



NG Study Guide: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, “Be Ready” [11.4.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Although at times it may seem as though God isn’t doing anything about the evil in the world today, the Bible reveals He does indeed have a plan to return to judge the world and pour out His wrath in punishment of all sin. This event is referred to as “The Day of the Lord” numerous times throughout Scripture, and although no one knows exactly when this day will come, we can be assured it will. This knowledge should motivate all believers to be ready by being aware, being different, and being confident.

I. Be aware (vv. 1-3)

Paul changes the focus of his letter from the Rapture, when Jesus will gather His people to meet Him in the air, to the Day of the Lord. He assures his readers they already know what they need to know about this important subject, as he taught them about it when he was previously with them. He reminds them this day will come “as a thief in the night,” i.e., unexpectedly, suddenly, and without warning, and he warns them that no one will escape.

The Day of the Lord is referred to at least nineteen times in the Old testament by eight different authors. It is also mentioned several times in the New Testament. This “Day” is not just one day, but a season of time when Jesus Christ will return in glory, judging the sinful world and executing the wrath (righteous anger) of God. From these prophetic revelations we learn that this Day will involve earthquakes, violent weather, darkness, and other cosmic disturbances. In reference to this day, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Behold, the day of the Lord comes cruel with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate” (Isaiah 13:9). The New Testament apostle Peter also described this terrible day: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be turned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

As followers of Jesus Christ, it’s important we’re aware of and continually remember this truth. God wants us to know this day is coming, understand what it will be, and live knowing it can come at any time.

II. Be different (vv. 4-8)

In verse 4 Paul changes the pronouns he’s using from “they” to “you” and “we,”, indicating he’s now writing about fellow followers of Christ. He reminds these Thessalonian believers they are not in “darkness,” or spiritual ignorance, so this Day should not come as a surprise to them. Paul assures these

Christians they are “sons of light” and “sons of the day,” meaning they are different than those who do not know the truth and have not placed their faith in Christ. In the Semitic languages, to be the “son” of something meant to be characterized by that thing. He contrasts this “light” of those who believe in Jesus with the “darkness” of the unbelieving, sinful world.

Paul exhorts these believers to not fall asleep, but instead watch and be sober, i.e., be alert and pay serious attention to what going on around them. He warns them to watch **against** temptation, laziness and distraction, and to watch **for** the return of Jesus Christ. Paul is concerned those who don’t do these things may fall asleep and get drunk, spiritual metaphors for becoming spiritually indifferent and sinful. Knowing Jesus is returning to judge the world with the wrath of God should motivate us to live differently, continuing to abide in faith, hope and love.

III. Be confident (vv. 9-11)

Paul then assures his readers that as believers in Christ they will not have to experience the Day of the Lord- it is not God’s plan for His children to experience His wrath. Instead, we have been saved from it through faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for our sins on the cross. The Word of God is clear that faith in Jesus is the only way to be saved from the wrath of God: *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

Paul reminds them that Jesus is Lord of our lives, that He has provided eternal life for us, and that whether we are alive when He returns, or whether we go to be with Him beforehand, we will live with Him forever! He then encourages his readers to comfort one another with these incredible truths, knowing that this encouragement will build confidence in them as their faith and hope increase. This confidence is not based upon who we are, or anything we do or have done; rather, it is solely based on Jesus Christ- Who He is, and what He has done on the cross at Calvary.

As believers today we, too need to be ready for Jesus’ return and the Day of the Lord. To best be prepared, we need to be aware this Day is coming, understanding the nature of it. We need to be different, living our lives in obedience to the Lord, for His glory, and avoiding the temptations and pitfalls of this world. And, we need to be confident, know that our eternal destinies are secure in Christ, and that we will not have to experience the judgement and wrath of our holy God. Finally, understand these truths, out of love for our neighbors, we need to be telling others about Jesus, speaking the truth in love, praying God will also save them, as he has us, from the inevitable judgement that is to come.

Study Guide Qs

Q1: Why do you think God is delaying the “Day of the Lord?”

Q2: In what specific ways can believers be different than those who do not yet know Christ?

Q3: How can knowing these truths about the coming of the Day of the Lord build up our confidence?

Q4: How might one go about sharing the truth about the Day of the Lord with someone who doesn't know about it?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Read what Jesus said about the Day of the Lord in Matthew chapters 24 and 25. Learn about more specific details of this day by reading Revelation chapters 6 through 19.
2. For addition teaching on this subject, visit this Bible Study Tools web page: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/the-day-of-the-lord-god-christ.html>.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Pray regularly for your neighbors, by name. Ask the Lord to soften their hearts to the truth about Jesus. Make yourself available to interact with them if He opens the door to do so. Be open to allowing the Holy Spirit to direct your conversation to spiritual matters.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.