

## The Inescapable Reality of No Escape I Thess 5:1-3

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> 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.

### Introduction

The most infamous sermon on the topic is probably Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," preached to great effect at Enfield in New England in 1741. In this sermon Edwards is unrestrained in the language that he uses to describe God's wrath:[\[iii\]](#)

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. ...The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like a fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him

infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince. And yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment.

O sinner! consider the fearful danger you are in. It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it and burn it asunder. ...

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger implies that he will inflict wrath without any pity.

When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall *not suffer beyond what strict justice requires*. Nothing shall be withheld because it is so hard for you to bear. Ezek. viii.18. "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them."

God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. ... [God]

will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets. ...And seeing this is his design and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it.

### **Luke 21:34**

<sup>34</sup> “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. <sup>35</sup> For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

### **Romans 2:1-3**

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. <sup>2</sup> But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> 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?

<sup>5</sup> But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup> who “*will render to each one according to his deeds*”

### **Hebrews 2:1-3**

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. <sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*,

### **I Thess 1:6**

since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup> and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

## **Review**

## Lesson

### I. The Seasons of the Day of the Lord

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

[1Thes 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18](#) the subject was instruction the church needed concerning the fate those who had **fallen asleep in Jesus**. The main cause for unrest among the believers was their thought that only those who were alive at the time of the parousia would witness and share in its glories. All grounds for their unrest were removed with the assuring revelation that there would be no difference in the experience of the believers who had died and those who were alive when Christ returned for His Church.

**Now** in the second half of the distinctively eschatological section of this letter Paul provides a word of needed exhortation to the those those who living in Christ.

In the preceding Paul addressed the ignorance of the readers but **now** he addresses their knowledge, for his statement **we have no need of anything to be written to you** clearly indicates this teaching was already known by the Thessalonians. In short, they do not need further instruction but fatherly encouragement to live according to the truth they already know, which is the need of most believers today. Most of us do not need "new teaching" but a renewed spirit to obey what we already know!

**Now** in this section Paul presents the solemn truth that the returning Lord will bring a **day** of judgment for the unbelieving world. With this in mind the duty of the believers is to so live that

they will be prepared to meet the Lord whenever He comes giving diligence to be morally and spiritually ready.

**Vine** commenting in regard this conjunction **but** writes that... having thus reassured his readers concerning the share of the departed in the glory of Christ by explaining to them that all in Christ, living and dead, will be received into the presence of the Lord before that glory is revealed to the world at all, the apostle proceeds to describe the effect of that revelation upon the world, ([1Thes 5:2](#), [3](#)), and to instruct and exhort them as to their own conduct in the meantime, ([1Thes 5:4-11](#)).

**The change of subject is marked**, for whereas [1Thes 4:13-17](#) is concerned with salvation, [1 Thes 5:1-3](#) is concerned with judgment. In [1 Thes 4:13-17](#) the language of the apostle closely follows that of the Lord recorded in [John 14:1](#), [2](#), [3](#); where the **first and second personal pronouns** are used, “I come again and will receive you unto Myself” with which compare “the Lord Himself shall descend...**we**...shall be caught up...to meet the Lord in the air.” But in [1Thes 5:3](#) the language corresponds with that of the Lord recorded, for example, in [Matthew 16:27](#); [24:31](#); [Mark 13:26](#); [Luke 9:26](#), where, as always in the Synoptists, the **third personal pronoun** only is used, “the Son of Man,” “**they**,” “**them**,” with which compare “When **they** are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” (Vine, W E: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. 1996. Nelson)

## Times and Seasons

**Chronos** refers to chronological time, to clock time or calendar time, to a general space or succession of time. **Kairos**, on the other hand, refers to a specific and often predetermined period or moment of time and so views time in terms of events, eras, or seasons, such as the **times of the Gentiles** (see below) In other

words, **kairos** defines the best time to do something, the moment when circumstances are most suitable, the psychologically "ripe" moment.

## **God is in Control of these**

In his appearance before Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the most powerful human ruler of his day, Daniel testifies to the sovereign control of **El Elyon, the Most High God** regarding the **times and epochs** declaring

And it is He who changes the **times and the epochs**. He removes kings and establishes kings. He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding.  
([Daniel 2:21](#))

## NOTE

It is important to note that Paul does not go into great detail on the Day of the Lord. It is merely mentioned as a day of Judgment that is coming on the Lost world and we need to be sober and alert.

The REASON I believe this to be the case is:

1. We will not be here for the Day of the Lord and so no need for a lot of Detail
2. The Rapture, is part of the Commencement of the Day of the Lord and Need to be understood in that context.
3. Matt 24 is often stated from a pretrip position as not having the Rapture in it, but only the Second Coming. It is argued that Jesus concludes in point by his return and since there is no mentioning of the judgments of God following that event recorded in Matt 24:31 then it must be the Second coming before his return. But there is no need for this type of

approach. The Disciples ask what would be the sign of your Coming (parousia) and he spoke of the events leading up to the event and then the event itself and did not go any further. The Disciples did not ask when would be the sign of your judgement and the Day of the Lord, Or what are the judgments in the day of the Lord. IF that was the question, I'm sure that Jesus could have answered that. But since the question pertains to the Parousia, He gave them the answer to that and stopped.

