

Chapter Twelve

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The Day of the LORD

When our Lord Jesus Christ began his ministry he was in a synagogue and read Isaiah 61 saying,

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are bound*;
²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,

Then he closed the book and sat down. But there is one more phrase to the second verse. It reads, "And the day of vengeance of our God." The reason Christ did not read the full verse was that his ministry then was to inaugurate a time of grace and mercy when people could be saved. Now is the time of salvation.

And between those who are saved and the Lord Jesus Christ there is an unbreakable bond. We are in Christ and he is in us. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. And at his return we shall be like him and appear with him in glory. We have passed from death to life. We shall never come into judgment for our sins. We will never face the wrath of God.

But this is not true for this sinful, fallen, evil world. And we will not really understand what the New Testament says about the return of Christ until we understand an Old Testament truth. In the Old Testament there is a concept called The Day of the LORD or The Day of Yahweh.

This is not a 24 hour day, but a period of time of intense divine judgment and punishment upon an evil and rebellious world. Some people believe that the coming Great Tribulation is the same thing as The Day of the LORD. It is not. The Great Tribulation is the time of Antichrist's anger and persecution of God's people. This time of tribulation will end with the return of Christ and the resurrection and gathering of God's people.¹

¹ Matthew 24:15-22; 29-31

Just as Noah and his family were in the ark before God's wrath sent the flood, so all of God's people will be gathered unto Christ before The Day of the LORD. Concerning this time of God's wrath Isaiah cried,

Behold, the day of the LORD comes,
Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger,
To lay the land desolate;
And He will destroy its sinners from it.
(Isaiah 13:9)

Just as the Thessalonians were confused about the return of Christ they also had questions about The Day of the LORD. Were they already in The Day of the LORD? The answer was no, of course not. You are saved and will never face God's wrath. Let's read what Paul wrote.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 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.
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

The Day of the LORD will catch unbelievers off guard. It will come like a thief in that it will come unexpectedly. God's people will understand the signs of the times. But the world will not. They will be dulled into a false sense of peace and safety.

In Daniel 9, there is a prophecy where the final Antichrist (the abomination of desolation/man of sin²) will make a covenant with Israel that will seem to bring real peace to the middle east and the world. This covenant starts the last seven years of this age. After three and a half years the antichrist will break the covenant and according to Daniel and 2 Thessalonians will demand worship as God.

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

² Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4

and our gathering together to Him,
we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken
in mind or troubled, either by spirit or
by word or by letter, as if from us, as
though the day of Christ had come.
3 Let no one deceive you by any
means; for that Day will not come
unless the falling away comes first,
and the man of sin is revealed, the
son of perdition, 4 who opposes
and exalts himself above all that is
called God or that is worshiped, so
that he sits as God in the temple of
God, showing himself that he is God.
(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

This begins the time of the Great Tribulation that will end with the return of Christ.

There has been a slogan in recent social justice protests where people chant, "No justice, no peace!" But there can never be true justice now or true peace because our world is governed by sinners. Our only hope is God's work in Christ. He is the Prince of peace. When Jesus Christ reigns in our world as King of kings then there will be true justice and peace in our world.

But even now Christ can and will give peace to you and to me. In John 14:27 our Lord Promised,

Peace I leave with you, My peace
I give to you; not as the world gives
do I give to you. Let not your heart
be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
(John 14:27)

We can have the peace of Christ for every situation and for every need. The Word of God says to us,

Be anxious for nothing, but in
everything by prayer and
supplication, with thanksgiving,
let your requests be made
known to God; 7 and the
peace of God, which
surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and

minds through Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:6, 7)

Whatever your need, whatever your concern, pray and be thankful and let the peace of Christ guard your heart. We have peace with God because of our union with Christ. But a day is coming when God's judgment and wrath will fall on a wicked world.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 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.
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

Just as a woman in labor will not escape childbirth, the wrath of God upon a wicked world is inevitable! There will be no way for sinners to escape it. There will be no place to run. In Revelation 6:16 describing the Day of the LORD we read that the people will say to the mountains, "fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb."

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be [a]sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.
(1 Thessalonians 5:4-6)

Because we believe in and follow Jesus who is the light of the world we are not in darkness. We are children of light who can shine in a dark world too offer hope. Today is still the day of salvation.

Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 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 Thessalonians 5:6-8)

The Word of God is not saying that we need to be grim and humorless. It is not saying that we cannot have fun and enjoy life. But we are being urged to take God seriously. Our world shoves God out of the picture. Iy is caught up in the things of the moment and not the things of eternity. And it is all too easy, even for us, to slip into the world's attitude.

I have an art print in my office of a cavalry Buffalo soldier. The painting is called "The Alert." The soldier is sitting on his horse alert and looking to his right as if he heard or saw something in the distance. Even the horse is alert with his ears tilted to hear. We will never face God's wrath. But we need to be alert against sin and evil. And we need to be always ready to be a light in a dark world. The apostle Paul wrote a similar encouragement to the Romans.

And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. ¹²The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts. (Romans 13:11-14)

When we put on the armor of light we are protected from the sinful influences of this world. And we bring light and hope to others.

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through

our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.
(1 Thessalonians 5:9-11)

Until our Lord returns we are to comfort and encourage and build each other up in our faith, love and hope. Let's close in 2 Peter 3. At times people ask, "Why hasn't Christ returned yet? And why hasn't the Day of the LORD, the time of His wrath come?" The apostle Peter gives us the answer.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.
⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,
¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with

fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we,
according to His promise, look for
new heavens and a new earth in
which righteousness dwells.
(2 Peter 3:8-13)

The Day of the LORD has not yet come because God is giving people
time to repent and not perish. As Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue it is still
“The acceptable year of the LORD.”