

A letter from Paul – 1 Thessalonians

Sunday July 12, 2026

Paul, Silas and Timothy first went to the Macedonian port city of Thessalonica on the second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-14).

Acts Chapter 17

Paul in Thessalonica. ¹ When they took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they reached Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² Following his usual custom, Paul joined them, and for three sabbaths he entered into discussions with them from the scriptures, ³ expounding and demonstrating that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that “This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I proclaim to you.” ⁴ Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so, too, a great number of Greeks who were worshipers, and not a few of the prominent women. ⁵ But the Jews became jealous and recruited some worthless men loitering in the public square, formed a mob, and set the city in turmoil. They marched on the house of Jason, intending to bring them before the people’s assembly. ⁶ When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city magistrates, shouting, “These people who have been creating a disturbance all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them. They all act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar and claim instead that there is another king, Jesus.” ⁸ They stirred up the crowd and the city magistrates who, upon hearing these charges, ⁹ took a surety payment from Jason and the others before releasing them.

Paul in Berea. ¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas to Berea during the night. Upon arrival they went to the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These Jews were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all willingness and examined the scriptures daily to determine whether these things were so. ¹² Many of them became believers, as did not a few of the influential Greek women and men. ¹³ But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had now been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there too to cause a commotion and stir up the crowds. ¹⁴ So the brothers at once sent Paul on his way to the seacoast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. ¹⁵ After Paul’s escorts had taken him to Athens, they came away with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

Thessalonica was the second place the gospel was preached in Europe, Philippi being the first. The preaching of the gospel had depleted the congregation in the synagogues, causing the Jews to charge Paul's host, Jason with harboring traitors to Ceasar. The city's government officials kept Jason, charging him a peace bond as security and let the missionaries leave the city. When they got to Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (1 Thess.3:1-2, 5) to encourage the believers and report back on the condition of the church there.

After Timothy left Thessalonica and rejoined Paul and Silas in Corinth, Paul wrote two letters to the Thessalonians.

The trials the Thessalonians endured were social, economic and financial pressures placed on them by the unbelievers. The Jews were upset that the synagogues were not being attended by Christians and the Gentile unbelievers were involved in idol worship. Those who had become believers were under pressure from both groups. The unbelieving Jews went after Paul, Silas and Timothy. They were accused of rebellion from the Jewish leaders and with the recent killing of Stephen, they took the threats seriously. Jason was also on the hook financially, if Paul and his group returned. Paul was concerned and the pressure caused them to get out of Thessalonica. Paul sent Timothy back to check on the Thessalonians and bring back a report. Paul received a good report from Timothy and wrote his first letter to see if they were still practicing what he had taught them.

Paul's Commendation of the Thessalonians

1 Thess. 1:2-10 says:

2) *We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;* 3) *constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father;* 4) *knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;* 5) *for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (Paul was reminding them because of the slanderous, false things that had been said about Paul and Silas to malign them to their followers.)* 6) *You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,* 7) *so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. (The reputation of the newly converted Thessalonians was traveling all around with the testimonies of those who had been around them.)* 8) *For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place, your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.* 9) *For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve “a living and true God”* 10) *and to wait for His son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from “the wrath to come.”*

To wait – Not watch for signs. Why did Paul tell them to wait and not to look for signs of Christ’s coming? The Rapture of the Believer had been taught to the

Thessalonians by Paul. They knew what was to come. The reason they were told “to wait” was because there were no prophecies left to be fulfilled before the Rapture was to happen.

The Christian believer was to wait, but the unbelieving Jew was to watch for signs. Why? Because there were signs for the Jews.

(Isaiah 11:11; Malachai 4:5). Some of the signs for the Jews:

(Ingathering of the Jewish exiles; Arrival of prophet Elijah returning; Gog and Magog revolution; Rebuilding of the temple; a Jewish spiritual awakening.)

Matthew 24:42-44 - says “*Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.*”⁴³ *But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.*”⁴⁴ *For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.* (This was written to Israelites)

Matthew 24:15-16 - ¹⁵ “*Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand,*”¹⁶ then *those who are in Judea* must flee to the mountains.

This was written with a specific audience (Those who are in Judea). This was the Jews in the Tribulation, who were **to see the temple desecrated** and flee to the mountains in Jordan to a place called Petra. How do we know this is to the Jews? Because the Abomination of Desolation is when the Anti-Christ stands in the temple and declares himself to be the Christ. This is 3 ½ years into the Tribulation period.

