

**Don't Walk in Your Sleep
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Part 1**

Jesus Christ both unites and divides. Those who have trusted Him as Savior are united in Christ as God's children. We are members of His body and are "all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). When Jesus Christ returns in the air, we shall be "caught up together" with Him. We have just been reminded of this great event in our study of **1 Thess. 4:13-18**. Let us take a moment and again remind ourselves of this glorious hope. **"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words."** Hopefully as we have gone through this week we have been looking heavenward with the joyful anticipation of Christ's return.

But Christ not only unites, He also divides. In **John 7:43** it says, **"So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him."** And again we read in **John 9:16** **"Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs? And there was a division among them."** And again in **John 10:17-19** **"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. (18) No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from my Father. (19) There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words.** Faith in Jesus Christ not only unites us to other believers it also separates us spiritually from the rest of the world. Jesus said in **John 17:16** **"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."** There is a difference between believers who are looking for the Lord's return, and the people of the world; it is this theme that Paul will develop for us in **1 Thess. 5:1-11**.

As we read these verses be looking particularly at the differences between ourselves and the people who are in the world. **"Now as to the times and the epochs brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. (2) For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. (3) While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape, (4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; (5) for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; (6) so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. (7) For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.**

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(8) But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (9) For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. (11) Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.” His purpose in these verses was to encourage the believers to live holy lives in the midst of their pagan surroundings. He did this by pointing out the contrasts between believers and unbelievers. How many contrasts did you find? Over the next several weeks I will be sharing with you four contrasts that I believe are found in this passage. What is the first contrast that we see between ourselves and the world?

KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

There is a contrast between knowledge and ignorance. This contrast is seen in **VV. 1-2** **“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. (2) For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.** Before we can clearly understand this contrast between knowledge and ignorance three phrases in these verses need careful consideration.

“Times and the epochs” This phrase is introduced by the word “now” (PERI DE). This is a familiar phrase and it is used in order to transition to a new thought. In the preceding paragraph in **1 Thess. 4:13-18**, Paul addressed himself to the ignorance of his readers, **“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep....”** But now in the present paragraph he addresses himself to their KNOWLEDGE!! Look at **V. 1** **“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.”** The purpose in these verses is not to give them new information about future things but rather to cause them to profit from what they however know and about future things. This transition in purpose causes Paul to use the word “Now” (PERI DE).

What specifically did they know? They knew about the **“times and the epochs.”** This phrase is found only three times in the Bible. Daniel used it in a prayer of thankfulness to the Lord when God gave him understanding of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in **Dan. 2:21**. And this is the phrase that Luke tells us that Jesus used when responding to questions by His disciples concerning Israel’s earthly kingdom just prior to His ascension. And finally we find it here in this text.

The word “times” is the Greek word “CHRONOI” and this word emphasizes time in respect to the day and the hour. “Epochs” is the Greek word “KAIROI” and this word emphasizes events that will happen in respect to time.

What did they have knowledge about? It had something to do with the day and hour of something. And the events surrounding that something. Exactly what that something was we need to go on to the second phrase.

“The day of the Lord” This phrase is found frequently within the scriptures, primarily it is found in the O.T. It is found in **Is. 2:12; 13:6,9; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31,3:14; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7,14 (twice); Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; here in 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10.**

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In addition, the phrase “**that day**” or “**the day or the great day**” occurs 75 times in the Old Testament.

We will be unable to examine everyone of these passages and expect you to want to keep coming back. But let me share with you a few observations that can be made simply from the verses listed.

1) The day of the Lord is always associated with the judgment of God.

2) The day of the Lord when used in the O.T. to refer to a future judgment by God can refer to either a near or far judgment of God or both. An example of this can be found in **Joel 1:15, 2:1,11** this term is used to refer to a threatened locust plague of biblical proportions that was about to descend upon Judah. In light of this approaching day of judgment Joel is calling them to repent in order to avoid destruction that was going to come upon them in the “**day of the Lord.**” Let me read this portion of scripture to you in order for you to get a feel for what I have just said. “**The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it? (12) “Yet even now, declares the Lord “Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping, and mourning; (13) And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and relenting of evil.**” This future judgment referred to by Joel is an example of when a reference to “the Day of the Lord” can have a near fulfillment. But Joel makes a major departure from the near fulfillment of the Day of the Lord in **Joel 1:15; 2:1,11** to a far more troublesome period much further in the future which will also be a time of judgment. And which is also called by Joel “**The day of the Lord.**” In **Joel 2:28** he goes on to say, “**And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. (29) And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (30) And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.**” Now look at **Joel 3:14** “**Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon grow dark, and the waters lose their brightness. (16) And the Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble.** Certainly the specifics of these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. If we took time to look at these verses more closely we would actually see that these events will be fulfilled in a time period that theologians call the tribulation which are described in the book of revelation.

3) The expression “Day of the Lord,” though involving other nations exclusively concerns God’s purposes for the nation of Israel. God has a definite plan for the nations of the world but his plan for them involves his ordained purposes for the nation of Israel. It had to be this way for they are his chosen people. In **Gen. 12:1-3** God made an unconditional covenant with Israel “**Now the Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country, And from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; (2) And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; (3) And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse.**

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And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” This promise still stands, unfulfilled but through God’s future judgments, He is prepared to unleash against this world, and His people, He will fulfill His promise.

4) The Church will not go through the Day of the Lord. We see this clearly stated in **2 Thess. 2**. The day of the Lord comes after the church is raptured. The Day of the Lord prepares Israel for the earthly kingdom promised to Israel. What also is interesting is the Day of the Lord will also culminate the messianic kingdom. Look at **2 Peter 3:10** **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”** This concluding expressing of God’s judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom is also called “the day of the Lord.”

What did they not need Paul to write them about? It had something to do with the day and the hour of something, and the events surrounding that something. Exactly what was that something? It was “the day of the Lord.” A time of approaching judgment that would be directed at God’s purposes for the nation of Israel. **WHAT SPECIFIC PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE DID THEY HAVE THAT HE WAS SPECIFICALLY ALLUDING TO?**

“A thief in the night” - Our Lord used this image in His own teaching (Mt. 24:42-43; Luke 12:35-40). It describes the suddenness and the surprise involved in the coming of the Day of the Lord. These Thessalonians knew that a day of judgment was soon going to come upon this world. Paul had no need to write to them in this regard.

CONCLUSION

In this passage of Scripture Paul is going to contrast for us the differences between ourselves and the world. The first contrast that we looked at this morning was the contrast between knowledge and ignorance. **WE KNOW THAT THE LORD IS COMING AS A THIEF IN JUDGMENT, THE WORLD DOES NOT.**