

The Christian and “The Day of the Lord”

Study 7. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

by James T. Bartsch, WordExplain.com

A. Their Awareness of Future Events. 5:1-2

1. About what did Paul not need to write them? 5:1 _____

2. What did they already know about “the day of the Lord?”¹ 5:2 _____

B. The Illusory Nature of the Day of the Lord. 5:3

1. What will people be saying prior to the coming of “the day of the Lord?” _____
_____²
2. What will come upon them suddenly? _____
3. To what does he compare the destruction that will come upon the world suddenly? _____
4. Will there be any escape from this destruction? _____

¹ 5:2 - the day of the Lord: “The Day of the LORD is a period of time when the LORD enters human history in order to bring about terrible judgment upon man and the world he inhabits because of his evil. There have been historical fulfillments of the Day of the LORD (Joel 1:1-2:25; Isaiah 13). Both of these historical fulfillments use language that typifies yet future fulfillments more devastating in ferocity and scope than the historical fulfillments turned out to be. Those eschatological fulfillments will take place during the Tribulation (Isaiah 13:6-13; Ezek. 30:3; Obad. 1:15-16; Zeph. 1:14-18), at the Second Coming of Christ to Judge the Nations preparatory to setting up His global Kingdom (Joel 3:1-17, cf. Zech. 14:1-15), and at the Destruction of the Existing Heavens and Earth preparatory to the Creation of the New Heavens and Earth (2 Pet. 3:10-13).”

http://www.wordexplain.com/Isaiah_13_and_the_Day_of_the_LORD.html

² 5:3 - Peace and safety! At the beginning of the Tribulation period, Daniel’s Seventieth Week (Dan. 9:27), a charismatic politician of world repute will guarantee Israel peace and security. Israel and the rest of the world will be lulled asleep, thinking that the war of attrition between Israel and her Arab neighbors will finally have been resolved. The jubilation of the world will be short-lived. The events of the Tribulation period (Rev. 6-18) will unfold with escalating rapidity. Paul will discuss the sequence of events more explicitly in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

C. Old Testament References to “the Day of the Lord.” What do the following passages tell us?

1. Isaiah 13:6-13:³

2. Joel 2:30-32:

3. Amos 5:18-20

4. Zephaniah 1:14-18:

5. 2 Peter 3:10-13

D. The Believers’ Non-Participation in “the Day of the Lord.” 5:4-10

1. How does Paul identify the Thessalonians to whom he is writing? 5:4 They are _____

³ Isaiah 13:6-13: Note that this passage describes the judgment that is to befall Judah when Babylon invades their land and destroys them as an instrument of Yahweh (Isa. 13:1-5). That is the historical fulfillment. But notice that much of the language in 13:6-13 goes beyond a local judgment to a world-wide judgment. Thus, this prophecy of judgment is two-pronged. It prophesies judgment on Judah at the hands of the Babylonians, but it also predicts judgment on the entire world during the eschatological “Day of the Lord” known elsewhere as the “The Great Tribulation” (Matt. 24:21, 29; Rev. 7:14).

2. What condition are they *not* in? 5:4 _____
3. Consequently, what will not overtake them like a thief in the night? 5:4

4. Quite to the contrary, they are all 5:5a
 - a. _____ of _____
 - b. And _____ of _____
 - c. What did he mean by that? _____

5. Paul addressed them in 5:5a. Now he includes himself in the discussion. What are “we” not? 5:5b
 - a. We are not of _____
 - b. Nor (are we) of _____
 - c. What did he mean by that? _____

6. The clear implication of 5:4-5 is that “sons of light” and “day” will _____ participate in “the day of the Lord.” On the other hand, people who are of “night” and “darkness” _____ participate in “the day of the Lord.” They will not be able to escape from it, for it will overtake them suddenly, like a thief in the night.” Note the following:
 - a. We who are pre-tribulationists interpret Paul’s statements in 5:4-5 as meaning that, since we are sons of light and sons of day, we Church-Age Christians will not be forced to participate in the “night” and “darkness” that describes “the Day of the Lord.”
 - b. Post-tribulationists interpret Paul’s statement in 5:4 to mean that, though we Christians will participate in the terrible “Day of the Lord”, it won’t surprise us. We will be ready for it!
 - c. Which do you think Paul meant?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____

7. An understanding of Biblical prophecy not only helps us to interpret what is going on in our world and be aware of what will happen in the future, but also tells us *how to live* in light of coming events! 5:6-8
- a. What are we Christians not supposed to do that others (unbelievers) do? 5:6a _____⁴
 - b. Instead, we are to be _____ and _____ 5:6b
 - c. When do people sleep? 5:7a _____ (This is the opposite of 5:6a.)
 - d. When do people get drunk? 5:7b _____ (This is the opposite of 5:6b.)
 - e. Since we are of the _____ we are urged to be _____ 5:8a
 - f. Part of the process of being alert and sober is to utilize armor that God has provided for us Christians. 5:8b
 - 1) Having put on the _____
 - a) Of _____
 - b) Of _____
 - 2) Having put on the _____, which is the _____ of _____.
8. The destiny of the Thessalonian Christians (and all Christians) 5:9-10
- a. For what has God not destined Christians? 5:9a For _____.⁵

⁴ 5:6 - so then let us not sleep: Pre-tribulationists are often accused of being so obsessed with escaping from the rapture that they miss the exhortations for Godly living found in eschatological. That is a mischaracterization, in my estimation. Why can't both be true? We are sons of the day who are exempted from the judgment of the Tribulation. Precisely because we are sons of the day, we are to be alert and sober (5:6 and 5:8).

⁵ 5:9 - God has not destined us for wrath: It could be argued that Paul simply meant that God has not destined Christians for the wrath of eternal punishment, meaning the Lake of Fire and Brimstone (Rev. 20:11-15). However, the whole context of 1 Thess. 4:13- 5:11 is framed in an "end times" eschatological context, not an "eternal" eschatological context (Rev. 20:11-15). Therefore we are justified in asserting that Paul was referring primarily, in this context, to the wrath of the Tribulation period. Believers will not go through the wrath of the Day of the Lord, meaning, the wrath of the Tribulation period (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19).

- b. Rather, God has destined Christians for obtaining 5:9b _____.
- 1) Who is the means of salvation? 5:9c _____
 - 2) How did He provide salvation? 5:10a _____
 - 3) What is the purpose of Jesus' having died? 5:10b So that, whether we believers
 - a) Are _____
 - b) Or whether we _____,
 - c) We will _____

E. The Concluding Application about Salvation from the Coming Wrath 5:11

1. The Thessalonian believers are to _____ one another;⁶
2. Also they are to _____ one another.
3. What is their present activity? _____
4. Do you think most Christians in our country are living as "sons of light" and "sons of day?" (5:5)? _____ Why or why not? _____
5. How about Christians in countries like Iran or China? _____
6. Do you think most Christians in our country are living "alertly and soberly" (5:6-8)? _____ Why or why not? _____
7. What makes the difference? _____

⁶ 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another: These words echo, almost verbatim, the words of 4:18. There, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to comfort one another because their loved ones would not miss the Rapture. Here, Paul urges them to comfort one another because they have been exempted from the wrath of the Day of the Lord, the judgment of the Tribulation period, which follows the Rapture.

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Prepared by James T. Bartsch

Published Online September, 2012 by WordExplain.com

Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

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