

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

The Reason for the Rapture (1 Thessalonians [5:1-11](#))

What is going to happen after the Rapture (1 Thess. [5:1-3](#))

- **NOW** = Paul is now going to address a different (but related) subject. He has just finished discussing the resurrection of Church-age believers (both living and dead), but **now** he turns to the subject of the actual Second Coming of Christ and its relationship to the Rapture. Paul had previously discussed this topic with the Thessalonians when he was with them.
- "**Times and Epochs**" = this phrase echoes the words of Jesus in Acts [1:7](#). The disciples had asked if He were coming at that time to judge the earth and establish His earthly kingdom. This phrase, then, refers to the Second Coming of Christ in judgment which will occur after the Tribulation period.
- **The Day of the Lord** = this is the second clue that Paul is specifically referring to the Tribulation period. This phrase is used often in the Old Testament to refer to the time of destruction and judgment preceding the millennial reign of Christ (see Isaiah [2:12](#); Joel [1:15](#); [2:11](#)).
- The illustration of a "thief in the night" = this is figurative language. Jesus is not a thief and does not operate like a thief. But there is something about the coming of a thief in the night to people who are asleep that conveys an important truth. The focus is not so much on the thief as on the unconscious homeowner who is not expecting a visitation and will not be fully aware of it even when it begins to happen.
- In 1 Thess. [5:3](#) Paul switches to subjects/objects in the third person plural: *they* and *them*. Believers (*we* and *you*) are not included in this description. They are **saying** "peace and safety" -- it is probably going to be more of a claim than a reality. This refers to the enforced peace at the time of the Antichrist (see Dan. [9:27](#); Ezek. [13:10](#)).
- The illustration of a "woman starting her labor pains" = again, this is figurative language. The point is not necessarily that the labor pains are completely unexpected, but that the time of onset of labor cannot be precisely predicted. One thing is certain: when the woman's "water breaks," the birth will inevitably take place in a very short time. There is no escape and life will never be the same afterwards.

Believers no longer belong to the realm of darkness (1 Thess. [5:4-7](#))

- **BUT** = Paul makes a direct contrast between the unbeliever's situation in 1 Thess. [5:3](#) and the believer's situation. Believers are not **in** darkness -- they do not belong to the realm of darkness, but to the realm of light. This is a common metaphor in the New Testament (see John [3:21](#); [8:12](#); [12:36](#); Acts [26:18](#); Eph. [5:8-9](#); 1 John [1:7](#); 1 Peter [2:9](#)).
- "**THAT** the Day would overtake you" = a purpose clause ("in order that, or for the purpose that"). Those in darkness are "purposed" for the Day of the Lord, but believers are not.
- **So then** = the logical conclusion from what has just been said. Since believers do not belong to the realm of darkness, how should they conduct themselves? Paul's exhortation has a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE side: We are NOT to sleep, but we ARE to remain alert.
- Paul mixes his metaphors a little bit here. In 1 Thess. [4:13-15](#) Paul used the word *koimao* to represent the sleep of death (1 Thess. [4:16](#) -- the *dead* will rise first). But here (1 Thess [5:6-7](#), [10](#)) Paul uses the word *katheudo* to mean **indifference to spiritual things**. So here sleep and drunkenness for the believer represent lack of spiritual consciousness or spiritual dullness. Wicked unbelievers will be immersed in sinful indulgence, but believers ought not to behave that way (even though it is possible for them to do so).

Since believers are "of the day," how should we behave? (1 Thess. 5:8)

- Believers ARE of the day = their very existence is in the realm of God's light. Because of this truth, believers should remain alert and sober rather than unconscious and dull.
- Not only that, but believers should guard their ability to remain alert. The armor listed here is only protective or defensive. Our thinking should be kept from error, and our heart should be protected from the cravings of sin and the flesh. Here the *hope* of our salvation is the "blessed hope of His appearing" (see Titus 2:13). When we keep in mind that we could be called before the Judgment Seat of Christ at any moment, we will be more likely to be engaged in godly pursuits.

