

Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians: 5:1-8

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1 Thessalonians 5:1-8 – (NIV)

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

v1 – Why didn’t Paul need to write the Thessalonians about times and dates?

The Thessalonians had been taught about the return of Jesus and other prophetic matters including **the times and the seasons** regarding the return of Jesus.

What was amazing about the fact that Paul taught the Thessalonians about the return of Jesus?

Paul was with the Thessalonians for only 3 weeks (Acts 17:2). In that time, he taught them about the prophetic times and seasons regarding the return of Jesus.

- Paul would be surprised that most people today consider the return of Jesus to be unimportant.
- Jesus criticized the religious leaders of His day because they could not *discern the signs of the times* (Matthew 16:1-3).

It is even more important today for us to study the Scriptures, and look to the world around us, so we can be aware of the **times and the seasons**.

Why is the NKJV translation *times and seasons* better than the NIV *times and dates*?

The Greek word *kairos* means seasons, not dates. While the NIV translation is true, it is not what is said here and you lose something in this translation...

What is the distinction between *times* and *seasons*?

The reference to *times* designates time in its duration, whether a longer or shorter period; the reference to *seasons* draws attention to the characteristics of the period.

- The first deals with the measurement of time, the second with the nature of the time.

v2 – What is the Day of the Lord?

This phrase is a familiar Old Testament idea... *Gods’* time. Man has his “day,” and the Lord has His **day**.

- Ultimately, **the Day of the Lord** is fulfilled with Jesus judging the earth and returning in glory.
- It denotes the day when God intervenes in history to judge His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His kingdom.

Is the Day of the Lord a single 24-hour period?

It does not refer to a single day, but to a season when God rapidly advances His agenda to the end of the age.

Where in the Scripture do we find the term, Day of the Lord?

This term for the Tribulation used more than any other:

Isa 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 1:15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Thes. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10

Is “the Day of Christ” another term for “the Day of the Lord”?

No, a distinction should be made... the “Day of Christ” is a reference to the Millennial Kingdom.

1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5 15; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16

What other terms does the Bible use for the *Day of the Lord*?

1. **The Indignation** Isa. 26:20; 34:2
2. **Day of God’s Vengeance** Isa. 34:8; 63:1-6
3. **The Time of Jacob’s Trouble** Jer. 30:7
4. **The Overspreading of Abominations** Dan. 9:27
5. **The Time of Trouble such as never was** Dan. 12:1 Matt. 24:21
6. **The Seventieth Week** Dan. 9:24-27
7. **The Time of The End** Dan. 12:9
8. **The great day of His Wrath** Rev. 6:17

9. **The hour of His Judgment** Rev. 14:7
10. **The end of this world** Matt. 13:40, 49
11. **The Tribulation** Matt. 24:21, 29

How is it the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night?

The Thessalonians knew, and had been taught, that they couldn't know the day of Jesus' return. That day would remain unknown, and come as a surprise, **as a thief in the night**.

- A **thief** does not announce the time of his arrival.

Does the Tribulation coming as a thief in the night mean God's prophetic plan cannot be known?

Not at all... Paul indicated that they knew that the *times and seasons* could be definitely known.

Does this mean we can know when the rapture will happen?

No... Jesus forbade setting dates when He said *of that day and hour no one knows* (Matthew 24:36).

- God *wants* this day to be unexpected, but He wants His people to be prepared for the unexpected.
- We can however know the season for the rapture since Jesus gave us signs to watch for in the Olivet Discourse.

v3 – What happens when people are saying, *peace and safety*?

then sudden destruction comes upon them: The unexpected nature of that day will be a tragedy for the unbeliever. They will be lulled to sleep by political and economic conditions, but they will be rudely awakened.

- When “all's well” and “all is safe” are on the lips of men.

Could this saying *peace and safety* be during the Tribulation?

This **sudden** coming, in a time when many say “**peace and safety!**” must be distinct from the coming of Jesus described in the Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-35). The Tribulation is a time of great global catastrophe, when no one could possibly say “**peace and safety!**”

What are the two aspects of the Lord's return?

Comparing passages like this shows us that there must be *two aspects* to Jesus' Second Coming.

- One aspect of His coming is at an unexpected hour, the other is positively predicted.
- One coming is to a “business as usual” world, the other to a world in cataclysm.
- One coming is meeting Him in the air (1 Thess 4:16-17), the other is Him coming with the saints (Zechariah 14:5).