Believers will have already been raptured. This is the distinction between waiting and watching. The Church is told “to wait” in the Greek, and is in the present tense, meaning we are to be “constantly waiting”. There is nothing that needs to happen before the Rapture. It could be any time, it is imminent. It is like a boss saying they are going on vacation but will just be hanging around the house. He could pop in and check on your work at any time, so it changes how we work. We should live our lives with imminent behavior. The Jews were still waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

The wrath to come – Paul was very successful at sharing with the Thessalonians that Jesus would return for the believers. Paul, himself likely believed that he himself was living in the days that he would see Christ’s return. The imminence in his teaching was echoed by the Thessalonians and they believed it too.

The Christian’s hope of the return of Christ is rooted in the fact that He was raised from the dead. He was the **Rescuer**, the **Deliverer**.

There was no reason to believe He would not do as He had taught. They all knew of the resurrection from the grave by Christ.

The judgements to come in the Tribulation period would be called the Day of the Lord, “The wrath” in Revelation 6:15-17. (To be delivered from this event would indicate a Pretribulation Rapture of believers.)

*When the Tribulation comes, men will act as if they believe the end of the world is at hand, not simply talk as if it were as seen above.

In Daniel 9:27, you see **the prophecy** that the wrath of God will be delivered within a seven-year period (Tribulation). It describes a ruler (Anti-Christ) who confirms a covenant (with Israel), breaks it halfway through by stopping temple sacrifices, and commits a sacrilegious act, “the Abomination of Desolation.” He

stands in the temple and declares that he is the Christ. He orders everyone to worship him.

The Jews view Daniel 9 as an Angelic response to Daniel's grief over the 70-year Babylonian empire. The 70 weeks represent the 490 yrs encompassing rebuilding the temple.

(This is what John said of his vision for the future Tribulation.)

*Revelation 6:15 -17 says: Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16) and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb**; 17) for the great day of **their wrath has come**, and who is able to stand?"*

Daniel prophesied the Rapture approx....537 B.C.

Paul's writing of the two letters to the Thessalonians was in 51 A.D.

John wrote the book of Revelation in 95 A.D. with even greater detail, just 44 years after Paul taught this to the Thessalonians.

The reason I am showing you the timelines is because it had been well-documented about the wrath of God to come, hundreds of years before Paul taught about it. The Thessalonians were looking for the return of the Lord in their day. They knew that they would be removed from the wrath of God as believers (1 Thess. 5:9). The teaching gave them hope that the Messiah was coming back for them. This was not some modern concept that was just someone's imagination. What they did not know at that time was that there would be an interrupted period in Daniel's 70th-week prophecy called the Church age, and the rapture of the believer would take place at the close of that era. The remaining

time of Daniel's 70th week would be the seven-year period of wrath that would complete the prophecy of Daniel 9.

Now back to the letters. Paul's concern for the Thessalonians received a positive report from Timothy when he met up with them in Corinth.

There was nothing bad for Paul to say to them in the letters, so he encouraged them to continue doing what they were doing while improving on it as they grew spiritually. In the first letter, Paul taught them about the development concerning: **Sexual relations** in *1 Thes. 4:1-8*; This doctrine was a reminder to not walk in sexual impurity. The believer is to control their lustful passions and know how to possess our own vessels. God has called us not for sexual impurity, but for sanctification. He who rejects this doctrine does not reject man but does reject the God who gives us the Holy Spirit.

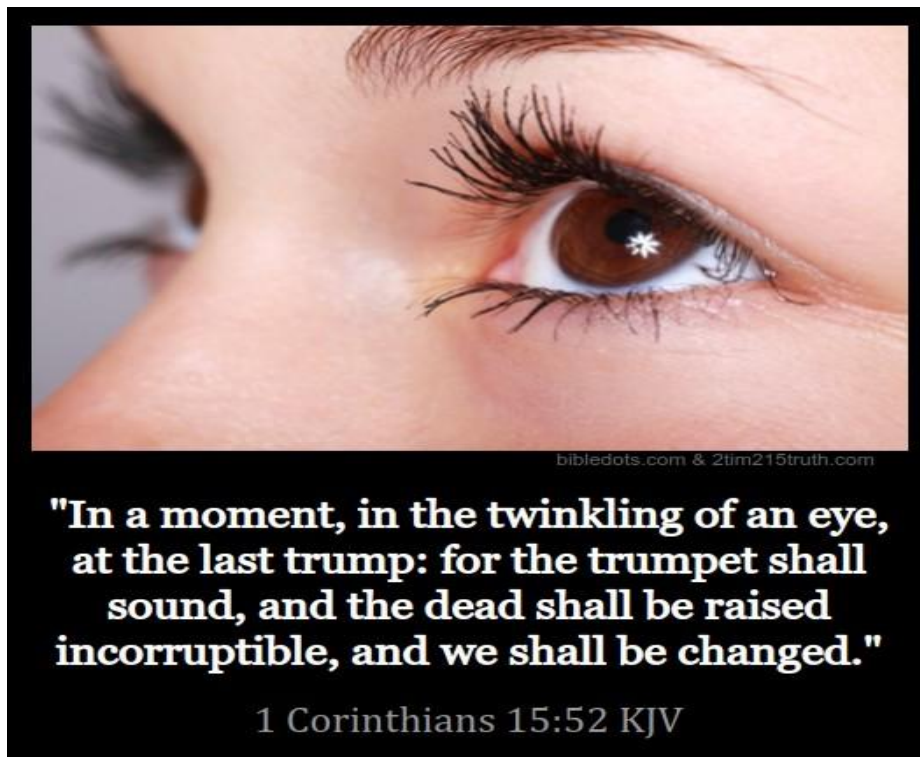
Brotherly love in *1 Thes. 4:9-10*, for no one needs to tell you how to love one another as you have been taught by God;