## II. The Suddenness of the Day of the Lord

<sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

**Know (1492)** (**eido**, perfect tense) The discussion of the participants in the parousia leads to questions about the time and the signs of the parousia. In response to these, Paul alerts the believers to constant readiness. Vigilance and sobriety are the proper attitudes, while faith, love, and hope are the Christian's arsenal.

**Full well (199)** (**akribos** from **akribes** = exact, precise) means circumspectly, perfect, diligently, accurately, exactly. It means to trace down to the last and minutest detail. **Akribos** implies an exactness of knowledge as the result of careful teaching.

In general terms, the **Day of the Lord** (abbreviated **DOL**) refers to a special or unique time when God's power and holiness are unveiled, bringing terror and death to His enemies. The **DOL** is a



prophetic term that primarily speaks of the supernatural outpouring of God's judgment on Israel, the Gentile nations or both. **DOL** never refers to a **literal day** but is used figuratively to refer to a period of time much as John uses **hour** in the phrase "the **hour** of His judgment has come" (see **note Rev 14:7**)

**Reginald E. Showers** adds that ...

The **Day of the Lord** refers to God's special interventions into the course of world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate who He is--the sovereign God of the universe. (Maranatha, Our Lord Come. Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995, 38)

## WHAT WILL THE DAY OF THE LORD LOOK LIKE?

Summarizing some of the descriptions in the OT references, God describes the **Day of the Lord** as...

"coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it" ([Is 13:9](#)), "a day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes...a slaughter for the Lord GOD of hosts" ([Je 46:10](#)), "a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations" ([Eze 30:3](#)), "near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty" ([Joel1:15](#)), "surely it is near" ([Joel 2:1](#)), "great and very awesome, and who can

endure it?" ([Joel 2:11](#)), "the great and awesome day" ([Joel 2:31](#)), "near in the valley of decision" ([Joel 3:14](#)), "It will be darkness and not light" ([Amos 5:18](#)), "even gloom with no brightness in it" ([Am 5:20](#)), "(a day when) your dealings will return on your own head" ([Obadiah1:15](#)), "near and coming very quickly...in it the warrior cries out bitterly, a day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness" ([Zeph 1:14,15](#)), "the day of the LORD'S wrath and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth" ([Zeph 1:18](#)), "the day of the LORD'S anger" ([Zeph 2:2](#)), "His coming...is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap" ([Mal 3:2](#)), "the great and terrible day" ([Mal 4:5](#)), "will come just like a thief in the night" ([1Th 5:2](#)).

**Will come** - Paul uses the **present tense** rather than the future tense, the present tense being regularly used in doctrinal statements signifying the abiding reality of the truth asserted. Stated another way, the **Day of the Lord** is continually on its way and is certain of arriving, but at a time when it is least expected (especially by those who deny the reality of God's sovereign control and certain intervention in human history!)

(**Jesus warns**) Behold, I am coming **like a thief**. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame. ([Re 16:15-note](#)) (**Comment:** He only comes as a thief upon those who are not watching. Jesus told the church at Sardis, "Be watchful...if you will not watch, I will come

upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” See commentary on [Re3:3-note](#)

Therefore (read the preceding section to see why He says therefore or draws the following conclusion) **Be on the alert** (present imperative) for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 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. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. ([Mt 24:42-44](#))

**(Peter declares)** 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. (See **note 2 Peter 3:10**)

## Imminence vs. Expectancy

James 5:7–9 is a very popular pretribulational proof-text used to teach that the rapture is “imminent.”

<sup>7</sup> Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

<sup>8</sup> You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

<sup>9</sup> Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

But I believe, James is teaching that the Lord's return—his second coming (parousia)—is *expectant*.

The pretribulation definition of imminence is that there cannot be any prophesied events that must occur before the rapture. So the question is does this passage teach expectancy or imminence? There are two statements in this text that pretribulationists cite purporting to teach an any-moment rapture. The first is in verse 8, “for the Lord's return is near,” and the second is found in verse 9, “the judge stands before the gates.” I first addressed the context of the passage and then responded to each of these two statements, demonstrating that the word “near” never means “imminence”; nor does the word “gates/door” indicate imminence.

### III. The Sureness of the Day of the Lord

<sup>3</sup> 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.

Note third person pronoun **they**, not first person pronoun **we**. You ask "so what?" The implication is that those who are the **we** (believers) are not here in that awful, awesome Day, but the **they** (professors and overt non-believers) are still here.

**While they are saying peace and safety** - The majority of mankind will be preoccupied with the things of this present evil age and will exhibit no anticipation of (or even absolutely no belief in) and no interest in preparing for the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord used similar **terms of comparison** to describe the days

before His return, declaring that on one hand they would be like the days of Noah (what event does this speak of?) or on the other hand like the days of Lot (what event does this speak of? Do you see the emphasis?)

