

UNIT 6

BF232 OUR FUTURE HOPE

We're going to continue our study of our future hope. Again, we are looking at

THE CHURCH OUR FUTURE HOPE

We've already noted that God's plan for the Church is different than His plan for Israel. We're looking at the Church and

HOW THE CHURCH RELATES TO THE DAY OF THE LORD

Now, the Day of the Lord is the focus of this passage.

THE DAY OF THE LORD IS THE TIME OF GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE EARTH

It's known as the Day of the Lord because that phrase is used all through the Old Testament to talk about a time of God's judgment that will be worse than any other time.

PAUL TEACHES ON THIS TOPIC IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS

He wants them to see that God has chosen to deliver them from the Day of the Lord instead of them going through the Day of the Lord.

HE REMINDS THEM OF THEIR RELATION TO THE DAY OF THE LORD AND HE ENCOURAGES THEM TO LIVE CONSISTENTLY WITH WHO THEY ARE IN CHRIST

He wants them to live in light of their hope as the Church.

THE DAY OF THE LORD IS A TIME PERIOD OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

That is a major topic in the Old Testament.

IT WILL BE THE MOST SEVERE TIME OF JUDGMENT EVER SEEN BEFORE

That means it will be worse than the Babylonian captivity. It will be worse than anything Israel has ever faced before.

IT WILL BE A TIME OF INESCAPABLE JUDGMENT

It is a judgment that one cannot get away from. I'm going to show you some examples in the Old Testament.

Amos 5:18-19 What sorrow awaits you who say, "If only the day of the Lord were here!" You have no idea what you are wishing for. That day will bring darkness, not light. In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion—only to meet a bear. Escaping from the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house— and he's bitten by a snake.

The picture that Amos gives is there's nowhere you can run. There's no way you can escape from the coming Day of the Lord judgment. It's a time of judgment that is inescapable.

Zephaniah gives a similar description.

Zephaniah 1:14 "That terrible day of the Lord is near. Swiftly it comes—a day of bitter tears, a day when even strong men will cry out.

Even a strong man will cry on that day.

Zephaniah 1:15-16 It will be a day when the Lord's anger is poured out— a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet calls and battle cries. Down go the walled cities and the strongest battlements!

A trumpet would be blown or sounded when an enemy was coming to attack a city. Just like when someone hears an alarm and gets scared, when someone heard a trumpet, they knew that an enemy was coming. Zephaniah said it's like a day when you hear a trumpet.

Zephaniah 1:17 "Because you have sinned against the Lord, I will make you grope around like the blind. Your blood will be poured into the dust, and your bodies will lie rotting on the ground."

Then, look at what he says.

Zephaniah 1:18 Your silver and gold will not save you on that day of the Lord's anger. For the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth.

You see that? This is a judgment that is inescapable. In our world, if someone has a lot of money, they might be able to buy their way out of trouble. God says your silver and gold will not save you on that day.

Amos said you can't run away from it. Zephaniah says you can't pay your way out of it. Joel says,

*Joel 2:1-2 Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem!
Raise the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let everyone tremble in fear
because the day of the Lord is upon us.
It is a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of thick clouds and deep blackness.
Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains,
a great and mighty army appears.*

He says that it is just like the sun coming up. All of a sudden, it's there. That's the way the Day of the Lord will be. Notice what he says.

*Joel 2:2 Nothing like it has been seen before
or will ever be seen again.*

That means it is inescapable judgment. It has never been that bad before. It will never be that bad again. It's the worst time of judgment ever. That's talking about the Day of the Lord.

In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus talked about the Great Tribulation. Jesus said:

Matthew 24:21 For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began.

Notice this. If Jesus is talking about something, and He said, "It's never been this bad before, and it will never be this bad again," and if Joel talks about something, and says, "It's never been this bad before. It will never be this bad again." Then, guess what? They have to be talking about the same thing. The Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation are talking about the same thing. It will be so bad, Jesus said,

Matthew 24:22 In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive.

You've probably read about this in the Book of Revelation. God pours out His wrath and judgment on the earth. It's going to destroy humanity. If God didn't cut those days short, nobody could live through it.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH RELATE TO THE DAY OF THE LORD?

THE DAY OF THE LORD IS A STEP TOWARDS RESTORATION.

