

THE DAY OF THE LORD

TEXT: I THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. The rapture is taught in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. After the rapture, comes the “day of the Lord” (5:1, 2).
2. In Semitic thought it was customary to designate events of importance with the term “day.” For example, our Lord said to the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56).
3. In the Old Testament, the term “day of the LORD” was used to describe any time of judgment, desolation, and darkness. It was described as a time when God would severely punish the wicked, especially those who oppressed Israel.
4. It was also seen as a time when God would judge Israel for her backsliding and idolatry.
 - “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?” (Amos 5:18-20).
 - “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.” (Isaiah 13:9-11).
 - “Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come” (Joel 1:15).
 - “The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph. 1:14, 15).

- “For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been” (Obadiah 15, 16).
5. The term “day of the LORD” is used 25 times in the Bible. And there are over 100 similar references, such as “in that day.”
 6. The day of the LORD was anticipated by Israel as a future day of God’s judgment and wrath to be followed by the establishment of His kingdom.
 7. Technically, the day of the LORD can refer to any period when God enters into human affairs and judges. It is a supernatural or providential intervention, in which God usually uses secondary causes and means (men, kings, armies, and the forces of nature).
 8. Here in I Thessalonians 5, “the day of the Lord” refers to the time when the Lord will deal with the world in judgment for its sin. It refers to the time of tribulation when God will pour out His wrath upon this wicked sin-loving world because this world has rejected the Gospel.
 9. The day of the Lord will also be a time of blessing when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom. Here the apostle Paul is not describing the entire day of the Lord, only the beginning of it (5:1, 2 ff).

I. THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME SUDDENLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY (5:1-3).

1. The conjunctive “but” ties chapter 5 with chapter 4. First comes the rapture (4:13-18), then comes the day of the Lord.
2. The Jewish day began at sunset. Genesis 1:5 says, “And the evening and the morning were the first day.”
3. Therefore, God’s judgment (the tribulation) will precede His blessings (the millennial kingdom).
4. “The times and the seasons” (5:1) is not a reference to the rapture, but to the events (times and seasons) following the rapture. Paul wrote that, “ye have no need that I write unto you” (5:1). There are several reasons for saying this.
 - They 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 had already gone over all of this with them (cf. II Thess. 2:5).
 - 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).
 - This same simile was used by our Lord in the Olivet Discourse and in the book of Revelation.
 - "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:42-44).
 - "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" (Rev. 3:3).
5. The Bible teaches our Lord's return will be unexpected. In 1992, Harold Camping published *1994? Camping introduced his book 1994?* with this boastful statement, "No book ever written is as audacious or bold as one that claims to predict the timing of the end of the world, and that is precisely what this book presumes to do." (emphasis added)
 6. Mr. Camping was rather audacious. And he was dead wrong. He was a false prophet. By the way, "audacious" can mean "bold or daring." It can also mean "reckless, impudent, and insolent."
 7. September 6, 1994 came and went, but Harold Camping did not repent of his false prophecies. Deuteronomy 18:22 says, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."
 8. Next Harold Camping predicted the world would end in 2011. He was wrong again. He died last year, a confused false prophet.
 9. 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).
 - "they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth" (Isa. 13:8).

- “The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him” (Hosea 13:13).
 - “for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail” (Micah 4:9).
 - “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows” (Mark 13:8). “Sorrows” literally means “birth pangs.”
10. The world will be saying, “Peace and safety” (I Thess. 5:3), but it will be a false peace and a false sense of security. The world will be entering into the tribulation but they will think they are entering the millennium (or “the age of Aquarius” or “the new age” or “the new world order,” etc.). Cf. II Thessalonians 2:11.

II. THIS WORLD IS IN SPIRITUAL DARKNESS, BUT CHRISTIANS ARE NOT IN DARKNESS (5:4).

1. In Genesis 1:18, we read that God divided “the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.” And God has been dividing the light from the darkness ever since.
2. John 3:19 says, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."
3. Ephesians 5:11 says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
4. Notice the contrast in pronouns (“they” and “ye,” etc.) in I Thessalonians 5:3ff. Darkness versus light.
5. We Christians should not be “sleeping” (5:6), i.e., indifferent, complacent, or lazy. Our Lord said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33).
6. Over and over again in the Bible we are told to “watch” (I Thess. 5:6).
7. “Sober” (I Thess. 5:6) means to abstain from indulging in alcohol, and it also means we should not be intoxicated with money, worldly pleasures, and worldly amusements, etc. Christians are to be serious about the things of God.
8. The night time (5:7) signifies darkness and sin. Sinners like to get drunk at night. They call their clubs “nightclubs.”
9. John 13:30 says, “He (Judas Iscariot) then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.”

10. Proverbs 7 describes a harlot walking the streets at night, and seducing a foolish young man. “For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart” (Pro. 7:6-10).
11. We need to put on our armour (I Thess. 5:8) and keep it on (cf. Eph. 6:12-18).
12. There is never any mention of a protective covering for the back, because Christians must never retreat. Once we are engaged in the battle we must never turn back.
13. Those who run from the battle are not right with God. “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:38, 39).
14. “Faith and love and...hope” (I Thess. 5:8; cf. 1:3).

III. GOD HAS NOT APPOINTED US TO WRATH (5:9-11).

1. First Thessalonians 5:9 substantiates the doctrine of a pretribulational rapture (cf. Rev. 3:10).
2. Some have said Paul is speaking here of being saved from hell, but the context is “the day of the Lord” (5:2).
3. During the coming tribulation God will pour out His wrath upon this wicked world because sinners have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 6:16, 17; 9:6; 12:12).
4. Our Lord said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).
5. Daniel 12:1 says the coming tribulation "shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time."
6. The New Testament teaches that believers will be delivered from the coming tribulation (cf. I Thess. 4:18; 5:11).
7. The basis for our deliverance is the substitutionary death of Christ (5:10; cf. 4:14).
8. The strongest argument for a pretribulational rapture is the fact that the church is not mentioned after Revelation 2 and 3.

CONCLUSION:

1. A farmer once wrote a sarcastic letter to a newspaper editor:
2. “Dear Sir:
I have plowed my fields on Sunday. I have planted my corn on Sunday. I cut it and hauled it into my barn on Sunday. And now I can tell you that I have more corn than any of my neighbors this October.”
3. The editor printed the man’s letter with this brief reply:
“God does not make full payment in October.”
4. God has not made His “full payment” yet. Many sinners are going to be very surprised when He does.