What does it tell us that the return of Jesus will be as labor pains upon a pregnant woman?

The phrase **labor pains** suggest both *inevitability* and *unexpectedness*. Jesus used the same idea in Matthew 24:8, when He spoke of calamities preceding the end times as *the beginning of sorrows*, which is literally *the beginning of labor pains*.

- The idea is both of giving birth to a new age and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities.

v4-5 – Why would the Thessalonians not be surprised like a thief by the return of the Lord?

Because they were ready... *But you, brethren, are not in darkness*: God has made us **sons of the light and sons of the day**. The time when we were **of the night** or **of the darkness** is in the past. So now we simply have to live up to what God has made us.

- In the Semitic languages generally to be a ‘son’ of something means to be characterized by that thing.
- The coming of Jesus will surprise *everybody*, because no one knows the day or the hour (Matt 24:36). But for Christians who know the *times and the seasons*, it will not be a complete surprise.
- No one knows the exact hour a thief will come, but some live in a general preparation against thieves.

Did the Thessalonians have anything to fear by the Day of the Lord?

No... this reinforces the pre-Trib rapture. If you think it means the Lord would protect His people through the Tribulation, how do you explain the myriads of martyrs (Revelation 7:9-17)?

What should those do who are in *darkness*?

Those who *are in darkness* — are *not* ready for the return of Jesus and need to made ready by accepting Him as Savior.

v6 – What should we do in light of the unexpected nature of the Lord's return?

let us not sleep: Because we do not belong to the *night nor of darkness* (1 Thessalonians 5:5), our spiritual condition should never be marked by **sleep**. Spiritually speaking, we need to be active and aware, to **watch and be sober**.

- Paul used a different word here than for the sleep of death of 1 Thessalonians 4:13. The word *sleep* is here used metaphorically to denote indifference to spiritual realities on the part of believers.

What characterizes those who are indifferent to spiritual realities?

This covers all sorts of moral and spiritual laxity or insensibility. **Sleep** speaks of so much that belongs to the world, but should not belong to Christians:

- Sleep speaks of *ignorance*.
- Sleep speaks of *insensibility*.
- Sleep speaks of *no defense*.
- Sleep speaks of *inactivity*.

What is the problem with sleeping Christians?

Spurgeon showed the folly and tragedy of the sleeping Christian with three powerful pictures:

- A city suffers under the plague, with an official walking the streets crying out, “Bring out the dead! Bring out the dead!” All the while, a doctor with the cure in his pocket *sleeps*.
- A passenger ship reels under a storm and is about to crash on the rocks, bringing near-certain death to the hundreds of passengers — all the while, the captain *sleeps*.
- A prisoner in his cell is about ready to be led to execution; his heart is terrified at the thought of hanging from his neck, terrified of death, and of what awaits him after death. All the while, a man with a letter of pardon for the condemned man sits in another room — and *sleeps*.

What does it mean to be *sober*?

This is more than just not being drunk... It has in mind someone who has an eternal perspective and thus doesn't get too excited about the things of this world.

- The person who lives his or her life just for fun and entertainment isn't **sober**.

v7 – Who are those who sleep and get drunk?

Those who are in darkness...

- The opposite of spiritual *watchfulness* is spiritual **sleep**.
- The opposite of spiritual *sobriety* is to be *spiritually drunk*.

As Christians we are **of the day**, and so we must **watch and be sober**.

v8 – What should we put on as children of the day?

Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation: Paul used the images of a soldier's armor to illustrate the idea of *watchfulness*. A soldier is a good example of someone who must **watch and be sober**, and he is *equipped* to do that with his armor.

- The spiritual armor of Ephesians 6 is not an exact correlation. This indicates that Paul saw the idea of spiritual armor as a helpful picture, not something rigid in its particular details.

Why is *faith and love* represented by *the breastplate*?

The breastplate covers the vital organs. No soldier would ever go to battle without his **breastplate**, and no Christian is equipped to live the Christian life without **faith and love**.

Why is *the hope of salvation* is represented as *a helmet*?

The helmet protects the head, which is just as essential as the **breastplate**. **Hope** isn't used in the sense of wishful thinking, but in the sense of a confident expectation of God's hand in the future.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- We can know the season of the Lord's return and we are in it... be watchful!
- The Lord's return is in two phases... it is much better to be ready for the first phase than to expect to be around for the second.
- The Lord's return will be like a thief to those who are not ready... live ready!