It's a step towards restoring Israel back to God. Israel did not learn from the 70 years of captivity. Because they didn't learn from 70 years of captivity, God said He would punish them seven times over. That is talking about those 70 units of seven. That final unit of seven, the last seven years, is the time of Israel's Trouble. It's the Day of the Lord. It's the Great Tribulation.

**GOD IS USING THAT TIME PERIOD TO BRING JUDGMENT ON THE REBELLIOUS NATIONS AND TO
MOVE ISRAEL TO REPENTANCE.**

Joel, for example, talks about how the Jews would tear their clothes to show that they were mourning and that they were repenting. Joel says, "Tear your heart and not your clothes." God wants Israel to repent, to recognize that they've done wrong by not believing in Jesus as Messiah.

GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD.

HIS PURPOSE IS TO PUNISH THE NATIONS FOR THEIR SIN.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL WITH THE DAY OF THE LORD, IS TO BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE.

Isaiah 26 and Isaiah 13. Both of those passages say that God will punish the nations for their rebellion. God's purpose for the Day of the Lord, for the nations, is to punish them for rebelling against Him.

But what is God's purpose for the Church in the Day of the Lord?

THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NOT PART OF GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH!

On the Day of the Lord, God's purpose for us is that it's not part of God's plan for the Church. In 1 Thessalonians 5, he says that God has not destined us, or chosen for us, to face wrath, but to be delivered from the Day of the Lord. God's plan for the Church is different than God's plan for Israel. We'll look at that now. Paul says,

1 Thessalonians 5:1 Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don't really need to write you.

I think this is interesting because in chapter 4 verse 13, he says, "We want you to know." When Paul was talking about the Rapture, he was talking about something they didn't know about. He wanted them to know. Here, Paul is talking about something different. He's talking about the Day of the Lord. He says, "With this subject, we don't really need to write to you." There's something they already know about in this passage. That is the Day of the Lord. They know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

It's this unexpected judgment, like Joel said. It's like the sun coming up in the morning. All of a sudden, it goes from darkness to light. Everything is seen.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

I want you to see some things here.

FOR UNBELIEVERS, THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

They are not expecting this. It will take them by surprise, not because God hasn't given warning. God has given warning all through Scripture. It will surprise them, just like the flood in Noah's day, because they did not believe the messengers of God who gave that warning.

It will come like a thief in the night, and

IT WILL BRING DESTRUCTION.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them like as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin.

Why are they saying everything is peaceful and secure? The reason they say this is because of the Antichrist. If you remember from Daniel 9, a ruler will come who will make a covenant with the nations for seven years. When the Antichrist makes this covenant with Israel and the other nations, it's an agreement that they can live together and get along together. Israel will be thinking that they have peace and safety; but at the middle point of that seven years, the Antichrist turns on them. He begins a persecution against the Jews and people who come to faith during the Tribulation.

They're saying everything is peaceful, but disaster is getting ready to come. The way he describes the disaster being sudden is by speaking about a woman and her labor pains. I'll never forget the birth of our first child. Our first child is our son. My wife was about two weeks away from her delivery date. The doctor said that the baby would come at the end of August, and it was about the first week of August. We knew it would still be a few weeks until the baby came. We went to bed late one night. We had been with friends all day. We were tired and stayed up late. When we went to bed, I was ready to sleep for a good full night. About two hours later, my wife woke me up. She said that she was starting labor and was having contractions. I just wanted to go back to sleep because I was tired. I was so surprised that it was time to go to the hospital. You know what? I wasn't surprised that we were having a baby. I knew that my wife was pregnant, but I was surprised at how quickly the end came. Here we are. It's time for this baby to come.

Paul says that this disaster will come suddenly like labor pains coming upon a pregnant woman. Notice what he said. He said that there will be no escape.

THIS IS AN INESCAPABLE JUDGMENT.

Just like Amos said. A man runs from a lion, and he runs into a bear. He runs from a bear, and a snake bites him on the arm. Just like Zephaniah said that your silver and gold will not deliver you. It is a time of inescapable judgment. Paul says that when this judgment comes, they will not escape.

What is this disaster that people will not escape from? What is the judgment? It's important to know the context of this passage. What is the judgment that Paul is talking about? Notice that just like the Day of the Lord is unexpected, disaster comes like a thief in the night. What we're seeing is the disaster, the judgment and the destruction are the same things as the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord comes suddenly, and they will not escape.

