**1 Thessalonians 5:1-2**

slide 1

**What is The Day of the Lord?**

***1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.***

* In my message last week we examined the apostle Paul’s instruction regarding the Lord’s promised coming for His bride . . . the church . . . in fulfillment of His promise in John 14:3 that even as **He was going away to prepare a place for the church, He promised that He will come again to receive us to Himself.**
* This morning we move on to the second half of Paul’s eschatological teaching in this letter. Where the first part was in regard to the **rapture of the church**, this second section is in regard to the subject of **the day of the Lord**.
* I know that most of you have heard and know something about **the day of the Lord**. But I am confident that you will all learn things this morning regarding **the day of the Lord** that you did not know.
  + So, more so than most of my messages, this message is more teaching than preaching . . . there are some significant eschatological and doctrinal things that I wish you to learn and understand.

**“You already know these things”**

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***1 Thessalonians 5:1— Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.***

* As we begin chapter 5 of this letter, Paul begins with an interesting statement. Back in 4:13 Paul began his instruction regarding ***the dead in Christ*** and **the rapture of the church** with the statement, ***we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren***.
  + In other words, there was something they did not know which Paul was about to teach them.
* But here in 5:1 Paul begins by saying, ***now as to the times and epochs, brethren you have not need of anything to be written to you***.
  + In other word, **you already know the things I am about to write.**
* Specifically, in v. 1 Paul states that the Thessalonians had already been taught regarding ***the times and the epochs***.
* Again, as so often happens in a translation, the words chosen by the translators are often not the words that we would choose.
  + For example, when was the last time you used . . . or heard . . . the word ***epoch*** in a conversation? I know that I’ve never used it or heard it. So, isn’t there a better word to use than ***epoch***? I think there is.
* Here in v. 1 when Paul refers to ***the times and the epochs***, the two Greek words are *chronos*, meaning “time” . . . and *kairos*, meaning “a portion of time” or “events that occur within a specific period or season of time.”
  + In the New International Version the word *kairos* is translated ***dates***.
  + Here in v. 1 Paul is referring to ***time*** on a grand scale and **events that occur within segments of time**, known as **eras** or **ages**.
  + For example, with the many inventions of the early 20th century, that **era** is referred to by historians as the “dawn of the industrial age.”
  + The era of the 1930s is best known as . . . “the great depression.”
  + The era of the 1960s and early 1970s are . . . the “age of the hippies and Vietnam war protests.”
  + Each of these time periods is a *kairos* . . . a specific period or season of time.
* So, here in v. 1 Paul is saying that **in regard to *times and the* events that occur at various eras of time*, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you***.
  + The implication of this statement is that, **unlike the subject of the rapture of the church, which they knew little about . . . the subject Paul is about to address is one that he had taught them on.**

**What did they have no need to be taught about?**

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***1 Thessalonians 5:2— For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.***

* And what was the subject that he had already taught them about? The answer is stated on v. 2 . . . ***For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.***
* Here in v. 2 Paul tells us, explicitly, what the Thessalonians already knew ***. . . that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night***.

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**What is *the day of the Lord*?**

* Before we examine the significance of the phrase ***like a thief in the night***, it is important to understand what event Paul is referring to
* Here in v. 2, for the first time in Paul’s teaching, the phrase ***the day of the Lord*** is referred to. What is ***the day of the Lord*?**
* The subject of ***the day of the Lord*** is a subject that is found prominently in the writings of the several prophets of the Old Testament . . . specifically, the writings of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Zephaniah and Obadiah.
* Stated succinctly, ***the day of the Lord*** is **the period of time that begins with** **God pouring out His wrath upon the sinful world.**
  + But the term ***the day of the Lord*** is a very complex and comprehensive period of time.
* The ***day of the Lord*** begins with God’s judgment of the unbelieving world, leading up to the restoration of the nation of Israel.
  + In order to accomplish this restoration of Israel, God uses the **7 years of Tribulation to reestablish His divine order and to evict evil from the earth.**

**What does the Old Testament say about *the day of the Lord?***

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* To help give us a better understanding of the magnitude of God’s wrath that is poured out on the earth during the Tribulation, listened to how God’s prophets describe ***the day of the Lord***. First, the prophet Isaiah reveals in 2 passages . . .

