

Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Series*) for **July 4, 2010**, is from **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the Bible Lesson Commentary. These are my preliminary verse by verse study notes before writing my Bible Lesson for *The Oklahoman* newspaper. They may help you in your class preparation and discussion. I do encourage you to write your own verse by verse notes and questions before reading the notes and questions below.

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you.

Paul carefully wrote about “times and seasons,” not “hours and days.” Throughout the last 200 years or so in the United States, various Bible teachers and leaders have predicted specific “days” or “years” as the time for the coming “day of the Lord,” and have been wrong. Here Paul taught, and the Bible does so in other places, that we can know the “seasons” or the condition of the “times” in which the Lord is most likely to return. The Bible describes what these “seasons” and “times” will look like so we can prepare ourselves for the forthcoming changes.

2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

The “day of the Lord” will come totally unexpectedly; that is, the actual “day” of His coming. Just as a thief does not, usually, tell his victim the day and hour of his coming to steal, lest the victim be prepared to stop him from stealing; the Bible does not tell us exactly when Jesus will return. If the Bible told us “the day” of the Lord’s return, many people would postpone preparing for the Lord’s coming until right before He came. They would ignore the Lord and His will up until the day before “the day;” trusting they could fool the Lord about the actual state of their heart.

3 When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!

Paul wrote about those of this world who think they have achieved or will achieve world peace and security by their own plans and programs. Perhaps they think their worldly schemes of one world government will bring peace and security, at least to them, when in actuality God alone can and will someday give us peace and security on His terms. We will never experience this until after “the day of the Lord.” Paul wrote that the coming destruction would be sudden, unexpected, certain, and there will be no escape for those who do not trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation.

4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief;

The day of destruction should not surprise Christians and those who study the Scriptures, for we should recognize the season in which we are living by what is taking place around us. From what we read, see, and hear in the news today, it does appear that we are in the season for “the day of the Lord” to come. So, we should not be surprised if destruction comes suddenly. We need to prepare ourselves everyday for “the day of the Lord.”

5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

As believers in and followers of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, we are children of light and children of the day (or children of honesty and truth). We should have no evil deeds that we are practicing, deeds that we want to practice and hide in the dark because we know they are wrong. Today, it seems some children of the night (or children of lies and falsehood) are practicing evil openly, without caring, for all to see.

6 So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober;

If we quit growing spiritually and in wisdom and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Scriptures, we will be lulled into sleep by the world, by worldly amusements, or worldly focus and success. Some who claim to be Christians are indeed turning their backs on the obedience that Jesus Christ requires of us, preferring worldly achievements and pleasures. Paul warned of the consequences of falling asleep and missing the day of the Lord, and Jesus gave the same warning, especially in some of His parables.

7 for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.

Night used to be the time when people did what they knew to be wrong (from what the Bible taught was wrong), and from what their conscience and society taught was wrong. They wanted to hide their evil so they would appear to others as “good” during the day. Now, it seems that some think they can live lawlessly, and whether it is day or night it does not matter if anyone sees, and they think they will be protected by others similar to themselves if anyone complains about their evil behavior.

8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Believers and followers of Jesus Christ “belong to the day,” to the light, to the truth. They live their lives openly and honestly according to the truth, because

they love the Lord Jesus and what He taught and how He lived. They remain sober, instead of dulling their senses and judgment by using drugs and alcohol. The breastplate that protects their heart [and their choices] from manipulation is faith [trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior] and love [for God and others]. The helmet of hope protects their mind [thinking and reasoning ability] by maintaining the expectation of salvation, which will be made possible by Jesus Christ. That is one reason we must keep feeding our minds on the word of God, the Bible.

9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Those who trust in Jesus for salvation receive the Holy Spirit and the power to live according to Jesus' commandments. Moreover, Jesus gave His life so God could justly and mercifully forgive us, because the Father and the Son love us. Therefore, true followers of Jesus Christ will not suffer the "wrath" or "judgment" of God, but obtain salvation for eternity.

10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

Whether we live in this world or die and go to heaven, we who are the children of light live with Jesus, the Lord of all creation. We may suffer with others in this world of sin. We may be persecuted by the children of darkness on this world. But we will not suffer God's just judgment, because Jesus died for us and rose again to be with us in every situation, both before and after "the day of the Lord."

11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Paul wrote his letter to benefit his readers – to encourage them to live to please God because they love God and to prepare them for the days ahead in the world before "the day of the Lord." The days ahead will be difficult, but as the children of light we live each day in the loving and protecting arms of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. In Christ alone do we find true and lasting peace and security.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. What evidences, if any, do we have that we are living in "the times and the seasons" of "the day of the Lord"?
2. Why do you think Paul wrote about the uncertainty of the actual day of the Lord's coming and compared that to the coming of a thief? Can you think of other analogies that could be used today? What other events catch people by surprise that could be compared to a coming day of destruction?

3. What in the world today tempts some, who think they are Christians, to sleep instead of keeping awake and sober?

4. In what ways can Christians be certain they are prepared for “the day of the Lord”?

5. In these days, how can we “encourage one another and build up each other”? Why is this such an important thing for us to do within our church families? Think of one person you would like to encourage, pray for them, and then do or say something to encourage them and build them up.

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