This is looking at the second half of the seven-year period. This is what we call the Great Tribulation. During those last 3.5 years when Antichrist breaks his covenant, he's going to turn on people. He's going to bring persecution. He's going to bring harm to a lot of people. That's what's going to happen to those people. I want you to notice what's being said here. "When people are saying everything is peaceful," he's talking about what other people are going to be saying. When Paul talks about them, he says "they are saying peace and safety." They are saying "everything is secure," and judgment comes upon them. They will not escape. He's looking at unbelievers who don't know Jesus.

Then, he gives a contrast in verse 4. He says,

1 Thessalonians 5:4 But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

When Paul says, "they are not in darkness," he's not just saying that they already know about something. He's saying they're different. God puts them in a different category. Think of it this way. When God sent the flood to judge the world in Noah's day, God rescued Noah and his family. When God sent judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, He waited until Lot had been taken out of the city. God's judgment on the unbelieving world is not what comes upon Christians.

BELIEVERS WILL NOT BE OVERTAKEN ON THE DAY OF THE LORD.

God has not destined us for this wrath, this Day of the Lord. He has chosen to rescue us through His Son. Paul says, "You are not in darkness." He's contrasting them and us.

Let me give you some examples of this. In the Gospel of John Chapter 12, Jesus said "while you have the light." Who is the light? Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus said,

John 12:36. Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light."

Children of the light is another way of describing Christians.

Those who believe in Jesus, we are not children of darkness. We are children of the light. That's our identity. That's who we are. In Colossians 1, Paul says that God has transferred us from the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of His Dear Son. We were in Darkness. That's when we were unsaved; but now, we are in the light because we are saved.

Darkness speaks of unbelievers. Light speaks of believers.

GOD SEES BELIEVERS IN A DIFFERENT CATEGORY.

Paul says,

Ephesians 5:8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord.

That's who you are. Then, he says,

Ephesians 5:8 So live as people of light!

That's what they do.

He says who you are. You are Children of Light. What you should do is live in the light. When Paul says you are not in the dark, he's saying that the Day of the Lord won't come upon you because you are saved. You are in a different category. You're a child of God.

Maybe you've heard of the Qumran area around the Dead Sea. That's where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. For about 200 years before Jesus came, and even while Jesus was on the earth, there was a group of people who lived in Qumran. They kept the Dead Sea scrolls. In their writings, they called believers Children of Light. They called unbelievers Children of Darkness. Jesus and Paul used those same words.

Paul is saying the Day of the Lord won't come upon you because you are a believer. You are in the Light.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.

We're not darkness people. We are people who believed in the Light of the World. We are Children of the Light.

Believers will not be overtaken in the Day of the Lord because God sees believers in a different category. Just like God rescued Lot before He gave fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, God will rescue the Church before He pours out His wrath in the Great Tribulation.

BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, GOD WANTS US TO LIVE DIFFERENT.

He says,

1 Thessalonians 5:6 So be on your guard, not asleep like the others.

You're not like others, so don't live like others. God wants believers to live as those who are different. He says,

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 Stay alert and be clearheaded. Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

What I want you to see is this: For a Christian to be clear headed, in this passage, means to be living each day knowing, "I am a Child of God. I'm a Child of the Light. God wants me to live as a Child of the Light." A Child of the Light, or a believer, lives knowing that one day, Jesus will come back to rescue me. Therefore, I want to live my life knowing that He could come at any time. I'm living with the Lord in mind.

He says that we have this helmet. The helmet is the confidence of our salvation. What is our salvation in this passage? Our salvation, in this passage, is found in verse 9.