***Isaiah 13:6— Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.***

***Isaiah 13:9— Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it.***

* + Isaiah’s words are frightening. The words ***destruction*** and ***desolation*** are powerful words. But the phrase, ***He will exterminate its sinners from it***, is truly frightening.
* In Ezekiel 30:3 the prophet Ezekiel says

***Ezekiel 30:3— "For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.***

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* The two prophets who have the most to say about ***the day of the Lord*** are Joel and Zephaniah. In Joel we read . . .

***Joel 1:15— Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.***

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***Joel 2:1— . . . Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; surely it is near,***

***Joel 2:11— . . . the day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?***

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***Joel 2:31— "The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood when the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.***

***Joel 3:14— Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.***

* Likewise, the prophet Zephaniah has much to say about ***the day of the Lord***. In Zephaniah 1:7-18 the prophet reveals God’s intentions on the great and terrible day of the Lord. In v. 14-18 we see the degree of wrath and devastation God will inflict . . .

***Zephaniah 1:14-18—14 Near is the great day of the LORD, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; and their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the LORD'S wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.***

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* As you listen to and read these passages you see the picture being painted. **The day of the Lord is the day of God’s great wrath and anger poured out upon the unbelieving world.** As Obadiah 1:15 states . . .

***Obadiah 1:15— "For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.***

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* For millennia God’s wrath has been restrained and stored up against evil, **like a river being held back by a dam.** When the dam finally bursts, the water rushes down the valley and everything in its path is destroyed.
  + **So shall the devastation of mankind when the dam holding back God’s wrath finally bursts.**

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**But “the day of the Lord” is much more than wrath and devastation**

* But for as devastating as these descriptions are, **there is so much more to “the day of the Lord”** as revealed in Scripture.
  + In fact, ***the day of the Lord*** is a complex doctrine. There are several components that I want to walk you through this morning.

**The Broad Sense of *the day of the Lord***

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* To begin with, the Old Testament verses I just read speak only of God’s wrath and judgment that are poured out on the earth. **But for as devastating as the 7 year Tribulation will be on the earth, there is an even longer period of God’s blessing that are part of *the day of the Lord***.
  + Listen to what the prophet Joel reveals in Joel 3:9-18. Notice in v. 9 that Joel describes the first part of ***the day of the Lord*** . . .

***Joel 3:9-18— 9 Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up! 10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a mighty man." 11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones. 12 Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. 13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision* (Armageddon!)*. 15 The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. 16 The LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble.***

* + Then, notice in the middle of v. 16 that the picture shifts from devastation to blessing . . . from war and judgment to peace and tranquility . . .

***But the LORD is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. 17 Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more. 18 And in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim.***

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* + In v. 18, when Joel refers to ***that day***, what ***day*** is he referring to? He’s referring to the same ***day*** he spoke of in v. 14 . . . ***the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision***.
  + But in v. 16b-18 the picture is much different. Instead of war and devastation, we see peace and abundance as God pours out His blessing on the land and those who live in the land.
* Also, notice the change that occurs in the Millennial Kingdom. In Joel 3:10 we see the conditions during the Tribulation is preparation for war . . . ***Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears***. Does that phrase seem familiar? Yes, the terms are familiar! We see the same term in Isaiah 2:4, except that in the Isaiah passage the actions are reversed. **The preparations for war are replaced with preparations for peace.**

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* + Instead of **“beating plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears,” in Isaiah 2:4 we see the opposite happening . . .**

***Isaiah 2:4— . . . they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.***

* **As you read these verses, you have to ask, “what is happening here?”**
  + While we see the nations taking their tools of farming and turning them into weapons with which to make war against God, when God has judged the unbelieving world and implemented His Millennial Kingdom, those same weapons will, once again, be made into tools for farming.
  + And not only are the weapons of war made into tools of peace, but as we read at the end of Isaiah 2:4 . . . ***never again will* the nations *learn war***.
* And, furthermore, when God reestablishes His dominion and evicts Satan from the earth, we see the world transformed into the state in which God first created it. In Isaiah 11:6-8 we see it described . . .

