

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 11

First Thessalonians

I. Exposition of Chapter Five.

A. **Verses 1-2 – “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”**

1. The word **“times”** is the Greek word **“chronos”** which means: **“an indefinite unit of time”**¹. The word **“seasons”** is the Greek word, **“kairos”** which means: **“a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis, the decisive epoch waited for; opportune or reasonable time; the right time.”**²

Regarding verse 1, Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“Paul had previously taught this church about the day of the Lord (v. 2), and the Old Testament prophets had much to say about it. Jesus had also taught His disciples about it (cf. Matt. 24:44; Mark 13; Luke 21). They had taught about the chronological periods (“times,” Gr. *chronos*, an extended period) and the major features of those periods (“epochs,” Gr. *chairos*, a definite period) that lay ahead in the future. These words may describe the end times from these two perspectives (cf. Acts 1:7; 3:19-21). But probably they mean virtually the same thing (cf. Dan. 2:21; 7:12; Acts 1:7).”³

2. **Verse 2 – “...the day of the Lord...”** – The **“day of the Lord”**, generally speaking, **“...refers to any period of time when God acts directly and unmistakably in human affairs. It may be in blessing, as in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, or it may be in judgment. Or it may be that the same event will be a judgment to some people and a blessing to others.”**⁴ It is also usually understood that this phrase is not normally referring to a 24 hour day but an extended period of time. In fact, it can refer to the period of time which begins with the second coming of Christ on through the Millennium. This particular use, however, seems to be referencing the particular **“day”**, of Christ’s return. This day will be a day of judgment for the unbeliever, and a day of blessing for the believer.

Dr. Robert Utley points out the following:

“The eschatological emphasis of a special coming day when humans will meet Jesus (as Savior or Judge) goes by several designations in Paul’s writings: (1) “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8); (2) “the day of the Lord” (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2); (3) “the day of the Lord Jesus” (cf. 2 Cor. 1:14); (4) “the day of Jesus Christ” (cf. Phil. 1:6); (5) “the day of Christ” (cf. Phil. 1:10; 2:16); (6) “His day (Son of Man)” (cf. Luke 17:24); (7) “the day that the Son of Man is revealed” (cf. Luke 17:30); (8) “the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7); (9) “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven” (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7); (10) “in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming” (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19).”⁵

3. **“...so comes as a thief in the night.”** – This expression brings forth the idea that His coming is going to come when the world doesn’t expect it. It’s going to be a surprise to the unbeliever. The Bible says that in the last days there will be **“scoffers”** who will mock the idea of the coming of the Lord (**II Peter 3:3-13**).

B. **Verse 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.”** – This shows us that Jesus is going to come when everything seems fine to the world. It’s not going to be during a time of chaos, but a time of **“peace and safety”**. Remember Jesus said:

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” Matthew 24:37-39

1. **“...then sudden destruction comes upon them...”** – The word **“destruction”** means; **“ruin, i.e. death, punishment”**⁶ This is speaking of judgment upon the unbeliever (the wicked).

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 638.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

³Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2022), 66.

⁴Ray C. Stedman, *Waiting for the Second Coming* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1990), 84.

⁵Robert James Utley, *Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 114–115.

⁶James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 51.

“The wrath of God that will have been building up over some time will suddenly break forth. The signs of its coming are discernible, even though the moment of its arrival is unpredictable. No more can the world escape the coming wrath of God, when it breaks out on the day of the Lord, than a pregnant woman can escape labor pains. A strong expression is used in the Greek (a double negative: *ou mē*) to stress that fleeing (*ekphygōsin*) will be futile.”⁷

C. Verse 4 – “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” – Believers are not to be taken by surprise by the “day of the Lord”. Paul begins to give a warning to believers concerning the coming of the Lord. The Dictionary of Bible Themes states the following about “darkness”: “Darkness is often used in Scripture as a symbol of sin and its effects. It is often contrasted with light, as a symbol of forgiveness and the presence of God.”⁸

D. Verse 5 – “You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.” – The Bible states that believers are “...delivered from the power of darkness...” (Colossians 1:13), and “...called out of darkness, into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). Leon Morris writes:

“There are both positive and negative reasons why the day should not surprise them. Positively they are all *sons of the light* (cf. Luke 16:8). In the Semitic idiom to be a ‘son’ of something is to be characterized by that thing (e.g. ‘a son of strength’ means ‘a strong man’); ‘light’ is the distinguishing characteristic of believers. This means more than being ‘in light’ and points to the transformation that Christ has made in them. *Sons of the day...* is similar to *sons of the light*, for day is the region of light; but it is not a simple repetition, for it looks back to ‘the day of the Lord’ (v. 2). They will participate in the triumph of that great day; they belong to that great day; they will have the fulfilment of their being when that great day comes.”⁹

E. Verses 6-8 – “Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 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.”

1. When Paul speaks of “sleep” here, it should be obvious that he is not talking about physical death as we saw in 4:13-15. It should also be obvious that he is not referring to physical, literal sleep. Paul is warning the believers to not be lethargic, insensitive, and indifferent to the things of God. In other words, he’s warning them to not be carnal and living like the unbeliever. Notice the following Scriptures:

“For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.’ – Ephesians 5:8-14

2. “...those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night...” – Those who are asleep and drunk are not fully aware of what is going on around them. Believers are admonished to be alert, watchful and aware of the signs of the times.

3. “...be sober...” – In a figurative sense, this word means; “to behave with restraint and moderation, thus not permitting excess—‘to be self- controlled, to be restrained, to be moderate in one’s behavior, to be sober’¹⁰ The Fire Bible asserts:

“Here it suggests spiritual alertness and discipline in every aspect of life, so as not to get caught up in worldly pleasures, worries or spiritual distractions that could cause believers to become unfaithful to the Lord and unprepared for His return.”¹¹

4. “...putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.” – Again, the Fire Bible states:

“A breastplate was a large piece of armor that protected the chest of a soldier during battle. Having ‘the breastplate of faith and love’ means that a loving and trusting relationship with Christ and a life that shows His love to others will protect one’s spiritual heart. Having ‘for a helmet the hope of salvation’ implies that a believer’s mind would be protected by the assurance of being spared from God’s wrath and spending eternity with Christ. This same confidence should allow us to stay focused on Christ’s return, be self-controlled and be at peace while we wait for Him.”¹²

⁷Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 706.

⁸Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

⁹Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 13: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.)

¹⁰Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 751.

¹¹*Fire Bible: English Standard Version*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2011), 2079

¹²Ibid.