Orderly living in *1 Thes. 4:11-12* - *But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,¹¹ and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,¹² so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need;*

Teaching concerning the dead in *1 Thes. 4:13-18*; This was a doctrine that they had questions to Paul about. It really bothered them that they had learned about the Rapture and were told to wait, but when thinking about loved ones who had died already, would they get to experience the Rapture and if so, how? Paul could not just tell them to go read their Bible, because the New Testament canon of scripture had not yet been completed. Paul explained that the dead in Christ

would be caught up first in the rapture. Their physical body would join their Soul in its temporal body and God would give them their resurrection body. Then the living believers would be caught up into the sky to meet the Lord and receive their resurrection body. This event will be a joyful occasion, because it will also be as a reunion of those who have died before us meeting us in the sky.

This will all take place in a twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52).



The now resurrected dead and the living believers will start eternity with the Lord. This doctrine gave the Thessalonians peace.

Teaching concerning the Day of the Lord in 1 Thes. 5:1-11. The Day of the Lord is called the “birth pangs” It is an extended period of time, beginning with the Tribulation and including the events of the second coming of Christ and the Millennial kingdom on earth. Here, Paul focuses on the beginning of that day (not a period of 24 hours) which will come unexpectedly (like a thief in the night).

The references Paul made here are of those who are asleep or those who get drunk at night. To be asleep means they are unbelievers. To be drunk at night refers to people who are busy in their life of pleasure and debauchery. When he says we are not of the night or the darkness, but sons of light (we have had our eyes open to the truth) we are believers. Paul says to put on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet, the hope of salvation (a reference to the Armor of God in Ephesians 6:14-17).

The most important verse in chapter 5 is vs 9.

*⁹ For **God has not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.*

*¹¹ Therefore, **encourage one another and build-up one another**, just as you also are doing.*

This is the Rapture doctrine. God removes the believer before His wrath is executed in the Tribulation. This should give you hope.

The word “Rapture” is not in the Bible.

Rapture is a state or experience of being carried away. The English word comes from a Latin word, "*Rapiemur*", which means to seize or snatch in relation to an ecstasy of spirit or the actual removal from one place to another. In other words, it means to be carried away in spirit or in body. The Rapture of the church means the carrying away of the church from earth to heaven.

The Greek word from this term “rapture” is derived appears in [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#), translated “caught up.” The Greek word it translates is “harpazo”, which means to snatch or take away.

Here are 5 general comments about the Rapture:

1. **This is not the first mention of the Rapture.** Jesus first mentioned the event prior to His death when speaking to the Disciples in the upper room. John 14:1-4

says: “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many rooms; if that was not so, I would have told you, because *I am going there* to prepare a place for you. ³ And *if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again* and *will take you to Myself*, so that *where I am, there you also will be*. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.”

2. **The word Rapture doesn’t come from the Greek**; it is a Latin term.

3. **The Rapture is distinct from the 2nd Advent of Christ**. In the Rapture *believers are caught up to the sky* to meet the Lord. At the 2nd Advent, the Lord *comes down to earth* and the believer saints “*Come back with Him*”.

