

The Day of the Lord

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1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 (NKJV) “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”

In this passage, Paul gives instruction regarding the coming “Day of the Lord.” Paul had already instructed the saints in Thessalonica regarding the “times and the seasons” of prophetic events. The Greek word for “times” is *chronos*. From this word we get the English word “chronology.” *Chronos* refers to a space of time. The Greek word for “seasons” is *kairos*. *Kairos* refers to a set period of time. Prophetic “times” are made up of prophetic “seasons”. Paul made it clear that the Day of the Lord would come during a prescribed prophetic time and season.

It is possible that Paul uses “times” to refer to each of the three yearly Jewish festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) and “seasons” to refer the specific events within each festival. In the prophetic sense, Christ has already come as our Passover Lamb and the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. This being the case, the final prophetic event is Tabernacles consisting of the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus made it clear that no one knows the day nor the hour of His return except the Father. (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7) Therefore Paul does not set a date but simply reminds believers to be aware of the prophetic indicators that the Day is near.

What is the Day of the Lord? The Day of the Lord is “the occasion of God’s final intervention in human affairs to punish sin, restore the faithful of his people and establish his rule over the nations. It is linked with the Messianic hope and will be fulfilled at Jesus Christ’s return. This future consummation is anticipated in historical acts of judgment and, although its time is unknown, it will be heralded and accompanied by signs and by great upheavals in nature.”¹ The Day of the Lord is associated with Christ’s Second Coming.

Although we are not told the day or the hour, we are told the nature of the Day of the Lord. First, the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2; Matthew 24:36–44; Luke 12:35–40; 2 Peter 3:10–13) “A thief in the night” implies that Day will come suddenly with great loss. Those who have gathered treasures on earth will lose everything in a moment. On the other hand, those who are watching, are prepared, and have laid up treasures in heaven, that Day will make them richer not poorer.

Second, the Day of the Lord will come at a time when mankind will anticipate peace and safety. (1 Thessalonians 5:3; Luke 17:26–30) This expectation will result from an unholy alliance among the nations in revolt against God’s commandments. (Psalm 2) The Day of the Lord will suddenly shatter this world’s conspiracy against God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Manser, M. H. (1999). *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*. London: Martin Manser.

Third, the Day of the Lord will come upon the world with doom and catastrophic destruction. (1 Thessalonians 5:3; Luke 17:26-30; 2 Peter 3:10-13) It will come as travail comes upon a pregnant woman. As travail ends in birth, God's determined end shall be realized on that Day.

Fourth, the Day of the Lord will be a Day of no escape. In 1 Thessalonians 5:3 the Greek wording is a double-negative: "They shall not, by no means, escape". John the Baptist declared, "*Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*" (Matthew 23:33 NKJV) In the same way Paul wrote, "*And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*" (Romans 2:3 NKJV) There will be no place to hide from the wrath to come.

Fifth, the Day of the Lord will not overtake true believers by surprise. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5) True believers are not living in the darkness of this world. Although Christ will come unnoticed by the world in a time of spiritual darkness, He will not come unnoticed by the saints who are living in the light. True believers are "sons of the light" and "sons of the day". They are not of the night or of darkness. God has not appointed believers to experience the wrath that will come upon those who believe not.

In light of God's warnings, there is no reason for the believer to be surprised by and unprepared for the Lord's return. The believer is to heed God's warning and be watchful. (1 Thessalonians 5:7; Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 5:14) He is not to sleep as others do. Sleeping speaks of a lack of watchfulness. The apostle Peter exhorts, "*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*" (1 Peter 4:7 NKJV)

Sixth, the believer is to be sober or self-controlled. They are not live like staggering drunks at night. (Luke 21:34-36) Rather, the believer is to be dressed and prepared for spiritual battle. (Ephesians 6:10-18; Isaiah 59:17)

Seventh, the believer is to look forward to the Day of the Lord with hope. (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10) Believers will not be objects of God's wrath on that Day but of His salvation through Christ. God has not appointed the believer to wrath. Believers are to comfort one another with these things. They are to edify one with words and acts of encouragement. They are to exhort one another to not grow weary in their watchfulness and steadfastness but are to be even more committed to the church gatherings in anticipation of Christ's return for His church. They are to remember that the Christian life is not about "me" but about "we."

Are you living your life in the light of Christ's return? Are you encouraging others to do the same by your words and your example? If you are living like the world, then you are unprepared and encouraging others to be unprepared also. If you are watchful then you will live your life with a different perspective. Your priorities in life will change. You will not be concerned about gaining this world, but about your own soul, the souls of others, and the work of God through His church. Remember the exhortation of Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV: "*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*"

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