

I Thessalonians

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1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Vss. 1-8

- We would do well to remember that all of the New Testament writers grew up emersed in the Old Testament. So much of their thought and imagery pours out of the Old Testament traditions they grew up with and were educated in. In the minds of the New Testament writers there was no conflict or disconnect here. Looking at how seamlessly Jesus would say, "You have heard it said, but I say to you..." where Old Testament truths are made alive, they saw a natural flow of one to the other, where the old truths were taken and made new, stronger, and deeper.
- Here Paul speaks of the "the day of the Lord" in vs. 2. The number of references to "the day of the Lord" in the Old Testament seem countless. The phrase is stated specifically 18 times, but is referred to as "on that day" another 208 times. In the Old Testament The Day of The Lord was always viewed as a terrible day, a day where divine judgement visits the earth. To the Jews, time was divided into two epochs: the present time, which is evil and incurably bad and the Golden Age of God where all injustices were made right, hunger was no more, and righteousness prevailed. And in between was The Day of The Lord. It was a day where the old world was destroyed, and a new world was born. The phrase mostly appears or is referred to in the prophets and throughout carries a common thread of ideas: 1) it would come suddenly without warning 2) it would be a day of universal upheaval where not only earthly injustice is affected, but the moon and the stars and the very earth itself would be shaken to the core 3) it would be a time of severe judgement. Justice will roll down like waters and righteous like a might stream (Amos 5:24).
- Given the way Christ Himself spoke of His return it was an easy step for the New Testament writers to make The Day of the Lord into The Second Coming. Time and again, in parables like the Foolish Virgins of Matthew 25 or the Good and Evil Slaves of Luke 12, Jesus spoke of His return as being unexpected and sudden and of how blessings would then come to those who were ready, but heartbreak and pain to those who were not. You will find similar thoughts in Mark 13, known as The Little Apocalypse. Mark 13:24-27 sound very much like our passage here in Thessalonians.
- It is a natural question to want to know when such things will be, but Jesus Himself said that even He did not know, that only the Father knew (Matt. 24:36, Mark 13:32).

- Here, Paul like Jesus says the Second Coming will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night, like the labor pains of a young mother. People will be living sleepy lives of “peace and safety” when suddenly destruction is upon them and there is no escape.
- But Paul says there is no need for God’s people to be caught unaware even if they do not know the hour. We are people of the light, not of darkness. We are people of the day, not of night. For the thief comes at night while the people of darkness sleep in their false peace and safety. The Christian is already in Christ and is therefore always prepared for His return. The Christian lives life in the Light, sober and watchful, with the proper spiritual armor of faith, hope, and love.

Vss. 9-11

- No one knows when the time of Christ’s return will be, but we *KNOW* that our salvation is secure, that the destruction to come is nothing *WE* need to fear. Our lives are secure in Christ.
- We are truly able to sleep in heavenly peace, because no matter what may happen, *NOTHING* can separate us from the love of Christ. The Day of the Lord is nothing we have to fear. We merely need to keep on living our lives in Christ and for Christ. When the test comes, we are prepared. The one who lives life in the Light of Christ is never caught by surprise. The one who only desires to be drawn closer to Christ is never dismayed at entering the presence of their Lord and Savior.
- The previous section that ends at 4:18 instructs us to “comfort one another”. This section that ends with verse 11 instructs us to “encourage one another and build up one another”. This is what the people of Christ’s church should always be doing! One raw distinction between the world and Christ’s Kingdom is that in the world others are always trying to drag you down, tear you down, keep you down, whereas in His Kingdom we are to comfort each other, encourage each other, and build each other up, thereby strengthening the Body of Christ.