

FIRST THESSALONIANS 5:1-11
The Day of the Lord

I. A definition of that Day is: a time of God's special intervention in the affairs of human history. Three facets of that Day are: (1) historical--God's intervention in the affairs of Israel and heathen nations (Zeph. 1:14-18; Ezek. 30:3); (2) illustrative--an historical event represents a partial fulfillment of the future day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-11); (3) future--includes the tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32), and the millennium (Isa. 4:2; 12). In this passage the focus is on the beginning of the future Day (i.e., the tribulation).

II. The Revelation of the Day of the Lord, 5:1.

A. It does not include the revelation of the Rapture of the Church, 1. "Now" or "But" translates 2 the phrase *περὶ δε* which Paul uses regularly to introduce a new subject in his letters (1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 1 Thess. 4:9; 5:1). Therefore, the Day of the Lord is a new subject from the rapture in the preceding paragraph. Also the rapture is termed a mystery in 1 Cor. 15:51 (something not revealed in the O.T.) whereas the day of the Lord was known from the O.T. "Day of the Lord" occurs 20 times; "1st days," 14 times; and "that day," 100 times, so it was obviously well known from the O.T. and undoubtedly a part of Paul's teaching. We can conclude, then, that the rapture is not part of the Day of the Lord and must occur before the beginning of that Day; i.e., before the tribulation begins. "Times" may refer to the duration, and "seasons" to the characteristics of the Day.

III. The Beginning of the Day of the Lord, 5:2-3.

Emphasize the word "comes" because the beginning of the Day will be unexpected, just like the coming of a thief. The only time in the chapters on the tribulation that there will be peace and safety is under the first seal at its beginning (Rev. 6:1-2 compared with v. 4). "Destruction" is not annihilation, but ruin of peoples' lives. The comparison of a pregnant woman suggest the Day will come inevitably, suddenly, and painfully.

IV. The Exhortations to Believers in Light of the Day of the Lord, 4-11.

A. Remember we are sons of light (because we belong to Christ who is light), and not darkness, vv.4-5 (see Joel 2:2); therefore, Day will not overtake us. (But if the church is to live through any part of the tribulation, darkness would overtake Christians).

B. Don't be asleep, 6a. Refers to indifference of spiritual things (this is a different word from 4:13). "Others" refer to unsaved. Note that believers can be indifferent to the truth just as unsaved people are.

C. Watch or be alert, 6b. Note connection with prayer in Mark 13:34-37 and Col. 4:2 same word for watch in these passages).

D. Be sober, 6c, 8. In complete control of one's senses. This is one of the characteristics for an elder (1 Tim. 3:2 and word was used of wineless offerings). We do this by having put on (aorist) two pieces of armor. Helmet is hope of the future consummation of our salvation.

E. Remember our salvation, 9-11. (1) Its origin, 9. God destined (middle voice--for Himself) salvation, not wrath (see 1 Thess. 1:10), put it in place, and we obtain it through faith. (2) Its goal, 10--All believers whether awake (alive at rapture) or asleep (dead) will live together with Him (see Rom. 14:8). (3) Its ramification, 11. Since this hope is true then exhort and build one another up. This is a mutual responsibility.