

## Fact Sheet for “The Day of the Lord” 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

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Today we are going to follow up a pleasing passage (4:13-18) with an ugly one (5:1-11). The first is about the Rapture, the second is about the “day of the Lord”.

Remember that when Paul wrote this letter there were no chapter or verse divisions. He quite naturally flows from the Christians sure and certain hope of resurrection (4:13-18) to what is ahead for those who are still alive and are not Christians, and he uses the term “day of the Lord”. This does not refer to a single 24 hour day but a short time or season of events. It is a time of God’s judgment.

**ESV <sup>1</sup> ¶ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.**

That term, “day of the Lord”, is found in multiple prophetic passages of the OT (Samples: Isaiah 13:6, Ezekiel 30:3; Joel 3:9-17; Amos 5:20; Zephaniah 1:14; Malachi 4:5). The Jews and Gentiles who met at the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4) would have been well aware of this term, and perhaps it is why Paul wrote that they had no need to have anything written to them about it. This term is also found in other places in the NT (Samples: Acts 2:20; 2 Peter 3:10).

In Joel 3:13 he speaks of God’s winepress. John the Apostle writes about the winepress of God in Revelation 14:19-20 and 19:15. And we sing about this winepress in a familiar song.

### Battle Hymn of the Republic

“Mine eyes have seen the glory  
of the coming of the Lord,  
He is trampling out the vintage  
where the grapes of wrath are stored”

The “day of the Lord” refers to the coming judgment on the unsaved.

However you cut it the “day of the Lord” will be an ugly day, and it will come upon the world suddenly.

**<sup>3</sup> While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**

Jesus himself spoke of the events that conclude the day of the Lord (Luke 17:26-35).

Now Paul encourages the believers at Thessalonica. Remember that he has just spoken to them about the Rapture.

<sup>4</sup> But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

In 1 Thess. 4:13-18 Paul uses one word for “sleep” as a euphemism for death. In verses 1 Thess. 5:6-10 Paul uses a different word for “sleep” along with three of its meanings of literal sleep, spiritual indifference, or death.

These are in some ways synonyms like our two words “sleep” and “slumber” (light sleep).

Paul also uses a common figure of speech for sin and righteousness... light and dark. Think about what John wrote in one of his letters.

**ESV 1 John 1:5** ¶ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

<sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober (*not spiritually indifferent*), having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep (*dead*) we might live with him.

This image of the armor of God is found in other places also.

Eph. 6:13-17

belt of truth  
breastplate of righteousness  
shoes of readiness given by the gospel  
shield of faith  
helmet of salvation  
sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

**ESV Isaiah 59:17** He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Paul wrote a similar encouragement to this in 4:18.

How should we apply this passage?

1. Wouldn't you naturally warn someone of danger ahead?
2. Remind yourself to put on the armor of God.
3. Be encouraged, as Paul encouraged them, for God has not destined us for wrath!