

LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

In hard times,

God's people ask "hard" questions!"

- Why? • How long?
- How should God's people respond to ungodly opposition?
- What's really important to us?
- What's worth dying for
- What does the future hold?

Thess. were struggling with such issues.

Thessalonica—one of 1st churches in Macedonia; begun on 2nd journey (Acts 16-17)

Paul's ministry was fruitful=> positive response.

Persecution results

–continues after his departure

He writes to stimulate them to be faithful and not get discouraged.

Instruction Concerning the Future 4:13-5:11

CONCERNING DEAD IN CHRIST

4:13-18

Problem 4:13

They believe Lord's return is imminent.

He could come at any time!

Paul assumes HE'll be alive when Jesus returns

Before He comes, some die.

What will happen to them?

Solution 4:14-17

1st– God will raise the dead in Christ.

Then– God will raise living who trust Him.

Both groups meet the Lord.

Both groups remain with Him forever.

Result 4:18

We can encourage one another.

No indication **WHEN!**

- Only refers to relationship between dead & living
 - Argument presupposes imminence of our Lord's coming
- Next event in God's timetable for church.–but doesn't tell *when!*

Concerning Day of the Lord

5:1-11

Ch. 5 introduced by "when?" question–"about times & dates" 5:1

WHEN is this going to happen?

Ch. 4 comes before ch. 5!

–so also its events.

Rapture comes *before* the Day of the Lord!

–connected to it

–initial question connects 2 parts

5:10–dealing with same subject =>how death affects program

Thought of passage: he doesn't need to warn US about these times; *WE* are *day* people; thief comes to victimize *night* people who believe they're in time of peace & safety.

Paul describes events on earth following rapture,

in... "*The Day of the Lord*"

Non-eschatological use–Any period when God demonstrates His control over history

–when God has HIS day!

Eschatological use–Final period when God demonstrates His control over history–for judg-ment OR for blessing His people

–(Zech. 14 (9); Joel 3; Zeph. 3)

It's a day of judgment for the opponents of God, But day of deliverance for faithful!

–Same day, from 2 perspectives.

Throughout discussion of Day of the Lord, Paul distinguishes between those who are ready & those who aren't expecting it.

So, when IS this going to happen?

"YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TELL YOU ..." [When things are going to happen!]

You already know . . .

Day of Lord will come like a thief in the night--unexpected/ unannounced **5:2-**

3 *"The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, "Peace & safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, & they will not escape."*

It comes when **people least expect it**–Lk. 12:39; Matt. 24:42

–Lk. 12:39–no advance warning

A thief doesn't call and ask

Since we don't know *WHEN* we must be ready at *ALL* times!

People expect peace & safety

(Ezek. 38-39–"Peace and safety!")

Begins with Antichrist's covenant–Ezek. 38-39; Dan. 9:26-27

People experience destruction.

He compares it to **CHILDBIRTH** –begins with labor pains, but at the end there is a birth.

It comes as result of an irreversible process.

Once it starts, it will deliver.

People won't escape it!

Day of the Lord will not be a surprise for God's children

5:4-8 *"But you, brothers & sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all children of the light & children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake &*

sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, & those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith & love as a breastplate, & the hope of salvation as a helmet."

- We know order of events revealed in God's plan (Ch. 4 => 5).
- Contrast between "you" & "them" (5:2-3)

You: "know full well"

They: "are saying, 'Peace & safety'"

"destruction comes on *them* suddenly"

"shall not escape..." But you ...:

- We'll be ready personally – difference in our nature (5:4-8)

We're not in the dark,

so we shouldn't be surprised

Since we're not night people, we shouldn't sleep or get drunk

Since we're day people, we should be sober & ready for battle

Unsaved go about life, oblivious to danger–lulled to sleep; living it up!–living for pleasure

By contrast we live expectantly –ready for His coming–4:13-18

Breastplate = body shield that protects our heart–faith and love.

Helmet = protects our head–confidence of salvation

We should be sober.

Our hearts should be shielded by faith & love.

Our heads should be protected by confidence of salvation

Day of the Lord doesn't bring wrath for God's children 5:9-10

"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him."

Day of the Lord = day of wrath.

God's wrath is not designed for those who walk in light.

God's wrath is designed for those who walk in darkness

God's wrath is for one kind of people; we're different kind of people.

Rev. 3:10: God will "**keep us from the HOUR** of trial that is coming on the whole world."

God has not designated us as the objects of judgment.

God has designated us as objects of salvation–to live together with Him.

Result of the message 5:11

"Therefore encourage 1 another & build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

We should continue to encourage one another.

We should continue to build up one another

Warning to unbelievers:

You may not see it coming!

Satan wants to lull you to sleep.

to focus on momentary pleasures

World system can't guarantee peace and safety!

Commentary–1997–*before 9/11*–tried to convince readers that we shouldn't put our confidence in gov't. or sophisticated security systems.

WTC had the best, sophisticated security systems–couldn't provide safety!

Don't be lulled to sleep!

Our only sure hope is Christ!

Are YOU trusting Him?

Watch out!

–there's a storm coming

–*Are you ready?*

Word to believers: Be alert!

Are you ready for His coming?

**Living as people of the day,
in the midst of people of the night.**

v. 6–“Let us not be like others!”

“Let us not be like night people.”

“Let us be alert and sober.”

Self-controlled

Demonstrate faith, love, and hope.

“Let us encourage one another

–to become all God wants us to be!”

“Let us build up one another”

We aren't night people.

We aren't destined for wrath.

We should live like day people!

Is OUR light shining in the dark,

–among people of darkness around us?