

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

The Day of the Lord

1

Introduction

History is filled with wars and turmoil. From the world's perspective, it is a parade of never-ending events that seem to wander aimlessly. Man struggles to find meaning and purpose in this chaos, with regard to history, society, and as individuals. People are desperate to escape the succession of war and natural disasters and place their trust in men who only continue the events they are attempting to escape. The world has become disillusioned. Is there any real purpose to history and our existence or is it just a wild rollercoaster ride that leads to nowhere?

2

Introduction

The Thessalonians struggled with these same questions. Paul is going to remind them that there is a different perspective. There is a Holy Sovereign God who rules the events of human history. He gives man freedom to make choices which reveals man's sinfulness and need for deliverance. However, God is directing human history to His ends and purpose.

Jesus is the central purpose of redemptive history. The Old Testament looked for His coming to deliver us from the consequences of our sin and rebellion. The New Testament expounds on His death, resurrection, and second coming.

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Introduction

As history continues to unfold the eternally planned purposes of God, one event looms large on the horizon – the Day of the Lord. That event will mark the end of man's day, as God acts in judgment to take back direct control of the earth from those who presently rule it – both human and demonic. It will be an unprecedented time of cataclysmic judgment on all unrepentant sinners.

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1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

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The Timing of The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:1

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

Paul, in the previous section answered the Thessalonians questions about those who died before the return of Christ. Now he turns to address their concerns about the “Day of the Lord.”

Paul begins this section with “But concerning...”. Paul frequently uses this phrase to signal a change in topic. This is important. In his discussion of end-time events, Paul is turning from the Rapture to a new subject, “the Day of the Lord.”

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The Timing of The Day of the Lord

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But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

The phrase **the times** (*chronos*) **and the seasons** (*kairos*) refers in a general sense to the end times. Though the two words may be used here in an overlapping sense, there is a subtle difference in meaning between them. *Chronos* refers to chronological time, to clock time or calendar time. *Kairos*, on the other hand, views time in terms of events, eras, or seasons, such as “the times of the Gentiles.” Taken together, the two terms suggest that the Thessalonians were curious about the timing of the end-time events.

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The Timing of The Day of the Lord

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That both nouns are plural indicates that many different time periods and events (e.g., the Rapture, the rise of Antichrist, the salvation of Israel, the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments, the Second Coming, the battle of Armageddon, the sheep and goat judgment, the binding of Satan, the millennial kingdom, the loosing of Satan and subsequent worldwide rebellion at the end of the Millennium, the Great White Throne judgment, and the new heavens and the new earth) make up the end times.

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The Timing of The Day of the Lord

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It appears that the Thessalonians wanted to know the time that these events would take place. Paul replies, “you have no need that I should write to you.” Jesus gave a similar answer to the disciples when they asked. Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know times or seasons” (Acts 1:6-7). Jesus wants us to be prepared for His return at any time.

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The Coming of The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3a

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!”

What the Thessalonians already knew perfectly was that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. That is that it will come suddenly, unexpectedly, unwelcomed, and harmfully. It will be a terrifying shock to those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. The term “perfectly” describes careful, accurate, painstaking research. The Thessalonians knew for certain that the Day of the Lord will arrive unexpectedly. Obviously, then, the time of its arrival will not be revealed; no sane thief announces in advance what time of the night he plans to rob someone.

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The Coming of The Day of the Lord

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The metaphor of a thief coming is never used to refer to the Rapture of the church. It describes the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period, and the judgment at the end of the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth (2 Peter 3:10).

A **thief** coming is not a hopeful, joyful event of deliverance, but an unexpected calamity.

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"The day of the Lord" refers to the Lord's dealings with unbelievers. John Walvoord puts it in simple and striking words:

"The Day of the Lord is a period of time in which God will deal with wicked men directly and dramatically in fearful judgment. Today a man may be a blasphemer of God, an atheist, can denounce God and teach bad doctrine. Seemingly God does nothing about it. But the day designated in Scripture as 'the day of the Lord' is coming when God will punish human sin, and He will deal in wrath and in judgment with a Christ-rejecting world. One thing we are sure of, that God in His own way will bring every soul into judgment."

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The Coming of The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3a

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The world who have rejected Christ will place their faith and trust in a human leader and system. The "antichrist" will claim to be the Messiah and will work signs and wonders but is empowered by Satan. In a world of turmoil, war, terrorism, and other chaos, you can understand why people would turn to one who promises "**peace and safety**." As believers, we know that the antichrist is a man of sin and unable to fully deliver on his promises.

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The Character of The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:3b

then **sudden destruction** comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.

The Greek word translated "**destruction**" does not refer to annihilation, but separation from God (cf. 2 Thess. 1:9). It does not mean the destruction of being, but of well-being (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9); not the end of existence, but the destruction of the purpose for existence. During the tribulation, God will pour out His wrath upon the earth destroying the plans of men. God will accomplish the final **destruction** of unbelievers by casting them into the eternal torment of hell.

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The Character of The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:3b

then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.

By using the term “them” (a reference to unbelievers), Paul reassured the Thessalonians that they will not face **destruction**.

The Thessalonians will not experience the Day of the Lord but will be raptured before it begins. The Day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly on unbelievers. They failed to respond to the many precursors that should have warned them of its imminent arrival, just as labor pains coming upon a pregnant woman warn her that the birth of her child is imminent. Once started labor does not stop!

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The Completeness of The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:3c

And they shall not escape.

Those who do not accept God’s grace and forgiveness through the finished work of Jesus Christ will face the Day of the Lord and they shall not escape divine judgment. This judgment will bring destruction on every unbeliever alive when it comes.

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So What ...

As believers, we should find comfort knowing that we will be raptured before the coming of the “Day of the Lord” and will not experience God’s judgment.

Knowing that this event is coming and is unstoppable should motivate us to rise up, live the holy lives God is calling us to, and evangelize the lost.

The tragic reality is that those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ will experience God’s temporal and eternal wrath. In the words of the writer of Hebrews, “How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb. 2:3).