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### Personal Study through the Bible-23 (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

In the last lesson, I touched on the importance of every believer really *studying* the Bible for himself. I also noted that listening to Bible doctrine is *not* the same as studying the Bible personally. Let me be clear: listening to Bible doctrine, even from among the greatest Bible teachers of all time, can *never* substitute or replace personal, daily study of the Bible. You need both! I will show you why both are important later in this essay.

In the previous lesson, I also mentioned that I would be spending more time on biblical commands for believers to *study* their bibles—again, this is not the same as listening to someone teach you doctrine, i.e., by listening to a tape. I asked you to read Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and note what the Word of God says about personal study. If you have not read these sections and reflected on the implications, I would like for you to do so before reading the following on those passages.

Before Deuteronomy 6:6-9, we have verses 4-5, which was familiar to every Jew of the Old Testament. Its words were used to call the assembly for worship: "*Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* The passage I had you read comes right after this solemn passage: Deuteronomy 6:6 "*And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 "And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

So the passage that commands believers to love the Lord with all of their hearts/wills, souls, and strength commands that believers to teach their children the Word of God day in and day out as a way of life. God desires that His Word be taught so diligently that it penetrates the heart. The content of the Bible is not to be mentioned casually and infrequently. Repeated discussion is the order of the day, every day. The call to bind on the hand, the forehead, the door post and gate makes it clear that God is saying that the job must be done by whatever method it takes.

One frequent objection by doctrinal families goes something like this, 'I don't know the original languages of Scripture, so I am not qualified.' I understand comments like this, but let me just say that the whole idea that the believer cannot understand the Word of God on a basic, conceptual level without the original languages is false. As a matter of fact, the whole idea that the meaning of any word is where the reality is is false. I am not going to go into philosophy of language in any depth, at this time. But I will give an overview of language and reality for you to chew on. There are three views of how language works with reality: the *essentialist* (Platonic, Heideggerian view = reality is in the word), the *conventionalist* view (modern view which does not believe there are real essences anywhere: words are just pointing to conventional or cultural view of things, nothing but language games; e.g., they do not believe there is a real human nature), and the *realist* view that words point to real essences (which are abstracted and brought immaterially in the mind). The biblical view, of course, is the realist view. It is the only view which provides objectivity across centuries of cultures. All human beings have the same

metaphysical makeup and abstract some realities, though they use different words to point to those same realities, which they all take in their minds immateriality. Anyway, I am not sure if what I just wrote is terribly helpful, but we will get into this more when we move through philosophy of language. The bottom line here is that the meaning is in the essences in the extra-mental world, which the human mind comes into direct contact with—words only point to those same realities we all experience. Words never carry the meaning, they point to it. More later.

The other passage I asked you to read was 2 Timothy 3:14-17. If you have not read it, I would like for you to read it, think about it, and then continue with this lesson. This passage is even more direct on the importance of personal Bible study. The following are some key phrases.

*“You, however, continue in the things you have learned (14).* Note the continuity: the personal study of the Bible is to never end. It is not a one-shot deal. Consistent personal Bible study forms a sound basis for really understanding the Bible. You will never be able to personally understand and thus grow in love for your English Bible without consistency. You must ponder, and chew on its truth consistently. Your understanding of the Bible must continue to develop as long as you are alive on this earth. You will never know it all, and you will always be able to learn more, even from the most rudimentary passages.

*“knowing from whom you have learned them” (14).* Who is this *whom* Paul is referring to? Was it Timothy’s grandmother? Or Paul himself? While they might have been instruments, the ultimate *whom* is God as indicated by Paul’s following comment that “all Scripture is God-breathed (vs. 16).” Regardless of the instrumental causes in Bible teaching, it is God who is the ultimate source of the living Word of God.

*“and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom (15).”* Note the power of the living Word of God to impart wisdom. This is biblical wisdom: insight into spiritual realities, which begins with a real respect, an awe, for God (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). Wisdom is not the same as knowledge. We are commanded to acquire knowledge, but more to acquire wisdom. Knowledge is necessary if wisdom is to be gained, but it is not identical with wisdom. Wisdom never comes *simply* by listening to others teach the Word of God. The believer who never personally studies the Bible may have a lot of information gained from others, but will be very thin on wisdom and will lack personal confidence on many biblical and spiritual issues and will always have to refer to others on vital areas. Wisdom is not something that anyone can teach you. It is acquired by personal study and personal reflection. I have more to say about this passage in these mini-lessons on the importance of personal Bible study in the next lesson.

