

## THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES: DIRECTION FOR THE LAST DAYS

### VI. The Post-Rapture Start Of The "Day Of The Lord"

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Paul's epistles to the believers at Thessalonica addressed new converts out of raw paganism who faced persecution and false teaching, a recipe for spiritual defeat if they failed to get adequate spiritual insight.
- B. These needs are like what many believers face in today's world, so we view 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 that explains what prophetically begins to occur after the rapture of all true believers in Christ, the true Church:

#### II. The Post-Rapture Start Of The "Day Of The Lord," 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

- A. After Paul had addressed his readers' concern that fellow deceased Christians had forever physically perished that they might not experience Christ's predicted Kingdom, what Paul addressed by revealing the truth about the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), he decided to edify his readers even **further!**
- B. To that end, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Paul repeated an instruction he had given his readers when he was with them, namely, that the rapture would occur **not only before** Christ's **Kingdom**, **but** that it would occur **also before** the **START** of the "Day of the Lord," that is, **before** the **START** of the **Great Tribulation Period**:
  - 1. The subject Paul introduced in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 differs from what he had just written on the rapture of the Church, for 1 Thessalonians 4:13 states the rapture was new truth to the readers where Paul claimed that his readers had previously been taught about the information he mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2a.
  - 2. As such, this **familiar** information was Paul's teaching on "the day of the Lord," a "time referred to by many Old Testament prophets" that deals with end-time events starting with the Great Tribulation Period and ending with the 2 Peter 3:10-13 destruction of the present universe and God's creation of a new one. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 705; J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, 1972, p. 229-231)
  - 3. Thus, the Great Tribulation Period that begins with the start of this "day of the Lord" end-time era will come upon the earth's inhabitants unexpectedly: when they speak of peace and safety, they will face sudden destruction like a woman who goes into labor, and no one will escape this trouble, 1 Thess. 5:2b-3.
  - 4. However, Paul clarified that his believing Christian readers were not in spiritual darkness that that "day [of the Lord]" should overtake them like a thief, for they were children of light, children of the spiritual daytime, not of the spiritual nighttime or of the spiritual darkness, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5. Being of the spiritual light, they would already be in heaven via the rapture of the Church by the time the "day of the Lord" overtakes an unsuspecting world of spiritual darkness at the start of the Great Tribulation Period.
  - 5. Paul thus urged his readers to align their walk with their destiny, that they not "sleep" (*katheudo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 389), with "sleep" here referring to "spiritual lethargy" (Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 706) like the world, but "be alert and self-controlled," 1 Thessalonians 5:6 NIV.
  - 6. Unsaved people in the world are neither spiritually awake nor alert to spiritual truths but are spiritually asleep and controlled by forces outside themselves like a drunk is controlled by wine, Ibid.; 1 Thess. 5:7.
  - 7. Paul's readers were then admonished as those who are of the spiritual daytime to be self-controlled, putting on the figurative breastplate of faith toward God and love for one another, and for a figurative helmet the hope of deliverance from the Great Tribulation Period through the rapture, 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Ibid.
  - 8. Explaining that hope in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul added that God has not appointed us believers in Christ to face His wrath of the Great Tribulation [or His wrath in hell for that matter], but to obtain the **physical** "salvation" of God's physical deliverance of all true believers of the Church in the **pretribulation** rapture.
  - 9. Significantly, Paul added that Christ died for us that whether we believers "wake" or "sleep," we should live together with Him [at the rapture], 1 Thessalonians 5:10. Paul did **not** here refer to "living" and "dead" believers, for the Greek words for "awake" and "sleep" here are the same as those used in verse 6 where they clearly refer to spiritual alertness and lethargy. (Ibid., p. 707) In other words, whether a true believer in Christ is living in sin or righteously at the rapture, God will graciously include him in the rapture, a truth that counters the "partial rapture" belief that God takes only godly believers to heaven!
  - 10. Paul then urged his readers to comfort and edify one another with these words, 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

**Lesson:** *By grace, God will rapture every believer before the start of the Great Tribulation, so every believer should live righteously in alignment with this blessed destiny and not function like the lost world in its spiritual darkness.*

**Application:** *May we hope for the pretribulation rapture and live righteous lives in anticipation of that great hope.*