

# 1 1 Thessalonians – Who, What, Why, When?

- ◆ **Written by whom?**
  - Paul, the apostle.
- ◆ **Written when and where?**
  - Written shortly after his arrival in Corinth, which would mean either AD 50 or AD 51.
- ◆ **Written to whom?**
  - To the young church in Thessalonica. Timothy was sent there to help find out what the conditions were with the new believers.
- ◆ **What form?**
  - A loving pastoral letter. Paul told them how pleased he was with them.
- ◆ **What's it about?**
  - Paul used this letter to answer some charges that were made against him by the Jews in the city. He encouraged the Christians to stay strong in the face of their difficulties. He was overjoyed to hear how steadfast they were in their faith.
- ◆ **Written for what purpose?**
  - The Church as a whole was still in early days, in some cases struggling to reconcile doctrinal differences between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. Paul wanted to encourage the local believers and strengthen their resolve. Also, Paul explained the superior morality of the Christian faith over the pagan beliefs, and tried to calm their fears about the second coming of Jesus.

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## Paul's Missionary Journeys and Where Thessalonians Was Written



## 3

## I Thessalonians Chapter 1 – Scripture Questions

1. The 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to the Thessalonians was written by what three people? (v. 1)
2. Silvanus is the Latin name for \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 1)
3. In his prayers, Paul remembers three things about the Thessalonians (v. 3)  
their work of \_\_\_\_\_, their labor of \_\_\_\_\_ and  
their steadfastness of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. There were four ways that the Gospel came to the Thessalonians (v. 5) – what were they?  
In \_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_, in the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, and with full \_\_\_\_\_
5. How did the Thessalonians receive the word? (v. 6)
6. Who did the Thessalonians become an example to? (v. 7)
7. The Thessalonians turned from what to serve who? (v. 9)

## 4 I Thessalonians Chapter 1 – What did it mean to them?

In contrast to some of Paul's other letters, Paul's heart overflowed with joy and love because of the loyalty of the Thessalonians, both to him and to the gospel. We can see the heart of a pastor who had ties of love to those who had responded to his ministry.

Thessalonica was a bustling, prosperous city. There was no Roman garrison. Around 200,000 people lived there, and it was a free city ruled by its own council of citizens and administered by five or six 'politarchs'. It had been the seat of Roman government for Macedonia for about 200 years.

There were enough Jewish merchants to have a well-established synagogue, which offered Paul an obvious place to begin his ministry. While he used his usual approach of preaching from the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the resistance that he met forced him to move on to the city itself. He actually followed his own trade of manufacturing the goat's-hair cloth that was a part of the local economy.

There were a good number of Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, and prominent women who responded to his teaching in the synagogue, including a man named Jason who actually ended up defending himself (and Paul) before the city council.

The opening chapter is a warm expression of thanksgiving. He recognizes their loving self-sacrifice and their willingness to work hard to teach the gospel. The Thessalonians were persistent and courageous in their lives, and Paul praises them for their faithfulness.

## 5

## I Thessalonians Chapter 1 – Application Questions

1. Who do you mention constantly in your prayers? Who needs your prayers this week?
2. When Paul, Silas and Timothy founded the Thessalonian church, some of the converts were Jews and some were pagans. In other words, he took believers from other religions. Should we still do this? Why or why not?
3. People sometimes imitate us. I feel like a hypocrite sometimes because I know I'm not always a good example. What should I do?
4. If people were to start talking about this Sunday School class – what would they say? What would you like them to say?

## 6

## I Thessalonians Chapter 2 – Scripture Questions

1. Paul's first visit to the Thessalonians was NOT a \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 1)
2. With the help of \_\_\_\_\_ and in spite of strong \_\_\_\_\_ Paul told the gospel. (vs. 2)
3. Paul spoke as one approved by \_\_\_\_\_ and one to be \_\_\_\_\_ with the gospel. (vs. 4)
4. Which motherly characteristics did Paul list in verse 7 and 8?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which fatherly characteristics did Paul list in verse 11 and 12?  
\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_
6. Paul was thankful because the Thessalonians received the word of God not as \_\_\_\_\_ but as it actually is the \_\_\_\_\_. (vs. 13)
7. Who did the believers imitate? (vs. 14)
8. Who did the believers suffer from? (vs. 14)
9. Why were the Jews hostile, displeasing God? (vs. 16)
10. How high were the Jews heaping up their sins? (vs. 16)

## 7 I Thessalonians Chapter 2 – Summary

Having explained why he and his co-workers were thankful for the Thessalonians, Paul now moves on to one of the main purposes for this letter: a long vindication of their character and ministry. It seems likely that the ones who opposed Paul (and Silas & Timothy) were the Jews who were persistently coming after them from one town to another. These Jews even accused him of treason while he was still in the city. In light of these accusations, and since the local church was still young and relatively unorganized, Paul finds it necessary to confirm his sincerity.