The reason for the Rapture: God has not destined believers to experience His wrath (1 Thess. 5:9-11)

- *FOR* = Paul adds an explanation for the HOPE of our salvation: this hope is our deliverance from the coming wrath -- it is the resurrection or Rapture of believers that Paul had discussed in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Church-age saints already will have been resurrected before the Day of the Lord's wrath begins.
- This is the REASON for the RAPTURE = God has not destined us for wrath. It has not been assigned to us. Believers live in a completely different realm in which the wrath of God simply does not apply.
- 1 Thess. 5:10 tells us what makes it impossible for believers to experience the wrath of God. The Lord Jesus Christ has already completely taken God's wrath upon Himself in our place. This is a clear statement of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sin.
- "Whether we are awake or asleep" = there are two possible interpretations of this phrase:
 1. Paul may be reverting to his previous meaning for "asleep" (death), meaning that whether believers have died or are still living when the Lord resurrects them, they will all live with the Lord (see 1 Thess. 4:17). This is certainly a true statement, but the problem with this view is that Paul uses the word *katheudo* for sleep rather than reverting to *koimao* as in 1 Thess. 4:13-15.
 2. Paul wants believers to be alert and self-controlled, to live unselfish and productive lives instead of constantly indulging in sensual pleasures. But whether believers behave this way or whether they do act like unbelievers (whether awake or asleep), they will live with Him. This interpretation is more consistent with the use of the word *katheudo* in the immediate context. Our life with Christ does not depend upon our behavior, but on Christ's finished work. Believers live in a different realm and have a distinct destiny. They are always safe in the arms of Jesus. This is a statement of the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer.
- Paul provides this explanation concerning future events because he wants believers to experience encouragement while living here in this world. We are to share the gospel with unbelievers, but we are also to be teachers who build up other believers in their faith.
- Paul began 1 Thess. 4 addressing several issues regarding holiness in the believer's life, and 1 Thess. 5 fits in with this same theme. Because believers understand these truths, we should live in ways that are distinctively different from the world. Because we stand on the threshold of an event that will mean sudden destruction for some and sudden resurrection for others, believers should live lives of self-control, productivity, and holiness.

Contrasts between Believers and Unbelievers from this passage:

BELIEVERS	UNBELIEVING WICKED
Informed and aware of the "times and epochs" of the Second Coming of Christ in judgment.	Ignoring or ignorant of the "times and epochs" of the Second Coming of Christ.
Not laden with judgment. The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the believer's judgment.	Pregnant and increasingly heavy with the judgment of the Lord. Birth pains will soon begin, and judgment will be inescapable.

BELIEVERS	UNBELIEVING WICKED
Not existing in the realm of darkness or night, and therefore not eligible for the visitation of the "Day of the Lord."	Belong to the realm of darkness or night, and therefore are destined for the visitation of the "Day of the Lord."
Not spiritually insensitive or asleep. Not immersed in the things of the world so that they live like unbelievers.	Spiritually asleep or intoxicated -- living a life of selfish pleasure and sensual indulgence.
Not destined to experience the wrath of God at the coming "Day of the Lord."	Destined to experience God's wrath during the "Day of the Lord."

Points of Application:

- We should be like the Thessalonians who already know and understand the details of the Second Coming of Christ. We should continue to be avid students of God's Word.
- Since unbelievers will not escape the judgment during the Day of the Lord, this should motivate believers to spread the good news of what Christ has done for us.
- We must clearly understand our position "in Christ" -- we no longer belong to the realm of darkness. Therefore, we should live lives that are different from those who belong to this dark world system. We should protect ourselves so we can remain alert and self-controlled. We should continue to grow in holiness of life, seeking to live in ways that please God.
- The Lord Jesus Christ died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins -- to take all of God's wrath against us. We should never lose sight of this important truth!
- Believers are not destined to experience the Tribulation period. We should comfort each other with the hope of the resurrection of Church-age believers. From God's perspective, the encouragement and building up of believers in the faith is a very high priority. We should strive to do this whenever we have an opportunity.

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Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)