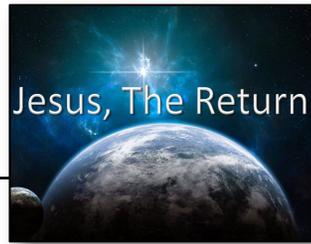


1 Thessalonians - Being READY for Christ's Return



- How familiar are you about the end times, the rapture of the church, and the return of Christ? If Jesus were to return today, would you be ready to meet Him?

The **return of Christ** is a running theme that is mentioned in all five chapters of the book of 1 Thessalonians (cf. 1:3, 10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-4, 23). In short, the central focus of the letter is that **Jesus is coming again** and will rapture (catch up into heaven) everyone who is a redeemed follower of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Until then, the believer must...

- **endure hardship** for the faith (1 Thess. 2:14; 3:3-4),
- **live lives that are “holy”** and **pleasing to God** (1 Thess. 4:1, 3-12), and
- **be ready to meet Jesus** without shame and regret (1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23).

Central Lesson:

Jesus is coming again - endure **HARDSHIP, live **RIGHT**, and be **READY** to meet Him.**

Author: The book identifies the Apostle **PAUL** as the author (1:1; 2:18) accompanied by Silas and Timothy. The early Church Fathers also wrote of Paul being the author as far back as A.D. 140.

Date: 1 Thessalonians was written about A.D. **51** from Corinth. It is one of Paul's first letters.

Paul started the church in Thessalonica during his second missionary travels around A.D. 51 as recorded in Acts 17:1-10, 13. Approximately three weeks later, the Jewish leaders started a city-wide riot. Paul and Silas had to sneak out of the city by night. They went to Berea (Acts 17:10), Athens (Acts 17:15) and eventually Corinth (Acts 18:1).

Paul had a deep concern for the well being of the new Christians in Thessalonica. The church was only a few months old and was experiencing persecution for their faith in Christ (2:14). Paul sent Timothy back to check on them and to encourage them spiritually (1 Thessalonians 3:5) while he waited in Corinth. When Timothy and Silas returned to Paul (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6), they gave a good report about the Thessalonians that brought great encouragement to Paul (1 Thess. 3:7-8).

Paul wrote the letter of 1 Thessalonians from Corinth to praise them for their steadfastness in the Lord (1 Thess. 3:8) and to address other issues to help them to grow spiritually.

Title: The title of the book is named after the recipients—Christians living in the city of **THESSALONICA** which is located in northeastern Greece. The church was made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers although the majority were Gentiles who turned to God from idolatry (1 Thess. 1:9; 2:14-16). This letter is the first of two that Paul wrote to these believers.

Key Verse: 1 Thessalonians 3:13. (NLT). “May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God our Father when our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people. Amen”

Key Chapter: Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 includes the central focus of **living right**—sanctified, holy lives (4:1-12)—and **being ready for the rapture** and return of Jesus Christ (4:13-18).

- **Immorality** was widespread and sanctioned by the Thessalonian pagan religion and society. Paul wrote to counter this with an emphasis on moral purity and sanctification (**1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**).

Bible teacher, Ray Stedman writes: “...just as we live today in an age of heightened sexual permissiveness and promiscuity so did the people of first-century Greek society. Their religion sanctioned sexual promiscuity. The priestesses of the pagan temples were often prostitutes, practicing their trade right in the temples. Those who practiced moral purity were regarded as laughable freaks. New Christians felt enormous pressure to fall in line with the common sexual practices of their day.” (p.641)

- The Thessalonian Christians were **confused** about the details concerning the rapture and return of Christ (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

Theologian, Paul Benware, in his book, *Survey of the New Testament*, explains: “When Paul was in Thessalonica, he had taught them that one day Jesus would return and suddenly take all believers to heaven. (This event is commonly called the ‘rapture.’) He apparently taught them that the rapture could occur at any moment with no events necessarily preceding it. When, therefore, some Christians died, the church was distressed that these believers would miss out on the rapture. Paul wrote to comfort them (4:18) by assuring them that all believers in Christ will be taken in this event. In fact, the ones who have died will go first and will be followed immediately by the living Christians. (In 1 Cor. 15:51-53, Paul explains that all Christians will receive their resurrected bodies at the rapture, with the dead being raised and the living being changed instantly.)” (p.183).

Key Words: **RETURN** or **COME** in the NLT (2:19; 3:17; 15-16; 5:23). The Greek noun *parousia*, (Phonetic Spelling: par-oo-see'-ah), can also be translated “arrival” or “presence.”

Outline: *The Life Application Bible* outlines the book as:

- I. **FAITHFULNESS** to the Lord (Chapters 1-3)
- II. **WATCHFULNESS** for the Lord (Chapters 4-5)

Conclusion: The main theme of 1 Thessalonians was **the return of Jesus Christ**. Even though he addressed several other issues, it all connected to the coming of Christ and living in such a way as to be ready to meet Him. Seek to live in such a way that you will not be ashamed or have regrets when you meet Jesus. Begin now to prepare yourself for the return of Christ.

Central Lesson:

Jesus is coming again - endure **HARDSHIP, live **RIGHT**, and be **READY** to meet Him**

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.