***Isaiah 11:6-8— 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.***

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* + Here in Isaiah 11 we see a description of nature in the Millennial Kingdom, when the creation is restored to its original Edenic state.

**The Narrow Sense of the day of the Lord**

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* So, we learn from the Old Testament prophets that **the day of the Lord begins with God pouring out His wrath on the earth in the Tribulation, but the day of the Lord continues into and through the Millennial Kingdom.** 
  + Doing the math, this makes the broad sense of the day of the Lord at least 1007 years.
* But, in addition to the broad sense of the day of the Lord, **there is also a narrow sense of the day of the Lord. In other words, there is a specific day that is referred to in Scripture as *the day of the Lord***.
  + We see this day described by the prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 14:1-4 . . .

***Zechariah 14:1-4— 1 Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.***

* + What we see described here in Zechariah 14 is **the day when the Lord triumphantly returns to the earth to destroy the armies of the earth and to reestablish His dominion**.
  + We see the New Testament equivalent of this event in Revelation 19:11-19 . . . the day in which the Lord Jesus Christ triumphantly returns to the earth to cast out Satan and all unbelievers and to institute His kingdom . . .

***Revelation 19:11-19— 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.***

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* + Here in Revelation 19 we see the description of the final defeat of the satanically-inspired world armies who have gathered against God.
  + With this final defeat of the world’s armies, Jesus Christ institutes His kingdom on the earth by casting out the unbelievers and admitting believers to live in the Millennial Kingdom.
* So, I’ve explained that there a **broad sense of** ***the day of the Lord*** . . . a period of time of over 1000 years in length.
  + At the same time, there is a **narrow sense of *the day of the Lord*** . . . a specific day, in which Jesus Christ triumphantly returns to the earth to defeat the world’s armies and to cast evil from the earth.

**The Two-Fold Nature of *the day of the Lord***

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* But, in addition to the broad and narrow sense of the day of the Lord, there is also **a two-fold nature of *the day of the Lord***.
  + We see this two-fold nature in **the darkness of God’s wrath and judgment** as He pours out his wrath and judgment on the unbelieving world, **contrasted with the light of God’s divine blessings** as He lavishes His peace and eternal life upon believers.
* We see the broad sense of the day of the Lord begins in the Tribulation with the terrible darkness of God’s wrath. But following the triumphant second coming of the Lord, we see the marvelous light of God’s blessings poured out in the form of the Millennial Kingdom as Jesus Christ reigns on the earth.

**“Has the day of the Lord already begun?”**

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* There are other things that I want to teach in regard to ***the day of the Lord***, and I will next week. But getting back to our text in 1 Thessalonians 5, I now want to point out the purpose of Paul’s statement in v. 1-2.
  + Paul says in v. 1-2 . . . ***Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.***
* Here in v. 1-2 Paul is reminding his Thessalonian readers that he had already taught them on the subject of ***the day of the Lord***, and that ***the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night***.
* The phrase ***like a thief in the night*** is a simile. It is a term of comparison. Here Paul is not saying that **the Lord is a thief in the night**. Paul is comparing **the time of the coming day of the Lord** to that of ***a thief in the night***.
* What does the image of a ***thief in the night*** bring to your mind? It brings to mind an unexpected and unannounced event . . . an event that happens when people are not paying attention and are unaware.
* Here in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 Paul is reminding his readers that ***you know full well . . .* I already taught you . . . *that the day of the Lord will come* suddenly and unexpectedly . . . *just like a thief in the night***.
* This description of the coming of ***the day of the Lord*** is similar to the description of the Jewish bridegroom’s coming for his bride in Matthew 25:6 . . .

