

Day 62, 1 Thessalonians 5

by David Servant

David Servant discusses the significance of 'the day of the Lord' and the return of Jesus, emphasizing the responsibilities of believers and church leaders in preparation for His coming.

Scripture: Zephaniah 1:14, Matthew 24:29, Matthew 24:32, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-23

Topics: "End Times", "Sanctification"

Description

David Servant preaches about the final day of cataclysmic wrath and terrible judgment known as 'the day of the Lord,' emphasizing the return of Jesus, the resurrection of deceased believers, the rapture of living saints, and God's judgment on the world. He refutes the belief in Jesus returning twice, highlighting that Christ's followers are not destined for God's wrath but may face persecution. Servant discusses the simplicity of leadership in the early church, where pastors focused on discipling a few individuals, and emphasizes the importance of examining prophecies carefully and striving for entire sanctification to be ready for Jesus' return.

Transcript

In today's chapter, Paul writes of "the day of the Lord," a phrase that is found four other times in the New Testament and fourteen times in the Old. It always refers to a final day, one of cataclysmic wrath and terrible judgment, when God will punish the world for its evil (see Zeph. 1:14-18; 2 Pet. 3:10). On that day, Scripture repeatedly tells us that the sun and moon will turn dark and stars will fall from the sky (see Is. 13:6-11; Joel 2:1-11, 31; 3:14-16; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:12-17). That is the day Jesus will return, as He told His disciples during His Olivet Discourse:

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky....And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other (Matt. 24:29-31).

As you will recall when we originally read the Olivet Discourse, Jesus left His disciples with the clear impression that they could be alive to see that monumental day. They, however, would not suffer God's wrath, but could expect to be gathered in the sky (as we just read).

Although it is popular today to believe that Jesus will return twice, first to rapture believers, and then, seven years later, to pour His wrath out on the earth, it isn't easy to find support for such a view in Scripture. Keep in mind that there were no chapter divisions in Paul's original letter to the Thessalonians. At the end of chapter four and the beginning of chapter five, Paul was clearly writing of Jesus' return, the resurrection of deceased believers, the rapture of the saints who are alive at His coming, and God's great judgment on the world (4:14 - 5:3), referring to that time as "the day of the Lord"(5:2). It is so obvious only a theologian could miss it! Jesus is not returning twice in the course of seven years! Just as He taught and Paul affirmed, He's coming back once.

From the Olivet Discourse, Paul borrowed Jesus' "thief in the night" analogy (Matt. 24:32-44). Paul similarly assured his readers that Jesus' coming would be a surprise only to those in darkness. Destruction "will come upon them" (5:3), but "God has not destined us for wrath" (5:9). This is not to say, however, that Christ's followers are not destined for persecution, which, according to Jesus, will grow quite severe just prior to His return.

Note that the Thessalonian church, although just a few months old, had leaders who were in charge and gave instruction (5:12-13). Obviously, none possessed years of seminary or Bible College training. I suspect they were born-again Jews who naturally would have had more biblical knowledge than Gentile believers. In any case, the biblical role of a pastor/overseer/elder is not nearly as complex as it has become in the modern church. In the New Testament, such men were responsible for discipling a few people who could all fit into one house, and obedience to Christ's commandments was the simple goal. Note, also, that the burden of discipling was not solely the leaders'. Rather, it was everyone's responsibility to "admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, [and] help the weak" (5:14).

How easy it is to "despise prophetic utterances" (5:20) when so many modern prophecies are products of the flesh rather than the Spirit. Nevertheless, we would do well to "examine everything carefully" and then "hold fast to that which is good" (5:21). I would encourage suspicion of any prophecy that doesn't sound like Scripture, that caters to selfishness, or that leads one segment of Christ's followers to think they are special.

What should be the church's goal? Everyone's entire sanctification through God's help, so we're all ready for Jesus' return (5:23).

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