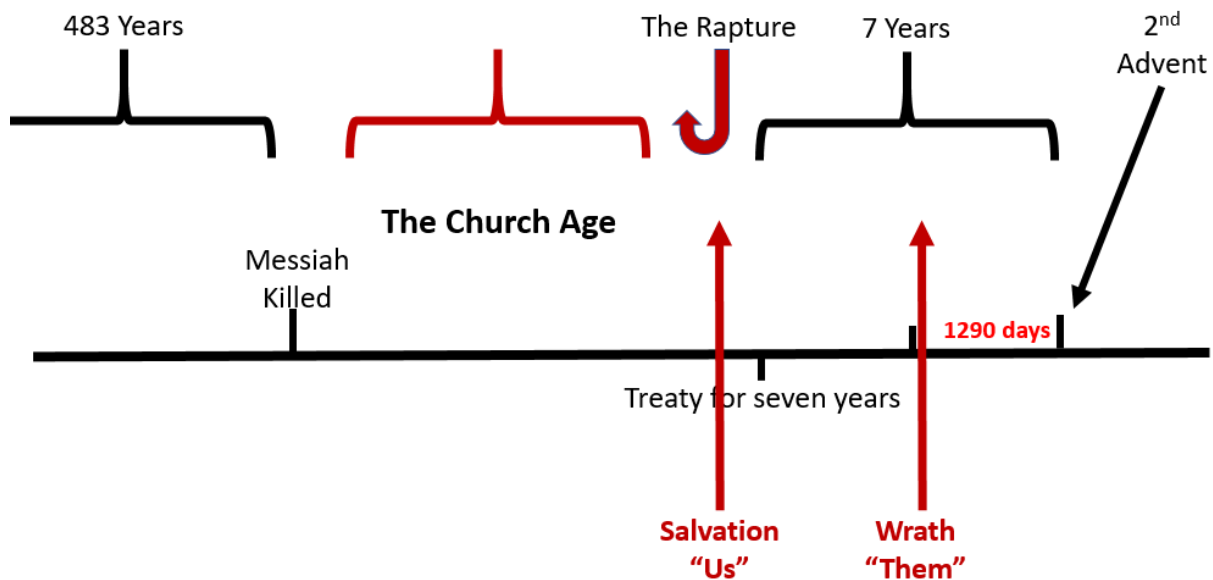
GOD HAS DIFFERENT PLANS FOR THE CHURCH.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

The passage gives us the context. The salvation in context has to be understood based on the wrath in context. The wrath, or the anger, in context is the Day of the Lord. Day of the Lord, sudden disaster, wrath. He's using different words to talk about the same thing. What Paul is saying here, is that God has chosen through Christ, to deliver us from this time period of coming wrath, this coming Tribulation. Christ died for us, so that whether we are dead or alive when He returns, we can live with Him forever. If we're alive when Jesus comes back for the rapture, we will be rescued before the Tribulation begins. If we die before the Rapture, when the Rapture happens, we will be rescued before the Tribulation. God has different plans for us than he has for them. For them, they will face sudden destruction and will not escape. For us who are in the Light, God has chosen to deliver us from the Day of the Lord.

God has different plans for the Church. You could also think about how it was in Egypt when God sent plagues on the Egyptians. Remember the plague of Darkness. It was dark in Egypt, but there was a light in the land of Goshen. God treats His people different than He treats the unbelieving world.

GOD WANTS US TO LIVE IN LIGHT OF OUR FUTURE HOPE.



Let me show you our chart again. We have the Church Age. The Church Age is where we are right now. God's plan for the Church is different than God's plan for Israel. We know God's plan for Israel is that they would have 70 units of seven. The first 69 are already over. The final unit of seven is that seven years that comes at the end. It will be the Great Tribulation. God's plan for them, for Israel, for the unsaved world, is to let them face His wrath during the Tribulation. God's plan for the Church does not include the day of the Lord. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. God has chosen to save us through His Son.

There's a difference in the plan here. God's plan for us is salvation. That salvation will be the Rapture that rescues us before the Day of the Lord begins. God's plan for them is the Great Tribulation. They will go through Daniel's 70th week. At the middle point of that period, there's this covenant, this treaty, for seven years. When that treaty happens, they're saying, "Peace, safety. Everything's great." But at the middle of that time period, the Antichrist turns on them, and sudden destruction comes.

It's at this midpoint that God begins to pour out His judgments. We'll see that in the Book of Revelation. There will be judgments upon the unsaved world to punish the nations for their sins and to bring Israel to repentance. There is no purpose of the Day of the Lord for the Church, except that God has purpose to deliver us from it with this thing called the Rapture.

IN SUMMARY

The Church is different from the world. We are not in darkness like the world. God has different plans for the Church than He has for the world. Since God's Word

reveals His plans for the unsaved world, we must warn them of the coming judgment.

Right now, we have to work while it is light because darkness comes when no one can work. Right now, is our opportunity to be warning the nations that judgment is coming. Right now, is our opportunity to give them the Good News that Jesus died for them so that they can be rescued from His judgment. That's the Good News that we have. This is the comfort of our hope as believers in the Church Age.