Paul reminds them that his message agreed perfectly with truth, and that he did not have ‘impure motives’. Sexual impropriety was a common problem with traveling religious leaders, and no doubt his enemies added this to their list of accusations. He denies three things specifically: 1) He never tried to ‘flatter’ anyone into believing the gospel, 2) He never sought money or self-satisfaction, and 3) He does not want praise from men.

Paul reminds his readers of his great tenderness with them, and the way that the missionaries shared their very lives with them. The long hours and hardships were more than balanced by the joy of their mission. Paul calls on the Thessalonians to witness how both the religious piety and moral conduct were beyond reproach. Paul felt like a father to these people.

Paul also speaks of their ready acceptance of the Christian way of life. They had accepted not only the truth of the gospel, but had allowed their hearts to be changed by the Word of God. He tenderly reminds them that their suffering and oppression were further evidence of their commitment to following Christ.

At the end, Paul looks forward to the return of Jesus. He tells the Thessalonians that they will be his “glory and joy” before Christ.

## 8

## I Thessalonians Chapter 2 – Application Questions

1. Paul faced some strong opponents - how can we share the gospel in the face of strong opposition? Have you ever actually faced any kind of opposition?
2. Paul supported himself rather than be a burden on other Christians – should ministers be self-supporting? Why would that work / not work in our congregation?
3. Some people might have questioned Paul's motives – what should we do when people question our motives?
4. Is it always true that if you are serving God then you will be persecuted? Why or why not?



9

## I Thessalonians Chapter 3 – Scripture Questions

1. Who did Paul send to the Thessalonians to encourage and teach them? (3:2)
2. What did Paul fear? (3:5)
3. Why was Paul comforted? (3:6)
4. How did Paul pray for the Thessalonians? (3:10)
5. What kind of hearts did Paul want them to have, and how were they to get these hearts? (3:12-13)
6. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to practice sexual purity. Why? (4:3-8)
7. Who taught the Thessalonians to love one another? (4:9)
8. Paul encouraged them to do several things in 4:9-11. List them below:  

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9. Why did he want them to do these things? (4:12)

## I Thessalonians Chapter 3 – What did it mean to them?

Paul now tells the Thessalonians why he sent Timothy. Paul had been so worried about them in the face of opposition and suffering that he just couldn't wait any longer—he needed a first-hand account of how they were coping. He was even willing to do without his favorite co-worker in a strange city (Athens). Timothy's specific mission was to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians in their faith.

This report helped Paul in the difficulties he was facing. And he was facing trouble: physical problems, antagonism and direct attacks. The faith of the Thessalonians made it easier for Paul to deal with his current problems.

Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for two things. First, that God and Jesus would clear a way for him to come back to them. Second, that their hearts would overflow with love and good works.

Finally, Paul speaks of the judgment that will come with Jesus' return. He has no doubt that the Thessalonians will be found faithful. And not only Christ, but 'all his holy ones' will be witnesses. In the New Testament, this phrase almost always means the redeemed human beings. Paul seems to be referring to the time when every Christian will have their character divinely measured.

## I Thessalonians Chapter 3 – Application Questions

1. Even Paul worried about things, as he worried about the faith of the Thessalonians. He sent Timothy to find out how they were doing. How do we handle worries about other people? About ourselves?
2. It seems as though Paul got confirmation of his mission through the faith of his converts. Is that okay? How am I supposed to measure my success at being a Christian?
3. Paul wanted to come and “supply what is lacking” in their faith (3:10). He was an apostle, so I guess he had the right to decide what they needed. What about me? Am I supposed to figure out what I’m lacking by myself, or are my church leaders supposed to tell me/teach me? That seems kind of nosy. Isn’t faith a private matter?
4. Paul said the Thessalonians were doing well, and yet he wanted them to do better and better. Where does this kind of thing end? When are my efforts good enough? Can I never stop and say, “I’ve done well”?