Now let’s get back to our eschatological passages in Thessalonians. I would like for you to reread 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11. If you read all of those other passages that I gave you in the last lesson on the day of the Lord, you *possess* a personal conceptual understanding of the day of the Lord that you would not have gained by me simply giving you various principles with the verses. There is something about going through those passages and seeing for yourself all of those passages of judgment on the day of the Lord. In the same way, by reading and re-reading 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, you are embedding in your soul the distinction between the Rapture and the wrathful day of the Lord. By reading 1 Thess. 4:13-18 in light of the hope of John 14:1-2, and by re-reading the day of the Lord passage of 1 Thess. 5:2 along with the day of the Lord passages in the OT and in Revelation, you have an understanding, a wisdom, that you cannot gain simply by passively listening to a pastor give you points and passages. Furthermore, when you are challenged, you will not need to go scrambling about to find this passage. By reading and re-reading, you can just open the Bible to these truths because you “own them.” That’s the goal!

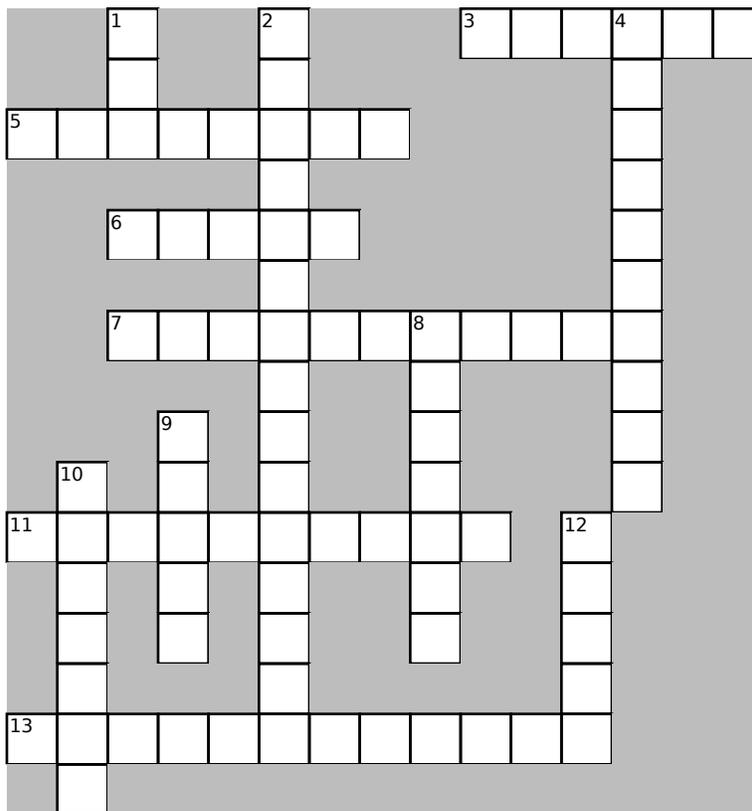
There is a wisdom you gain through personal study of the Bible that you cannot gain any other way. Of course, if you did not read those OT passages on the day of the Lord, you did not actualize that potentiality in your soul. It is your choice, your will, your view of what is really Good and worth doing and what is not so good and worth suppressing by a dismissive attitude.

I would like for you to read two more passages on the day of the Lord mentioned in our passage (1 Thess. 5:2): Joel 2:30-31; Isaiah 13:9-16. On the following pages are puzzles over these passages and this lesson.

*In 'Ehyeh,*

*Pastor Don Hargrove*

# Day of the Lord versus the Rapture



## Across

- 3 It is the sacred writings which are able to give \_\_\_ (2 Tim. 3:15).
- 5 Paul told Timothy to \_\_\_ in the things he learned (2 Tim. 3:14.)
- 6 Isa. 13:9 describes the day of the Lord in the terms "cruel, with fury, and burning \_\_\_,"
- 7 Isa. 13:6 tells us that the day of the Lord will bring \_\_\_ from the Almighty.
- 11 Isa. 13:9 tells us that the day of the Lord will make the land a \_\_\_.
- 13 \_\_\_ view of language sees the reality in the word.

## Down

- 1 Joel 2:31 predicts that when the day of the Lord comes, there will signs of judgment like the \_\_\_ turning into darkness.
- 2 \_\_\_ view of language sees language as culturally determined.
- 4 The Word of God is to be taught \_\_\_ (Deut 6:7).
- 8 The day of the Lord brings judgment whereas the Rapture brings \_\_\_ (1 Thess. 4:18).
- 9 Joel 2:30 predicts that judgment associated with the day of the Lord include \_\_\_, fire, and smoke.
- 10 \_\_\_ view of language connects with real essences in the real world.
- 12 The objective in learning the Word of God is to have it in your \_\_\_ (Deut 6:6).

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