

Time of The Rapture

By Richmond Shee

As they eagerly await the rapture of the church, many believers reference 1Thessalonians 5:1-2 to highlight the uncertainty of its timing: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”*

While the exact year of the rapture remains unknown, a close examination of the scriptures reveals intriguing hints about its potential month and day. This paper aims to unravel these clues and clarify common misinterpretations of 1Thessalonians 5:1-5.

Why 1Thessalonians 5:1-5 is Not about the Rapture of the Church

To grasp 1Thessalonians fully, it’s crucial to start at the beginning. Paul commences with an extensive exordium, spanning three chapters, where he praises the Thessalonians for their steadfast faith, love, and hope. He delves into parenesis in chapters 4 and 5. (Parenesis, in biblical studies, refers to moral exhortation or practical ethical teachings. It typically includes a combination of practical instructions, moral admonitions, and encouragements aimed at guiding the recipients in their spiritual life.)

Among the commendations is the Thessalonians’ hope of seeing the Lord Jesus. *1Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.* While they are familiar with the concept of the rapture, Paul’s teaching about this event has been on some points misunderstood. Some church members have passed away since Paul’s last visit, and the survivors fear that the dead may have lost their place in the rapture. He reassures them that those who have died will not be excluded from Christ’s return. *1Thessalonians 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Paul then shifts focus to the “Day of the Lord” in chapter 5, underscoring its unpredictability and distinguishing it from the rapture. This day refers to Christ’s Second Coming, a time of judgment and reckoning.

*1Thessalonians 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when **they** shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that **that day** should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*

Key reasons why 1Thessalonians 5:1-11 does not refer to the rapture include:

1. We should not yearn for the “day of the Lord” because it is a day of wrath and vengeance.
 - *Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. 19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?*
 - *2Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*
 - *Joel 2:1-11.*
2. If the “day of the Lord” in 1Thessalonians 5:2 is the rapture of the church, that means the church must go through tribulation (verse 3), which it will not. *1Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*
3. The “day of the Lord” is a surprise for unbelievers, not believers, indicating that the church would have been raptured before this event. Moreover, notice the change in pronoun in verse 3 from “ye” to “they” and “them.” In other words, the day of the Lord applies to the unbelievers.
4. The phrase “the times and the seasons” in 1Thessalonians 5:1 corresponds to Acts 1:6-7, which states, *“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”* Following Jesus’ resurrection, His disciples ask when He will restore the Kingdom of Heaven to the Jews. The Lord says, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.” (The Kingdom of Heaven is a physical kingdom with Jerusalem as the capital, and it belongs to the Jews. It is not the same as the Kingdom of God, which is spiritual, and it is given to the church. Due to the Jews’ rejection of the Messiah, the Kingdom of Heaven is put on pause, and the church currently operates under the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven will recommence at the Second Coming of Christ.) Therefore, the phrase “the times and the seasons” applies to Christ’s Second Coming instead of to the rapture of the church.

5. The term “that day” in 1Thessalonians 5:4 further points to the Second Coming rather than the rapture.

Clues to the Rapture’s Timing

While the term “rapture” is not explicitly used in the Bible, the concept is symbolized through the idea of a harvest. There are three distinct harvest phases in the Bible, which correspond to the three raptures.

- **The Firstfruits:** Represented by Jesus Christ’s resurrection.
 - *1Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*
- **The Main harvest:** - This is the rapture of the church, soon to be fulfilled.
 - *1Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*
- **The Gleanings:** This is the rapture of the Tribulation saints at Christ’s Second Coming.
 - *Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Furthermore, there are three compelling arguments that connect the timing of the rapture of the church with the Jewish Feast of Weeks (Shavuot or Pentecost), celebrated during the wheat harvest (Sivan 6 on the Hebrew calendar).

- Among the seven major Jewish feasts, the first three (Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits) occur in spring and are related to the First Coming of Christ. All these have been fulfilled. The final three feasts (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles) fall in the autumn and are related to the Second Coming of Christ, yet to be fulfilled. Uniquely positioned between these two sets is the Feast of Weeks, a summer feast celebrating the wheat harvest. This feast corresponds to the rapture of the church, serving as a bridge between Christ’s First and Second Coming.
- Leviticus 23:22 speaks of the main harvest, representing the rapture of the church, occurring before the harvest of the gleanings.

- *Leviticus 23:22* And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.
- In Jeremiah 8:20, there is a lamentation about missing the summer harvest (the rapture of the church) among the Jews, and they remain unsaved.
 - *Jeremiah 8:20* The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

I hope this analysis has helped clarify the intricacies of 1Thessalonians 5, particularly in differentiating between the concepts of the rapture and the “Day of the Lord.” After carefully considering the biblical symbolism of harvests and the significance of Jewish feasts, I am personally inclined to believe that the rapture could occur around Sivan 6 on the Hebrew calendar, aligning with the Feast of Weeks.