

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 7 – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Hope for a Hopeless World
An Attitude of Watchfulness

The final chapter gives a series of instructing the Christians how to live in the light of Christ's coming. As we read these many warnings, we see that there were some definite problems in the infant church. Christians were living carelessly; some were not respecting their church leaders; others were abusing the public services; and there was a general need for love and harmony among the saints. These instructions point out how the local church can live in harmony and purity.

Paul presents a series of contrasts here between the Christians and the lost. Christ's coming, as far as the world is concerned, will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night; but not so for the believer. We are looking for Him to come. Unbelievers are in the dark. Their understanding is darkened, they love the darkness, they are controlled by the power of darkness, and they are headed for eternal darkness. But the Christian is associated with the light, for God is light, and Christ is the Light of the world. The Christian is a child of light, though at one time he was darkness itself. Since Christians belong to the day, they should live in the light and be ready for Christ's return.

Satan likes to keep people in the dark. Judas was in the dark and so were Ananias and Sapphira. The world is ignorant of God's plans because the world has rejected Christ and the Bible. They go by appearances and say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But the Christian who reads his Bible and keeps his eyes open knows the way God is working in this world and is not ignorant.

The unsaved world lives in false security, like the people before the flood or the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Christ has taken the church out of the world, the Day of the Lord will begin, a seven-year period of tribulation and suffering for the world. The Day of the Lord will come to the world as a thief in the night.

Christians who are looking for Christ to come will stay awake and be alert; they will not become drunken like the people of the world. "Wake" and "sleep" here do not mean "alive" and "dead" as in 4:13-18; they mean "alert" and "careless." Christians should be living holy lives when Jesus comes.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and answer the following questions

1. What does 5:1-2 indicate about how complete Paul's description had been in his original instructions about "The day of the Lord" to the Thessalonians?
(See Matt. 24)
2. What does Jesus say in Matthew 24:36 about forecasting dates for His return?
3. Why do you think they are saying "*peace and safety*" when danger is so near?
(See 5:3)
4. What does it mean, in practical terms to be "*in darkness*"? (See 5:4). How does living in spiritual darkness affect a person day to day?
5. Paul compares the coming of destruction to the coming of "*labor pains*." What does that image recall for you?
6. Even though Paul had already told the Thessalonians that Jesus would come at an unexpected time, like "a thief in the night," they still evidently wanted to know when it would happen. Why do you think people desire so strongly to know the date of Christ's return?

7. Even though we don't know when the day of the Lord will come, why won't it be a surprise for Christian?

8. What lesson does Paul intend for us to learn according to 5:6?

9. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8, how does a person who belongs to the light think and behave?

10. The breastplate and the helmet probably were the most important items in a soldier's equipment, because they protected the most important body parts. What does this picture tell you about the importance of faith, hope and love? (See 5:8)

11. To what are we appointed and not appointed? What did Christ do to make this possible? (See 5:9-10)

12. What is the final encouragement Paul gives from this passage? (See 5:11)

The Day of the Lord

The day of the Lord is a future period of time in which God will be at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been since the earthly ministry of Jesus. This extended “day” includes the second coming of the Lord and the Rapture, as well as judgement for those who reject Christ.

The “day of the Lord” is a huge concept in the Bible. Cross references include: Isaiah 2:12, 13:6-9, Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3, Joel 1:15, Amos 5:18, Zephaniah 1:7, Acts 2:20, 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 2 Peter 3:10. Take some time and go through these Scriptures, paying particular attention to the characteristics of “Day.”