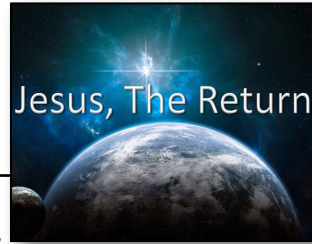


1 & 2 Thessalonians

Be READY for Christ's Return



- How familiar are you with 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?

In **1 Thessalonians**, the **return of Christ** is a running theme mentioned in all five chapters (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 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).

In **2 Thessalonians**, the believers in Thessalonica were **living in fear of the future**. A letter was sent to the church with Paul's name on it that suggested that the Tribulation period—"the Day of the Lord"—had started (2:1-2). However, the letter was a **counterfeit**. Paul never sent the letter. Someone was deliberately trying to deceive the Thessalonian church. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (NLT), "*2 Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us.*" Paul sent the letter of 2 Thessalonians to expose the deception and correct the misinformation about the end times.

Central Lesson:

You don't have to fear the future - God is already there and in control.

Author: Both books identify the Apostle **PAUL** as the author (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:18. 2 Thess. 1:1; 3:17) accompanied by Silas and Timothy. In 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Paul said that he had written the greeting of this letter "*in my own handwriting*" and added, "*I do this in all my letters to prove they are from me.*" 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. **2 Thessalonians** was written about A.D. **52** from Corinth. Paul wrote this letter shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians (cf. Acts 18:5).

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).

Title: Both books were named after the 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).

Key Verses: **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.*"

2 Thessalonians 2:15. (NLT). "*With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter.*"

Key Chapters: In **1 Thessalonians**, chapter **4**. 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).

In **2 Thessalonians**, chapter **2**. This chapter corrects a serious error that had crept into the Thessalonian church. They thought they had missed the rapture, and their suffering was a result of being in the Tribulation period (2:1-2). Paul told them that the Tribulation had not started. Before the Tribulation begins, there are several events that must take place first (2:3-12).

1. The "*great rebellion against God*" must occur (2:3).
2. The "*the man of lawlessness is revealed*" also known as the Antichrist, must be revealed (2:3-4).
3. The **RESTRAINER** (believed to be the Holy Spirit) "*steps out of the way*" so that the Antichrist "*can be revealed*" (2:5-10).

"6 And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed only when his time comes. 7 For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way." Many Bible teachers believe the rapture will occur when the restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is removed from the world (A reversal of Pentecost). The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of every Christ-follower and can never be taken away from the believer (cf. John 14:16-17). If the Spirit leaves this world, so must all believers leave with Him.

Key Words: In **1 Thessalonians**, **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."

In **2 Thessalonians**, **COMING** or **COME** in the NLT (1:7, 10; 2:1, 3, 6, 8, 9; 3:5). The book describes the coming of Jesus and the coming of the Antichrist.

Outline: *The Life Application Bible* outlines **1 Thessalonians** as:

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

2 Thessalonians can be outlined as:

- I. Information about the **FUTURE** (1:1-2:12)
- II. Instruction about the **PRESENT** (2:13-3:18)

Central Lesson: You don't have to fear the future - God already there and is in control.

Next Steps: ► 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. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.