RAPTURE

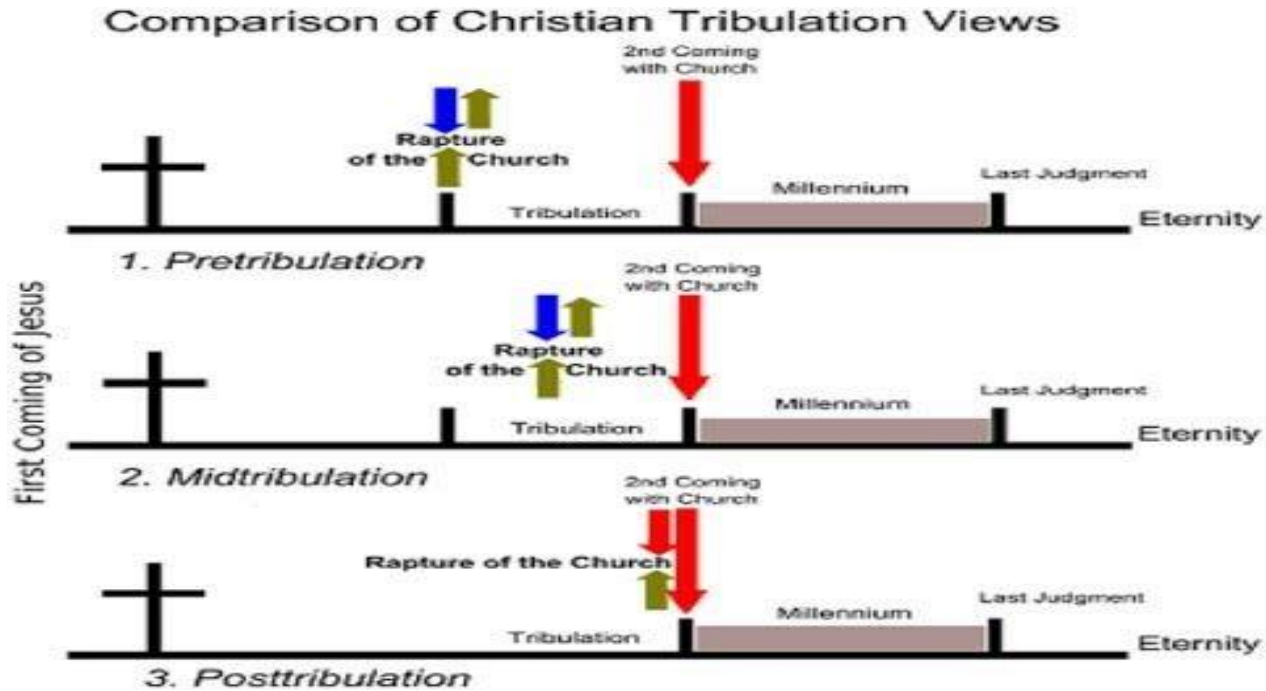
1. Meet bels. in the air
2. Believers taken
3. Bride is claimed
4. Tribulation begins
5. Imminent
6. Brings comfort
7. Program for Church
8. A mystery
9. Christians judged

2ND ADVENT

1. Touches earth
2. Unbelievers taken
3. Bride returns w/ J.C.
4. Millennium begins
5. Preceded by signs
6. Brings judgment
7. Program for Israel
8. Known in O.T. & N.T.
9. Gent. & Jews judged

4. **The Rapture is for the Church age believers only**. It is a rescue mission for the church and a reunion. (1 Thess. 1:10)

5. **Pre-tribulation is the correct view**.



Teaching concerning various duties in *1 Thes. 5:12-28*.

¹² But we request of you, Brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you (all workers in Christ), and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction (Pastor-Teachers), ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another (believers). ¹⁴ We urge you, Brethren, (believers). *Admonish* (firmly but gently warn or reprimand) *the unruly* (those mentioned in 2 Thess. 3:11 who quit working because they expected the Lord's return too soon) *encourage the fainthearted* (those new believers who need guidance), *help the weak* (help the ones who need help in finances, in health support), *be patient* with everyone. ¹⁵ See that *no one repays another with evil* for evil but *always seek after that which is good for one another* and for all people. ¹⁶ *Rejoice always*; ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing* (like a croupy cough that you can't stop); ¹⁸ *in everything give thanks*; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit*; The Bible likens the Holy Spirit to a flame. Do not resist Him or you can diminish His work in you.

²⁰ *do not despise prophetic utterances*. The early church tended to underrate the value of prophecies which were the direct communication by God before the New Testament was completed. Sometimes these revelations concerned future events,

but often they dealt with the present in their day (Acts 13:2). There are many spiritual gifts that have ended after this period.

²¹ But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He (Jesus Christ) who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

²⁵ Brethren, pray for us.

²⁶ Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. (Hey, that's YOU!)

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

With Love,

From your servant, Paul