

Week 7

Day 1

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** below three times and then follow the instructions:

About the times and the seasons: Brothers and sisters, you do not need anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. When they say, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the dark, for this day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness. So then, let us not sleep, like the rest, but let us stay awake and be self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled and put on the armor of faith and love, and a helmet of the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.

1. Circle any words that seem important to you in this passage.
2. Put squares around the verbs (action words) in this passage.
3. Write down three questions that you have after reading this passage:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
4. What encourages you from this passage?
5. What challenges you from this passage?
6. What would you say is the main idea of this passage?
7. Choose a verse or group of verses that you will memorize this week. Write that verse or those verses below:

Day 2

In the first church I pastored, I decided to teach my first Sunday night discipleship class on issues surrounding the end times and our eternal destiny. Looking back, that might not have been the smartest decision for a 25 year old who was in his first pastorate at a church that was 150 years old. In about the fourth week of the class, I developed an illness that would not allow me to teach on that Sunday night.

My associate pastor stepped in at the last minute to teach the class. As he began the class, he decided to start with a question to get discussion flowing. He asked them, "So, what have you learned in the first few weeks of the class?" As the story is told to me, one of the senior adult ladies in the church raised her hand and said, "We have learned that our pastor does not know a lot of definitive answers about the end times."

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:11**.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul is continuing to teach the church at Thessalonica about the end times. In this particular section, he refers to the second coming of Jesus as the "day of the Lord." That phrase is a prevalent one in the Bible. Particularly in the Old Testament, many prophets describe a coming day of the Lord.

1. How would you define the "day of the Lord"?

2. Is the "day of the Lord" good or bad?

Read the following passages from the Old Testament:

Amos 5:18-20

Ezekiel 30:2-4

Isaiah 13:6-10

Jeremiah 46:10

Zephaniah 1:14-16

Joel 1:13-16, 2:1-3, and 2:12-14

“The day of the Lord” is an expression used throughout Scripture that refers to God’s judgment and the defeat of his adversaries, as well as the salvation of his people. To the people of the Old Testament, it meant the day when Yahweh would intervene to put Israel at the head of the nations, regardless of Israel’s faithfulness to him. Prophets, conscious of the sins of other nations as well as of Israel, declare that the Day will come on individual nations as a punishment for their brutalities. The day of the Lord is thus the occasion when Yahweh actively intervenes to punish sin that has come to a climax.

The day of the Lord can be an event in the Old Testament like the judgment of Babylon or the judgment of Egypt. But we also know from our passage in [1 Thessalonians 5](#) that the day of the Lord is a day of great judgment coming on the whole world. Judgments in history foreshadow future judgments. That judgment on Egypt, as bad as it is, is a foreshadowing of the judgment God will bring on the great day of the Lord when he judges the whole world. Each historical event is a foreshadowing of what is to come.

3. How does an understanding of the biblical concept of the day of the Lord help you understand 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 better?

4. Write down one truth you learned today.

Day 3

On New Year's Eve, 999 A.D., Pope Sylvester celebrated what he and many thought would be the last midnight mass in history. Believing that based on Revelation 20:7-8, the end of the world would occur when Satan was unleashed one thousand years after Christ's birth, they prepared for the final hour. One author, sets the scene this way,

This was the final hour, the beginning of the day of wrath, the "nightfall of the universe," that fateful and dreaded eve of the turn of the millennium, when the earth would dissolve into ashes. Outside, anxious crowds flooded the streets. All across Europe people had donated land, and goods to the poor in acts of contrition. Debts had been canceled, infidelities confessed, wrongdoings forgiven. Many had freed animals and slaves to prepare for Final Judgment. Beggars had been fed, prisoners released, and churches besieged by crowds seeking absolution.

*One New Year's Eve, as the fatal hour was about to strike, Pop Sylvester II raised his hands skyward. The crowd - many dressed in sackcloth and ashes - remained transfixed, scarcely daring to breathe. As one account has it, the giant clock ticking away the last minutes of the first millennium suddenly stopped. Not a few died from fright, giving up their ghosts then and there. But after an awful moment that seemed like eternity suspended, the clock resumed its countdown. Only the ominous tick, tock and the voice of the pope broke the deadly silence . . . and at precisely midnight the bells atop the great tower of St. Peter's began to peal wildly. (Russell Chandler as quoted in *Doomsday Delusions* by C. Marvin Pate and Calvin B. Haines, Jr.)*

1. Why do you think people are so fascinated by setting an hour and date for the return of Jesus?

2. Is there any harm in making predictions about the hour and date of the return of Jesus? Why or why not?

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**.