***Matthew 25:6— "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'***

* For some reason the Thessalonians believed that **not only were their dead brethren at some spiritual disadvantage as a result of having died before the Lord’s return, but that they, themselves, had somehow missed the Lord’s return and that** ***the day of the Lord*** **had begun.**
* This misunderstanding is not clearly stated here in 1 Thessalonians, but is made more clear in Paul’s second letter. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 we read . . .

***2 Thessalonians 2:1-2— 1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.***

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* Some one or some ones had perpetrated a malicious act of evil upon the Thessalonian church. Their intent was to disrupt and disturb the Thessalonians into believing that Paul had communicated a message that “the day of the Lord” had already begun.
  + And the evil act had its intended result . . . the Thessalonians were fearful and disturbed.
  + So, having received word of this malicious falsehood, Paul has to write in both of his letters that ***the day of the Lord* had not yet come.**
* As I explained earlier, while Paul’s teaching on the rapture of the church was new, we see in his wording of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 that his teaching on ***the day of the Lord*** was not new.
  + Yet, despite the fact that he had previously taught on the subject, when the lie was sown into the church that **the day of the Lord had begun**, it had a very disruptive and disquieting effect that Paul had to correct.

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**How does Paul’s instruction here apply to me?**

* This morning I wanted to take time to explain the significant eschatological doctrine of ***the day of the Lord***. But the question that may be on some of your minds is, **“how does Paul’s instruction here apply to me?”** In answer to that question I have several points of application for you to consider.
* **The first point of application** is found in the fact that it was necessary for Paul to write on this subject in both of his letters to the Thessalonians.
  + **Why?** Because as new believers they were not firmly grounded in their doctrine. And when a false teacher came along and misrepresented himself as having instruction from Paul, the Thessalonians were not grounded well enough to recognize this malicious false teaching.
  + **One of the primary goals of the elders of this church** is to grow each of you in sound doctrine so that when a false teacher or false teaching presents itself . . . and false teachers will try to deceive you . . . you will be able to recognize it and reject it . . . that you will be able to defend what you believe and will not be persuaded away from what you know to be true.

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* **The second point of application** is found in Paul’s statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 . . . ***that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.*** 
  + Having learned that ***the day of the Lord*** is an imminent event, my hope is that each of you will have a renewed vigilance and sense of urgency in regard to godly living.
  + **Knowing that the rapture and the day of the Lord will come suddenly**, my question of you is, “are you ready for the Lord’s return?” My hope is that each of us will live with the expectation that He may come for us at any moment.
  + **Nothing is a greater motivator to godly living than the belief that the Lord may appear receive us to Himself at any moment.**
  + The person who believes that the Lord will not come soon or even in his or her lifetime becomes spiritually lazy. **This need for spiritual vigilance will be the subject of my message next week regarding the biblically-revealed signs that accompany the arrival of *the day of the Lord***.
* **And the third point of application** I want to leave you with is **the exhortation that because the rapture and the day of the Lord are imminent events, I hope the knowledge of the things you have learned today will give you a renewed burden to evangelize the lost**.

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* + Knowing the terrible fate that awaits those unbelievers who will appear before the Great White Throne judgment, we should have a renewed zeal to have lost friends and family members hear the message of the gospel.
  + This fear of God’s judgment on the lost is a motivator to us to be all the more vigilant in evangelizing the lost. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:11 . . . ***therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.***
  + And as the writer of Hebrews teaches in Hebrew 10:31 . . . ***It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.***
* I know that I have given you a lot to process this morning. A lot of verses of Scripture. If you want to have those Scripture passages, I invite you to download my sermon manuscript off the church website. I make my sermon notes from every sermon available to download each week.
  + Hopefully my explanation of ***the day of the Lord*** and biblical references have given you a better understanding of the significance, purpose and duration of these end-times events. Next week I want to continue teaching on the subject of ***the day of the Lord*** . . . specifically, **the biblically-revealed signs that accompany the arrival of *the day of the Lord***.
  + I want to show and explain that while the exact moment of the beginning of ***the day of the Lord*** is known only to God, God has given us clues to know when ***the day of the Lord*** is growing close. **And it is important, in light of what is going on the world today, that we know and look for these signs.**