For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the **days of Noah**. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ([Matt. 24:37, 38, 39](#)) (cf [Luke 17:26,27](#))

It was the same as happened in the **days of Lot**: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. ([Luke 17:28, 29, 30](#)).

Instead of anticipating and preparing for the coming day of judgment, earth dwellers (as unbelievers are repeatedly referred to in the Revelation of Jesus Christ) will be wrapped in a fatal, self-deceiving sense of security, **saying peace and safety**. This speaks of their false sense of security. And of note, the verb **saying** is in the **present tense** which denotes that they will be continually and repeatedly assuring themselves that there is peace everywhere and that everything is safe and secure. Deception can be a dangerous and deadly disposition!

**Peace** (1515) (**eirene** from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again, a meaning convey by the common

expression of one “having it all together”. **Eirene** can convey the sense of an inner rest, well being and harmony. **Peace** speaks of the absence of conflict and in the present context points to circumstances existing in the world that do not evoke a feeling of alarm or dread. Paul prophesies of a false sense of inward repose and security that will exist in the unbelieving world in the end times (and to a certain degree probably exists in the minds of all unbelievers for much of their life).

**Safety (803) (asphaleia** from **asphales** = safe from **a** = without + **sphálo** = throw down, trip up, totter) describes firmness, security, safety, security from peril. **Asphaleia** describes the mindset of unbelievers in the last days in which they possess (falsely) a sense of sureness and safety that is not interfered with or compromised by outward obstacles. They feel that everything is safe and secure and see no external evidence to dispute their sense of security.

**THEN DESTRUCTION WILL COME UPON THEM SUDDENLY: tote aiphnidios autois ephistatai (3SPMI) olethros:** ([Exodus 15:9,10](#); [Joshua 8:20, 21, 22](#); [Judges 20:41,42](#); [2Chronicles 32:19, 20, 21](#); [Psalms 73:18-20](#); [Proverbs 29:1](#); [Isaiah 30:13](#); [Luke 17:27, 28, 29](#); [21:34,35](#); [Acts 12:22,23](#); [13:41](#); [2Thessalonians 1:9](#); [2Peter 2:4](#); [Revelation 18:7,8](#))

The word order in the original Greek presents a dramatic picture... then sudden destruction doth stand by them (Young's Literal)

**Then (5119)(tote)** is an adverb of time translated when, at the time that, then.

**Suddenly (160)(aiphnidios** from **aíphnes** = unexpected, sudden) describes that which is unexpected or unforeseen. It is something that one cannot anticipate nor understand how it happened.

**Destruction** (3639)(**olethros** from **ollumi** = to destroy. Derivative = **apollumi** = destroy utterly or fully and has to do with that which is ruined and is no longer usable for its intended purpose) is a state of utter and hopeless ruin and the end of all that gives worth to human existence! Do not confuse with a state of annihilation (and non-existence so that there is no longer an actual personal perception) for **olethros** signifies an unavoidable, very real experience of distress and torment! The destruction Paul warns about is a time of unavoidable distress, disaster and ruin. This **destruction** will not be a loss of *being* but rather a loss of *well-being*. The idea of **olethros** is to suffer the loss of all that gives worth to existence.

**Olethros** - 4 times in the NT...

**1 Corinthians 5:5** I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the **destruction** of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:3** While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then **destruction** will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

**2 Thessalonians 1:9** And these ("*those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus*" **2Th 1:8**, cp **Jn 3:36**) will pay the penalty of eternal **destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

**LIKE LABOR PANGS UPON A WOMAN WITH CHILD: hosper e odin te en gastri echouse (PAPFSD):** (**Psalms 48:6; Isaiah 43:6, 7, 8, 9; 21:3; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; Ho 13:13; Micah 4:9,10**)

This common Greek idiom for a pregnant woman is literally rendered even as the travail to her in womb having



Paul uses this phrase as a figure of speech to refer to labor pains or birth pangs which pictures intense pain and sorrow.

The Old Testament uses a similar imagery...

(The prophet Isaiah records) And they (referring to Babylon) will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them. They will **writhe like a woman in labor**. They will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. 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. ([Isaiah 13:8, 9](#))

**Comment:** These verses had a partial fulfillment in the Medo-Persian triumph over Babylon, but awaits a final and complete fulfillment preceding the return of the Messiah at the end of the age.

**AND THEY SHALL NOT ESCAPE: kai ou me ekphugosin.**

**(3PAAS):** ([Matthew 23:33](#); [Hebrews 2:3](#); [12:23](#))

There shall be no escape for them—none! (Way)

But they shall not escape, no, not at all. (Williams)

**Shall not escape** - The English translation misses the sense of the Greek passage which is actually a **strong double negative** (ou me) which removes any hope one might have about their ability to escape this dreadful time. There is absolutely no escape.

Perhaps you are reading these notes as a curious agnostic or even a professor but not possessor of faith in Christ and you have never truly **repented** of your sins and thrown yourself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ accepting His perfect, eternally satisfactory,



substitutionary sacrifice. If not, let the picture of **no escape** draw you to the throne of grace to receive by faith His free gift of salvation, which alone can give you genuine **peace and safety**.