

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE DAY OF THE LORD”

For individual study or group discussion

In today's passage, Paul responds directly to the Thessalonian church's concerns about the return of Christ. In 4:13–18, he addresses their grief over the first generation of believers (after Christ) who had died. Now, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, Paul turns to their apocalyptic anxiety about the **Day of the Lord**, offering not just reassurance, but a fuller picture of how believers should live in preparation.

The Day of the Lord: sudden and certain (vv. 1–3)

To describe the nature of the *Day of the Lord*, Paul uses two key metaphors: a thief in the night and a woman in labor. The thief highlights the suddenness and unexpectedness of Christ's return; the labor pains emphasize its suddenness and inevitability. The return of Christ will be both without warning and impossible to escape. While the world proclaims “*peace and security*,” judgment will arrive swiftly, leaving the unprepared with no place to hide.

- Paul uses the phrase, *Day of the Lord*, to describe when and how God will intervene in human history to judge the unrighteous. He is echoing themes from OT prophets who warned of God's impending judgment. Read Amos 5:18–24. We're told by Amos that the *Day of the Lord* will bring darkness for those who defy him. How does Amos' warning call us to live with a sense of readiness, not complacency? (cf. Romans 14:10–12; 2 Peter 3:8–13)

The Children of the Day: alert and armored (vv. 4–8)

Paul then contrasts darkness with light, describing Christians as “*children of the day*” (v. 4). Because of their identity in Christ, they are not to live in spiritual darkness. NT scholar Greg Beale explains: “*God's revelation serves as a shining beacon to prevent them from stumbling into potential moral pitfalls lying in their path. Paying attention to such revelation enables saints to live in a state of moral and spiritual preparedness for Christ's unexpected return.*”¹ Paul also uses the imagery of sleep and drunkenness to reflect a life unaware and unready for Christ's return. In contrast, those who belong to the day are called to be awake and sober, arming themselves with the triad of Christian living: faith, love, and hope.

- Read Ephesians 5:8–20. What does it mean to be “*children of light*”?
- Read Isaiah 59:15b–20. Who wears armor to defend his people and bring justice? How does Paul's description of armor echo the divine warrior's armor?

At the End of the Day: judgment or salvation (vv. 9–11)

Finally, Paul emphasizes, that as we look to Christ's return, we have the reality of his first coming as the guarantee of his second. Christians are not destined for wrath but for salvation through Christ's work on the cross. This is the ultimate reason for our hope—Christ has already taken God's wrath upon himself. Whether we are awake or asleep (alive or dead), we will live with him. Then in verse 11, Paul calls the Thessalonians to continue encouraging and building each other up with this truth in mind—a truth that Herman Bavinck says is rooted in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ: “*While the kingdom of God is first planted spiritually in human hearts, the future blessedness is not to be spiritualized. Biblical hope, rooted in incarnation and resurrection, is creational, this-worldly, visible, physical, bodily hope. The re-birth of human beings is completed in the glorious rebirth of all creation.*”² Therefore encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

- Biblical hope is never a vague optimism that says, “*everything's going to be okay.*” Rather, it is a settled conviction of our salvation in Christ. Read 1 Peter 3:18–22. Discuss the cosmic implications of our hope as accomplished by Christ. (cf. Ephesians 1:18–23)

DATE: October 5, 2025

SPEAKER: Aaron/Wil

SERIES: 1 Thessalonians

PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

Family Dinner Table

We Do Not Walk Alone

In Peter Jackson's screen version of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Sam and Frodo are depicted on a dangerous journey to destroy the One Ring. At one point, as they venture further into the wilds, Sam stops in his tracks. With a somber look, he says to Frodo, “*If I take one more step, it'll be the farthest away from home I've ever been.*” Sam had never gone this far out of the Shire without turning back. His next step would take him into the unknown. Sam feels the weight of the uncertainty ahead, and for a moment, fear holds him in place. But Frodo doesn't leave him there. He encourages Sam, urging him to take that next step despite the uncertainty of their quest. Like Sam, the Thessalonians struggled with uncertainty and fear concerning the *Day of the Lord*. But Paul encourages them to press on, because for those who are in Christ, it's a day of hope, not destruction. Paul urges them to stay awake, to keep alert, and to take each step in faith, knowing that they are not alone on this journey. They have each other—just as Sam and Frodo had each other. As we, too, walk toward the unknown, whether it's unforeseen trials or temptations, we are called to encourage one another to persevere in faith. We do not walk alone in darkness, but as children of light, we walk together arm in arm with faith, love, and great hope toward the celestial City of God.

- In light of 1 Thessalonians 5, how can you encourage others to take the next step in their walk with God while pointing them to the hope we have in Christ?

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Redeemer Presbyterian Church,
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¹ Beale, G. K. 1 & 2 Thessalonians. 2003, Downers Grove, IL, IVP Academic. 148

² Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*. 2008, Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Publishing. 715