

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Don't Walk in Your Sleep 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Part 3

Where is history going? Does it have a goal? There are three different answers to this question.

The cyclical view - It says that history is endless repetition. We are caught in a repetitive cycle of reincarnation. This view gives no meaning to history. History is simply going in circles.

Atheistic existential view - It says that history is a line but it started by accident and no one has a clue as to how it is going to end. Again this view, like the first, gives no meaning to history. There is no movement toward a goal only a meaningless succession of events.

The Christian view - It says that God is sovereign over history and is methodically working out his purposes as explained in the Scriptures. The Christian view of history says that God is moving all the events of human history to a divinely planned goal and that everyone has an ultimate appointment with God to determine his eternal destiny. God started it, God controls it, and God is bringing it to its conclusion.

The Thessalonian Church certainly adopted the latter view very much in contrast to the world that surrounded them. And this contrast separated them. Paul in 1 Thess. 5:1-11 helps us to see those things which separated them from the world that surrounded them.

KNOWLEDGE IN CONTRAST TO IGNORANCE

Let us read **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.”** The Thessalonian Church was knowledgeable about “the times and the epochs” the world was not. The Thessalonian church knew that the “day of the Lord” was coming like a thief in the night.

The “day of the Lord” when used in the O.T. scriptures is always associated with the judgment of God.

The “day of the Lord” when used in the O.T. can refer to near or far judgment of God, or both. The reference to the day of the Lord in **1 Thess. 5:2** is referring to the final cataclysmic judgment of God.

The “day of the Lord” though involving other nations exclusively, concerns God’s purposes for the nation of Israel. It is this future cataclysmic judgment of God that initiates Israel’s millennial kingdom and it is this future cataclysmic judgment that culminates Israel’s millennial kingdom. The “day of the Lord” which is yet to come will extend from a period just before the millennial kingdom through the kingdom and conclude at the very end of the kingdom just prior to the new heavens and new earth.

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The church will not go through the Day of the Lord.

The first contrast that we observe in this passage is the fact that the Thessalonian church was knowledgeable about “the times and the epochs” the world was not. A second difference that flows from the first is the contrast between EXPECTANCY AND SURPRISE

EXPECTANCY AND SURPRISE

Let us read **VV. 3-5** **“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.”**

The world consistently believes that all is well even when God’s true messengers are warning them of judgment (Jer. 6:13-14; 8:10-11; Micah 3:5). This will be true even as the Day of the Lord comes upon them. Notice what Paul says, **“While they are saying, “peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly.”**

Notice how this destruction comes upon them, **“like birth pangs upon a woman with child.”** When the church is raptured (1 Thess. 4:13-18) the world goes into “labor”(1 Thess. 5:3). The world will be in “labor” for 7 years which is the length of the tribulation.

At the end of the tribulation the Lord will return in “power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30). This will be followed by Christ’s judgment of the nation of Israel (Mt. 25:1-30) and then the Gentiles (Mt. 25:31-46) this will make it possible for only the righteous to enter the millennial kingdom.

Though the world is surprised by the “day of the Lord,” Christians are “sons of the light” and therefore are not “in the dark” when it comes to future events. Though the church will not go through the “day of the Lord” we know that it is coming. And this expectancy in contrast to the world’s surprise leads us to a third difference between Christians and the world

SOBERNESS AND DRUNKENNESS

Let us read **VV. 6-8** **“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. (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.”** Paul contrasts those who are “sober and alert” with those who are “drunk and asleep.”

As “sons of the day” the Thessalonian church knew that the “day of the Lord” was coming in contrast to the world that was around them. The Thessalonian church in contrast to the world was expecting it. Paul is now calling them to live their lives in light of it. Paul is calling them to be “sober and alert” rather than being “drunk and asleep.” THIS HAS PRACTICAL RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH.

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Since we are “**sons of the day**” we should not live as those who belong to the darkness. **Rom. 13:12-13** says, “**The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (13) Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. In other words, because “the day” (the day of the Lord is approaching), it is time to wake up, clean up, and dress up with “the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation.””**

We have met faith, hope, and love before in **1 Thess. 1:2-3**. In those verses Paul was commending the Thessalonians and said, “**We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; (3) constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.** We concluded that the visible change in the way we live our lives because of our new relationship with Christ is the “work of faith” that Paul was referring to. We concluded that the obvious efforts in caring for the brethren is the “labor of love” that Paul was referring to. And finally we concluded that the upward longing of Christians for our day of future blessing is the “steadfastness of hope” that Paul was referring to. And there is no compelling reasons for us to change our understanding of these terms in the passage that is before us.

Sober and alert Christians will put on the breastplate of faith and love. They will be actively seeking to know the teachings of the Word of God and be actively applying them to their lives. These continuing attempts at understanding the Word and applying the Word should not only be obvious to the world around us but also to ourselves. If we are failing to do this then our lives would be more closely identified with the “drunk and asleep” than the “sober and alert.” Not only will sober and alert Christians put on the breastplate of faith but also of love. They will giving themselves up in service to the church. They will be seeking to minister their time, talents and resources in building up their brother and sisters in Christ. If we are failing to give active attention to being with and serving our brothers and sisters in Christ then our lives would be more closely identified with the drunk and asleep than the sober and alert. And finally not only will sober and alert Christians put on the breastplate of faith and love but also the hope of salvation.

the hope of salvation does not mean the hope that at last we will be saved. A person can know today that he is saved and is going to heaven. Paul knew that the Thessalonian believers were saved (1 Thess. 1:4), and he was certain that he and they would meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). The person who confidently says, “I know I am saved!” is not exhibiting pride; he is demonstrating faith in God’s Word. First John was written to help us know that we are saved (I John 5:9-13).

