeding at the wrong thing!
- e. Many are being intoxicated not just by alcohol or drugs, but by the allurements and pleasures of this world! (sports, video games, politics, Hollywood, etc). Satan has a merry-go-round of distractions to keep us away from our main task!
- f. Paul used the images of a soldier's armor to illustrate the idea of watchfulness. A soldier is a good example of someone who must watch and be sober
 - i. He refers to that precious triad we mentioned in chapter 1- faith, love, and hope.
 - ii. Hope isn't used in the sense of wishful thinking, but in the sense of a confident expectation of God's hand in the future- this is what the Day of the Lord should represent to us.

Conclusion:

- Watch and be sober- v. 6- the principle that Jesus taught his disciples
- Be on guard, vigilant, serious-minded
- Be prepared! Are you ready?
- Awake! Romans 13:11-14