



1 THESSALONIANS

A Study of Paul's Letters to a New and Growing Church with a Hopeful Future

◆ **Wednesday April 22, 2009**
(1 Thess. 5:1-11)

Review of *The Rapture* – 4:13-18

Principles Taught

- 1) The Rapture will be a dramatic event (loud command, archangel's voice, trumpet call), where the Lord himself (personally, visibly, and bodily) will return from heaven to receive his people to himself and take them back to heaven (see Jesus' teaching in John 14:1-3).
- 2) Christians **who have already died** will not miss out on the Rapture since Christ will bring their perfected souls (which are already in heaven) with him on the day the Rapture happens. These souls will receive a new spiritual, glorified body which God will raise to life on that day. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42-54) According to 1 Thess. 4:16, **this will happen before** #3 below.
- 3) In addition, Christians **who are alive at the time of Christ's return** will follow the resurrected dead and will join them to meet the Lord together in the air while at the same time experiencing their own transformation of body and soul (v.17). (cf. 1 John 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:51; Phil. 3:20-21)
- 4) According to Acts 1:9-11, Jesus' return will look very similar to how Jesus left when he ascended to heaven after his resurrection.
- 5) We are promised that as soon as all this happens, we will be "with the Lord forever" (v. 17), and that this is to be an encouraging promise for us to long for (v.18). For He "rescues us from the coming wrath" (1:10). For *we were not appointed* to "suffer wrath" (5:9).
- 6) **Paul wanted this to be such a note of encouragement to the church that he closed every single chapter of 1 Thessalonians with a reminder about it.**

NOTE: Paul does not directly address the *timing* of the Rapture, but the collective teaching of Scripture is that Christ's coming is imminent (at any time), and therefore we should be "alert, watchful."

A Pretribulational Rapture View

Since the church is to be *encouraged* by His imminent coming, and since they are promised *not to suffer wrath*, it is likely that the Rapture will happen prior to the "time of trial" (Rev. 3:10) or The Great Tribulation, which climaxes at the end with the "Day of the Lord." If true, this would mean then that the Second Coming of Christ would come in two stages, first to come *for* His church (Rapture), and then after the 7 year Tribulation, to come *with* His church to defeat the Anti-Christ and False Prophet, to bound Satan for 1,000 years, establishing His millennial kingdom and reign on earth.

“The Day of the Lord” – 5:1-11

^{1TH 5:1} Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

^{1TH 5:4} But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Verse by Verse

^{1TH 5:1} Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,

v. 1 - **“Now brothers.”** - Paul seemingly is making a transition away from the joyful idea of the Rapture to the horrific “Day of the Lord,” which seems to suggest that they happen at different times. We are transitioning from the day of blessing (The Rapture) to a day of judgment (Day of the Lord). The “Day of the Lord” is to be a climactic day of judgment, a day of wrath where destruction (v.3) will fall upon the earth - a dreadful time.

“We do not need to write to you.” – either he is saying this because...

- A) He verbally had taught them about it already, OR
- B) Because they will not have to worry about it since they will have already been raptured, OR
- C) It doesn't matter because God is the only one who knows anyway (Matt. 24:36),
- D) OR all of the above are true.

² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

v. 2 - **It will come like “a thief in the night.” (1 Thess. 5:2)** Even though there will be obvious signs that will precede it (see Matthew 24:4-33), no one will know the *exact timing* of this Day.

However, according to **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**, the “Day of the Lord” takes place after certain events have occurred during the Tribulation. It is during the Tribulation that the world will be introduced to the Anti-Christ.

³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

So then, during the Tribulation, where the wrath of God is poured out on an unbelieving world, a worldwide rebellion takes place and the person who is the Anti-Christ (“man of lawlessness”) is revealed and rules (Rev. 13). At the end, he will assemble his armies for the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16, Zechariah 14:1-4), but he will be destroyed and cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20).

³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

- v. 3 - The "Day of the Lord" will happen while many are falsely prophesying that "**Peace and Safety**" has come to the earth, perhaps because of the deceitful power and reign of the Anti-Christ and how he rallies nations together in the one worldwide rebellion. For he has signed a 7-year peace treaty with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27) which he will break about halfway (3.5 years) into the Tribulation.

MULTIPLE USES OF THE PHRASE -- The "**Day of the Lord**" is a phrase that is also seemingly associated with the final dissolution (2 Peter 3:10) and destruction of the earth which happens **after the 1,000 year reign of Christ**, ushering God's new creation of a New Heaven and a New Earth. Peter also calls this particular day, "the day of God." (2 Peter 3:12).

"The 'Day of the Lord' must be distinguished from the 'day of Christ' (Phil. 1:10; 2:16), the 'day of Christ Jesus' (Phi. 1:6), the 'day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor. 5:5), and the 'day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:8); all of those terms refer to the time when believers will receive their rewards from the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 14:10; 1 Co. 3:11-14; 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:9-10)."

- MacArthur NT Commentary, 144.

^{1TH 5:4} **But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.**

- v. 4 - Paul seems to indicate that the Thessalonians will not take part in ("be surprised by") the "Day of the Lord" since they are not in the "spiritual darkness" that the "Day of the Lord" is designed to destroy and overthrow. **This would especially be true of they were already "Raptured."**

COL 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

- v. 5-8 - Paul states that since they do not belong to the realm of darkness (sin) and all its practices (lack of self-control, drunkenness) that will be judged on the "Day of the Lord," they therefore should not live like they are in that spiritual darkness. He spurs them on to self-controlled living, with once again the triad of **faith, love and hope** as definitive markers of their lives.

"What they are [sons of the light] is what they should do. The moral exhortation finds its roots in the previous work of God in their lives [conversion]. They have been made 'children of the light and children of the day' via their salvation, and now they are to act according to their new state of being. The gift of grace includes within it the call to obedience. (Gene Green)

Note: Paul contrasts the life of sin (darkness) with the life of a Christian (light), and he uses the term "sleep" differently here. Instead of a euphemism for physical death (4:13, 15; 5:10), here he uses it as a way to describe the "moral and spiritual indifference of those who are not converted." (Green)

Other Notable Passages on Light and Darkness from Jesus and then later from the Apostle John.

^{MT 5:14} **"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.** ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, **let your light shine before men,** that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

^{1JN 1:5} **This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.** ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ **But if we walk in the light,** as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁹ **For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ **Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**

v. 9-11 - Paul ends this book with encouragement he began the last chapter with, that due to their future "Rapture" from earth when Jesus comes, they will not have to fear the wrath of God that is associated with the "Day of the Lord."

And due to the contrast he is making in this chapter between light and darkness, it may also include the idea of deliverance from the eternal wrath of God that those who live in darkness will endure in hell for all eternity. For we will not endure that wrath, but will instead "live together with Him" in the New Heavens and the New Earth forever.

The purpose of all this teaching was to not lay out a prophetic timeline, but to be a source of pastoral encouragement to the church. And we are to use this passage of Scripture to encourage each other in the body of Christ.

Our future classes:

May 13 – 2 Thessalonians 1:1 – 2:12
The Man of Lawlessness – The Antichrist

May 27 - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:18
Standing Firm in Faith
Spiritual and Physical Laziness

FINAL EXAM