

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Outline...

- **Change in Subject (Related but Distinct)...5:1,2**
- **Characteristics and Constituents (Of the Day of the Lord)...5:3**
- **Change in Position (No longer in darkness/night)...5:4,5**
- **Charge for Living (With a view to Christ's Imminent Return)...5:6-11**

I. Change in Subject (Related but Distinct)...5:1,2

5:1 **Now as to** the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

“Coming immediately after the revelation concerning the rapture of the church, it is natural to consider the question of when this will occur. Here the apostle appeals to a much larger doctrine of Scripture, the day of the Lord, which is a time of special divine visitation mentioned often in the Old and New Testaments.

“Paul stated, “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (vv. 1–2). As the day of the Lord comes without warning, so also will the rapture. The placing of this doctrine next to the revelation of the rapture is because of the similarity of both events not having signs prior to their beginning. Like a thief in the night, who comes without warning, the rapture will occur and the day of the Lord will begin.”

John Walvoord

The Rapture distinguished from the Day of the Lord

“In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:9, the order of events is striking. First Thessalonians 4:13-18 deals with the rapture of the church to meet the Lord in the air. Then, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1, a new subject is introduced by Paul with the words, “**Now as to**” (*peri de* in Greek). This Greek phrase is one of Paul’s favorite ways in his letters to change subjects.

So, it's clear that he is finished focusing on the rapture. But what is the next subject in 5:1-9? The day of the Lord or coming time of tribulation.

“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5:1-2). Why is this significant?

Because of the order of the events. Which event is mentioned first the rapture or the tribulation? It's the rapture first, then the tribulation or Day of the Lord. The tribulation is pictured as a *separate* and *subsequent* event from the rapture.

The order is clear...

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 The Day of the Lord (Tribulation)

The rapture and the day of the Lord can hardly be parts of the same event as posttribulationists maintain. The rapture comes before the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4-5.”

Mark Hitchcock

II. Characteristics and Constituents of the Day of the Lord...5:3

3 *While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.*

A. Characteristics...

- Sudden
- Devastating
- Inevitable
- Inescapable (emphatic negative!)

“The day of the Lord will begin as a time period at the rapture, but its major events will not begin immediately. The ten-nation kingdom must be formed in the final seven years before the second coming will begin.

Because the day of the Lord will begin as a time period at the time of the rapture, the two events are linked as both beginning without warning and coming without a specific sign. Once the day of the Lord begins, however, as it will after the rapture, as time progresses there will be obvious signs that the world is in the day of the Lord and in the period leading up to the second coming, just as there will be obvious evidences that the millennial kingdom has begun after the second coming. As the rapture must precede the signs, it necessarily must occur when the day of the Lord begins.

One of the important signs of the day of the Lord is the fact that the people will be saying, "Peace and safety," when, as a matter of fact, "destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). The interpretation teaching that this is the period between the rapture and the second coming fits very naturally into this period.

According to Daniel 9:27, there will be a seven-year period leading up to the second coming of Christ. The first half of this period will be a time of peace when a covenant of peace will be made with Israel, as indicated in Daniel 9:27. During this period people will hail peace as having been achieved as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Then suddenly the great tribulation will begin and they will not escape its judgment. The world-shaking judgments that precede the second coming are described graphically in Revelation 6–18."

John Walvoord

"In the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord is referred to by that phrase about 20 times, often with eschatological implications. In addition, a parallel term, "the last days," occurs 14 times, always eschatological. Further, the phrase "in that day" occurs over a hundred times and is generally eschatological. In Isaiah 2:2, 11, 12 (KJV) the three phrases refer to the same eschatological time. So there was ample reason for Paul to say that his readers knew about the Day of the Lord from the Old Testament itself.

But concerning the rapture there is no Old Testament revelation. This omission from over a hundred passages seems hard to understand if the rapture is the first event of the Day of the Lord, as the post-trib view teaches. But if the rapture is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament, and if it precedes the beginning of the Day of the Lord ..., then it is not strange that Paul had to inform them about the rapture.

Note- According to the passages listed above, the Day of the Lord has multiple characteristics and if the rapture, as important as it is to the body of Christ, were a part of that day or was one of its key events, surely Paul would have included it in his previous instruction.

Facts About the Day of The Lord...

- 1. It includes a time of great judgment and wrath on all the nations and on Israel (Isa. 2:12-21; 13:9-16; 34:1-8; Joel. 1:15-2:11, 28-32; 3:9-12; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15-17; Zeph. 1:7-18).**
- 2. It is associated with the overthrow of God's enemies (Isa. 2:12).**
- 3. It is God's instrument of wrath to purge out the rebels from Israel and results in Israel's return to the Lord (Ezek. 20:33-39).**
- 4. While it begins with judgment to defeat the enemies of God, it ushers in a time of great blessing called the millennium in which Christ will reign with the church, the body of Christ (Zeph. 1:7-18; 3:14-17). "The significant truth revealed here is that the day of the Lord which first inflicts terrible judgments ends with an extended period of blessing on Israel, which will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. **Based on Old Testament revelation, the day of the Lord is a time of judgment, culminating in the second coming of Christ, and followed by a time of special divine blessing to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.**"**
- 5. The day of the Lord is also known by the terms "the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer. 30:7) and "Daniel's seventieth week" (Dan. 9:24-29). Many other students of prophecy refer to this time as the Tribulation (see Matt. 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 13:19, 24; Rev. 7:14). **The chief passage on the many characteristics and events of this time is Revelation 6-19.**"**

Hampton Keathley III

B. Constituents...

"You" and "Them"

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 the interplay between the different audiences is critical, yet easy to miss. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 and ***notice the pronouns*** that are in italics.