3. What does Paul say about times and seasons of Christ's coming?

4. Have you ever had anything stolen from you? How would you describe that experience?

5. Why do you think Paul (and Jesus) picked that particular picture to describe Jesus' return?

Read **Matthew 24:36-39** and **Luke 21:34-35**.

6. Why do you think God has chosen not to give us the exact timing of Jesus' return?

7. Write down one truth that you learned today.

Day 4

Let's imagine for a moment that quarantine has been lifted and we are now free to resume life without worry. You have been gifted a free trip with your entire family to one of two destinations and the choice is yours. The first is a beach getaway to Florida in the middle of summer where you will be staying in a condo overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. The second is a trip to Maine in the late Fall where you will stay in a cabin overlooking at lake.

1. Which trip would you choose? Why?

2. How would you pack differently for each trip?

3. How would your preparation for each trip be different?

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**.

4. How does Paul suggest we live in light of not knowing exactly when Christ will return?

Read **Matthew 25:1-13** and **Luke 12:35-46**.

5. How does Jesus' teaching in these two passages inform and relate to Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 5?

In essence, Paul and Jesus both tell believers to be prepared. We do not know when exactly Jesus will return, but we must live as if he is coming at any moment. Being prepared is defined as living as children of the day even when the day of the Lord is unpredictable. Life in the light of Christ's return is not some mystical experience. Rather, it reveals itself in concrete, everyday actions as empowered by the Spirit. In this letter alone, "readiness" includes the following: deeds of love, patience, peace, gentleness, mutual encouragement, hard work, behaving righteously with regard to alcohol use and sexual behavior, treating other believers properly, evangelism, thanksgiving, and prayer.

Paul contrasts being prepared and alert with living in a state of sleeping. And if preparedness and vigilance can take many forms, so can its opposite, sleepiness. From 1 Thessalonians alone we might mention these: drunkenness, blocking the spread of the gospel, not actively participating in the spread of the gospel, sins of speech, a poor work ethic, lack of sexual self-control, taking advantage of others, taking God's truth lightly, being a troublemaker, being impatient, or being vengeful.

God calls all of us to be prepared and watchful - we are to live in hopeful anticipation of Jesus' return.

6. What would being watchful look like in your life?

7. Write down one truth you learned today.

Day 5

1. How do you feel about Jesus' return? What emotions do you feel when you think of His second coming?

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**.

2. How does Paul describe how believers should feel about Jesus' return?

For believers, the Day of the Lord is a cause of anticipation, not apprehension. At least some of the Thessalonians appear to have felt a degree of apprehension about the return of Jesus. There may be those today who share this sense of apprehension regarding Jesus' return, perhaps because they associate it primarily with wrath, destruction, and judgment. Paul goes out of his way, however, to emphasize that it really ought to be a cause of anticipation. He gives at least three reasons for this anticipation:

(1) It means that as believers we will be with the Lord forever (a point Paul makes twice in both 4:17 and 5:10). That is, the coming of Jesus will mean a transition to an even higher level of fellowship and life together with our risen Lord.

(2) Even though wrath will be one aspect of the return of Jesus, God has destined us for salvation rather than wrath (5:9), which is the very thing from which Jesus will deliver us (1:10).

(3) As Paul will say in a later letter, nothing—not even death or God’s wrath—can “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39).

Read **Romans 8:31-39**.

3. Which of Paul’s three reasons is most comforting to you? Why?

Just as Paul told the Thessalonians, we should not become so fascinated by or apprehensive about the future return of Jesus that we fail to be his ministers in the present. Thessalonian concerns about the fate of those who died before Christ’s return and questions about its timing did not, for Paul, override the need to practice *philadelphia*, “love for brother and sister”; on the contrary, they provided concrete occasions for its exercise. So too it is today: A proper understanding and awareness of the return of Jesus will energize us in the present, as we comfort and encourage one another in the midst of difficult circumstances, confident in the hope of a salvation grounded in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

4. Summarize Paul’s teaching to Thessalonians on the second coming of Christ.

5. How is Paul’s teaching similar from teaching that you have heard before? How is Paul’s teaching different?

6. Write down one truth you learned today.