The hope of salvation means “the hope that salvation gives to us.” There are actually three tenses to salvation: (1) PAST - I have been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin; (2) PRESENT - I am being saved from the power and pollution of sin (3) FUTURE - I shall be saved from the very presence of sin when Christ returns. The blessed hope of our Lord’s return is the “hope of salvation.” It is this hope that causes us to persevere in our pursuit of obedience and our expressions of love for the brethren no matter what our circumstances might be.

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Christians are knowledgeable of the times and the epochs. The world, by and large, is not. Christians are therefore living in expectancy of the “day of the Lord.” The world is not. Christians therefore in light of their anticipation of this future judgment are living lives which are sober and alert. The world is not. Now I would like to consider the final contrast.

SALVATION AND JUDGMENT

Let us read **VV. 9-11** **"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.** Believers do not have to fear future outpouring of wrath in judgment because it is not part of God’s appointed plan for us.

Certainly this would include the wrath of hell (**Rom. 9:22**) but I believe that it would include even more. I believe that we can be assured that we will not experience the wrath associated with the “day of the Lord.” We have just been talking about “the day of the Lord” in the passage we are studying. Clearly within scriptures the day of the Lord is associated with wrath. In **Zeph. 1:14-18** **“Near is the great day of the Lord, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. (15) A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, (16) a day of trumpet and battle cry, against the fortified cities. And the high corner towers. (17) I will bring distress on men, so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. (18) neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord’s wrath; And all the earth will be devoured. In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all inhabitants of the earth.** When Paul is saying that he has not destined us for wrath certainly it would mean that we would not only experience the wrath associated with hell but also the wrath associated with the Day of the Lord.

Paul makes a clear statement, we are not destined as the church to experience the outpouring of God’s wrath. So we will therefore not experience hell, and we will also not experience “the day of the Lord.” And I believe based upon the same reasoning that we will not experience the seven year period of tribulation that has been decreed for Israel just prior to their kingdom.

Though we will see that repeatedly the “day of the Lord” is referenced as coming at the end of the tribulation prior to the millennial kingdom such as in **2 Thess. 2:1-3**. We cannot separate the “day of the Lord” from the whole of the “tribulation.” More accurately when we think of the day of the Lord we must see it as beginning to unfold immediately after the rapture of the church and continuing to unfold throughout the tribulation right up to the end when it bursts forth like a dam that has been broken in a final form of cataclysmic judgment.

If this is so, then we would, I believe see the evidence of God’s increasing and unfolding judgments upon all of mankind very early in the tribulation period. And this is exactly what I shared with you that we do see. We saw it last week in **Matt. 24:1-8** when we talked about the beginning of birth pangs which would be associated with the early judgments of God within the tribulation which then continued to escalate from **Mt. 24:9-29** right up to the point of the birth of kingdom in **Mt. 24:30-31**.

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This gradual increasing of the judgments in this seven year period is paralleled in the Book of Revelation. There we see in the early part of the tribulation the seal judgments, then most likely in the middle of the tribulation we see the trumpet judgments and finally at the end of the tribulation period we find the bowl judgments. These judgments are strung out over, the entire length of the tribulation period.

It is true that the wrath of God is poured out in a cataclysmic judgment at the end of the tribulation in the “day of the Lord.” But judgments of God associated with this final cataclysmic day are already unfolding throughout the tribulation. And these judgments certainly cannot be disconnected from God’s wrath.

We have already learned that **Matt. 24** is describing the events of the period of time of the tribulation. What we have not mentioned is that **Luke 21** gives us a similar account. In fact **Mt. 24:19-22** parallels **Luke 21:23**.

Let us look at **Mt. 24:19-22** “**But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! (20) But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; (21) for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (22) And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.** What period of time is being described in these verses? It is the time period after the “abomination of desolation” which occurs at the mid point of the tribulation prior to the final cataclysmic judgment at the end of tribulation. Now let us read **Luke 21:23-24** “**Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to his people.** Clearly we have wrath before the final cataclysmic judgment of God. This is exactly what we would expect to find in light of the nature of the tribulation.

CONCLUSION

The world looks at the meaning of history as meaningless. This is not the Christian view. We believe that the Lord is working out His purposes as he has explained them in His Word.

And what does it tell us? It tells us that the world will ultimately be caught up in a cataclysmic judgment, an outpouring of the wrath of God on all ungodliness and wickedness of man.

How can we escape this future judgment and ultimately future damnation? It is by recognizing our inability to save ourselves and our need to come to Jesus and embrace him as Lord and Savior.

As Savior because we believe that in his death on Calvary He took our judgment and our punishment upon Himself for our sins and paid the debt that we owed.

As Lord because He is God, God the Son, and is worthy of receiving glory, honor, and praise.