“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, **you** have no need of anything to be written to **you**. For **you yourselves** know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 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. But **you**, brethren, are not in darkness, that they day should overtake **you** like a thief; for **you** are all sons of light and sons of the day. **We** are not of night nor of darkness.”

Notice the dramatic change in this setting between **you** and **we** (*the believers*) in the first and second person, and **they** and **them** (*the unbelievers*) in the third person. It’s striking. The wording indicates that when the tribulation comes there will be two groups of people each exclusive of the other.

One group will be raptured, and the other will face destruction. The day of the Lord will come upon **them**, and **they** shall not escape (5:3). Then in 5:4 there’s a sudden contrast: “But **you** are not in the darkness.” **They** stand in sharp contrast to the believers in vv. 4-11 who will escape.

This clear distinction between the unbelievers, who will not escape, and the believers, who will escape, is another strong indication that believers are exempt from the wrath of the day of the Lord.

Mark Hitchcock

III. Change in Position (No longer in darkness/night)...5:4,5

4 But you, brethren, are ***not in darkness***, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are ***all sons of light and sons of day***. We are ***not of night nor of darkness***;

Because Christians are forewarned that the day of the Lord is coming, they should not be surprised and should live in the light of God’s divine revelation. “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness” (1 Thess. 5:4–5).

The day of the Lord is pictured here as a time of night for the world because it is a time of judgment, in contrast to the Christian's day, which is a day of light. The Christian's day will be climaxed by the rapture; the day for the wicked will begin at that time, and the judgments related to the day of the Lord will take place according to the time sequence of this period, with the great judgments occurring in the great tribulation, climaxing in the second coming.

John Walvoord

The contrast between believers and unbelievers is emphatic. Paul draws out this contrast from 1 Thessalonians 5:4 to 5:8.

Unbelievers are in darkness, engulfed in moral and spiritual darkness due to sin and unbelief.

Ephesians 4:17,18...

Walking in the futility of their minds
Darkened in their understanding
Excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them

Unbelievers are children of Satan...John 8:44.

The purpose of the Gospel...Acts 26:8...that the eyes of unbelievers may be opened so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God.

Colossians 1:13

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 8:12

John 12:46

1 John 1:5,6

Romans 13:11-14

IV. Charge for Living (Christ's Imminent Return)...5:6-11

6 so then ***let us not sleep as others do***, but ***let us be alert and sober***.

7 ***For*** those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

8 But since we are of the day, ***let us be sober***, having put on the ***breastplate of faith and love***, and ***as a helmet, the hope of salvation***. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

11 Therefore ***encourage one another and build up one another***, just as you also are doing.

A major thrust of this passage...instruction how to live as children of light, rescued from darkness and delivered from the wrath to come

- **Be Awake...**

6 so then ***let us not sleep as others do....***

Paul's change in Greek terminology from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 to 1 Thessalonians 5:6,7,10...

Spiritual stupor
Moral insensitivity
Worldly apathy, sensuality and indifference

- **Be Alert and Sober...**

6...but let us be ***alert and sober***.

7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

Mindful of our times
Mindful of our new (and antithetical) position as believers
Mindful of our calling

Alert...alive and watchful...cf 1 Peter 5:8

Sober...disciplined, calm and circumspect...cf 1 Peter 5:8

Not “coasting along”...cf 1 Peter 4:7

- **Be Armed...**

8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, ***having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.***

Armament of a Roman soldier...prepared for hostile engagement..
cf Ephesians 6:10-18

Stand firm
In the midst of the evil day

- **Be Assured...**

9 For ***God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*** 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

“For”...key transitional word, explaining what has gone before and what lies ahead

Rationale for our encouragement

An Appointment to Keep

“1 Thessalonians 5:9 says clearly, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This verse is clear that we have an appointment with salvation, not wrath. Some maintain that this simply means that believers are not destined for the wrath of hell, but that we will be saved. However, there are two reasons why I don’t think that’s what this verse is referring to.

First, the Thessalonians already knew they were not destined for God's wrath in hell. Paul had told them this very clearly in 1 Thessalonians 1:4.

Second, in the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8 what wrath has Paul just been talking about? Not the wrath of hell but the wrath of the tribulation or day of the Lord. In this context, that's the wrath that believers will be delivered from. As Walvoord says, "In this passage he is expressly saying that our appointment is to be caught up to be with Christ; the appointment of the world is for the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath. One cannot keep both of these appointments."

Mark Hitchcock

Be Actively Serving...

11 Therefore ***encourage one another and build up one another***, just as you also are doing.

"One another"...twice in 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Life in the Body of Christ...encouraging and edifying

"As you also are doing"...excel still more