

First Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul is answering the third question from the Thessalonians in these verses:

Question #1 – First Thessalonians 4:9; Question #2 – First Thessalonians 4:13; Question #3 – First Thessalonians 5:1, “Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you.”

Outline:

1. 5:1-3 – The Day of the Lord
2. 5:4-8a – Watchfulness until the Day of the Lord
3. 5:8b-10 – The Christian experience in the meantime as we wait for the Day of the Lord
4. 5:11 – Conclusion to 5:1-11 and 4:13-18.

5:1 – “Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,”

1. Paul is telling them to remember or recall what he had taught: “times and seasons”; “the day of the Lord”; Sudden coming unknown “like a thief in the night”; People will be saying “Peace and safety,” but destruction will come suddenly; Destruction will come after clear warning signs like birth comes after labor pains; Believers who know the truth will not be taken by surprise any more than a pregnant women is surprised at birth; Know the truth and live in righteousness as you wait in hope because this day means deliverance for believers, not judgment.
2. “...times and dates...” – “*chronoi*” and “*kairoi*” - Matthew 24:3; Acts 1:7; 3:20-21; Daniel 2:21; 7:12; 1 Peter 1:10-11 – These two words worked together in Paul’s day (50 AD) as a pair of synonyms referring to the eschatological events and the divine judgment that occurs at the end.

5:2 – “for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”

1. “...for you know very well...” – “*autoi gar akribos iodate*” means “for you yourself know perfectly well” and “you are rightly informed.”
 - a. The Greek word *akribos* (“very well”, “accurately”, “certainly”) is used along with *oidate* (“you know”).
 - b. They had been reminded at least ten times of what they had already been taught by Paul
2. “...that the day of the Lord...” – “*oti hemera kuriou*”
 - a. The “Day of the Lord” is an Old Testament concept:
 - i. Isaiah 13:6 and 13:9 – “Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty... See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.
 - ii. Joel 1:15 – “Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.
 - iii. Joel 2:1, - “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand—
 - iv. Joel 2:11, - “The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?”
 - v. Joel 2:31 – “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”
 - vi. Joel 3:14 – “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.
 - vii. Amos 5:18 – “Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light.”
 - viii. Amos 5:20 – “Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light— pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?”
 - ix. Zephaniah 1:7 – “Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited.
 - x. Zephaniah 1:14 – “The great day of the Lord is near—near and coming quickly. The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.
 - xi. Malachi 4:5 – “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.”
 - b. Jesus was recognized and confessed to be “Lord” or *kurios* which makes “The Day of the Lord” in the New Testament as:
 - i. “The Day of Christ”
 1. Philippians 1:10 – “so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”
 2. Philippians 2:16 – “as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.”
 - ii. “The Day of Jesus Christ”
 1. Philippians 1:6 – “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
 - iii. “The Day of our Lord Jesus”

1. 2 Corinthians 1:14 – “as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
- iv. “The Day of our Lord Jesus Christ”
 1. 1 Corinthians 1:8 – “He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- v. “The Day of the Lord” –
 1. 2 Thessalonians 2:2 – “not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.”
 2. 1 Corinthians 5:5 – “hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.”
 3. 2 Peter 3:10 – “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”
- vi. “The Day”
 1. 1 Thessalonians 5:4 – “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.”
 2. Romans 13:12 – “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”
 3. 1 Corinthians 3:13 – “their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work.”
 4. Hebrews 10:25 – “not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- vii. “That Day” in 2 Thessalonians 1:10, “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.”
- viii. “The Great Day” in Jude 6, “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”
- ix. “The Last Day” in John 6:39, “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”
- x. “a day” in Acts 17:31, “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”
- c. “The Day of the Lord” is:
 - i. More than a 24 hour period
 - ii. It is an eschatological event
 - iii. It is a day of judgment on the earth
 - iv. It is a time of judgment on God’s enemies
 - v. It is a day of salvation for believers
 1. Joel 2:23-32
 2. Joel 3:18
 3. Obadiah 15-21
 4. Zech. 14:1-21
 5. The double meaning (or, two sided sword) of the Day of the Lord that brings both judgment on the world and deliverance for the believers is repeated in Paul’s writings in 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10 –
“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.”
 - vi. Impossible to know when it will occur:
 1. Matthew 24:36
 2. Mark 13:32-37
 3. Acts 1:7
 - vii. Always the believer is told to be ready for this day by being alert and living righteously:
 1. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6
 2. 2 Peter 3:10-11
 3. Matthew 23:43-44
 4. Luke 12:39-40
 5. Revelation 3:3
 6. Revelation 16:15
3. “...will come like a thief in the night.” – “*os kleptes en nukti outos erchetai*”
 - a. The image of a thief in the night captures the both the ideas of:
 - i. Unexpectedness of that Day

- ii. The threat of loss, destruction and damage of that Day
- b. Jesus used the figure of the thief in the night concerning the coming of the Son of Man in:
 - i. Matthew 24:(39)42-45 – “That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.....you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”
 - ii. Luke 12:39-40 – “...because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”
 - iii. Luke 21:34-36 – “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down...and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap...”
 - iv. Luke 17:24-32 – “For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lighting...as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man...it was the same in the days of Lot...it will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed...”
- c. Thief in the night is also used in:
 - i. 2 Peter 3:10
 - ii. Revelation 3:3 – “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if (*3^d class condition, a possibility*) you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”
 - iii. Revelation 16:15 – “Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

5:3 – “While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

1. The idea of “Peace and Safety” could come one of two places:
 - a. The prophets
 - i. Jeremiah 6:14 – “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”
 - ii. Jeremiah 8:10-11 – “From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”
 - b. Roman Empire and the contemporary political slogan of 50 AD: ***Pax et securitas***, or “peace and safety”. This slogan was printed on coins, monuments and other propaganda distributed among the people in the lands conquered by the Romans.

5:4 – “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

5:5 – “You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

1. “Son’s of light”
 - a. First appears in Luke 16:8, “For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.”
 - b. John 12:36, “Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.”
 - c. Ephesians 5:8, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.”
 - d. Frequently found in Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran community who called themselves “son’s of light” and had withdrawn themselves from society in anticipation with an eschatological conflict with the “sons of darkness”
 - e. The focus here is on living in agreement with the Light as we wait in the darkness for the Light to be revealed. In other words, we are to live righteously until the Day of the Lord comes.
 - f. By living as sons of light, or living godly lives, we will be ready for this day that will come like a thief.

5:6 – “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.

1. Living “awake” means to be living in righteousness and not in sin.
2. Staying awake:
 - a. Mark 13:35, 37 – “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn... What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”
 - b. Rev. 16:15 – “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”
3. Be sober
 - a. 1 Peter 5:8 – “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour..”

5:7 – “For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

1. Night, darkness, sleep, wickedness, sinful behavior are all associated and placed in contrast to “sons of Light” and staying awake!

5:8 – “But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

5:9 – “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:10 – “He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

5:11 – “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.