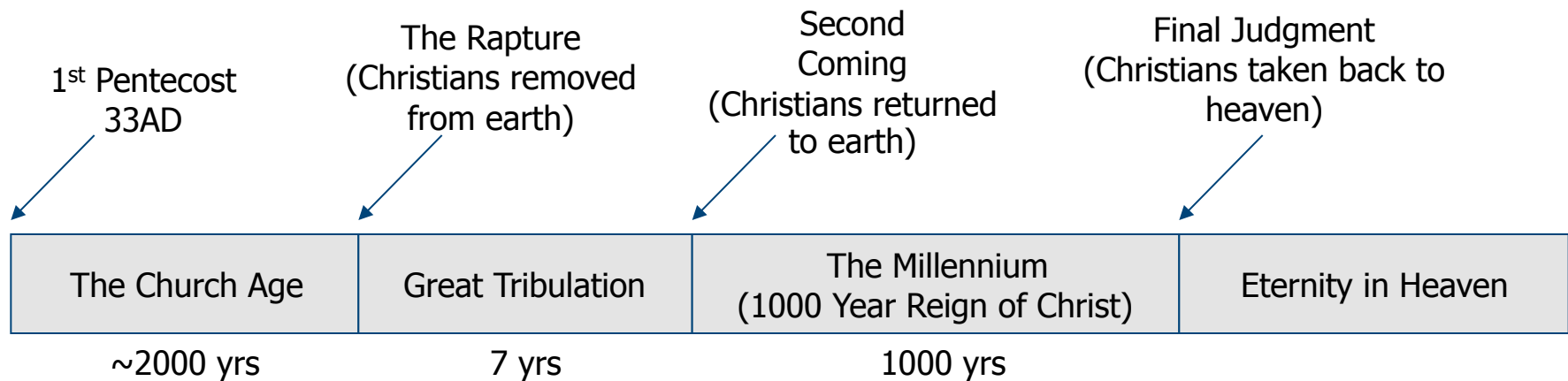
## 12

## I Thessalonians Chapter 4 – Scripture Questions

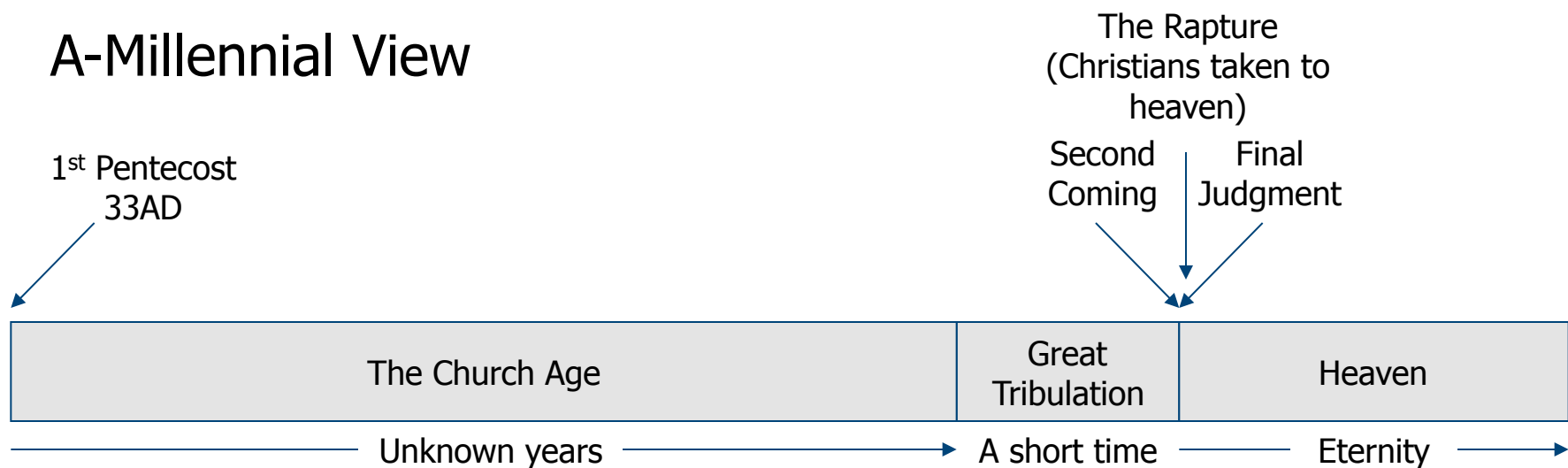
1. Who are we supposed to please with our lives? (vs. 1)
2. What is God's will for us? (vs. 3-6)  
Avoid \_\_\_\_\_ Learn to control \_\_\_\_\_  
No one should \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why did God call us? (vs. 7)
4. If we reject this instruction, who are we really rejecting? (vs. 8)
5. Who taught the Thessalonians to love one another? (vs. 9)
6. What did Paul believe should be their ambition? (vs. 11)
7. Why did Paul think this was a good ambition? (vs. 12)
8. "For we believe that Jesus died and \_\_\_\_\_, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have \_\_\_\_\_ in him." (vs. 14)
9. When the Lord returns, who will rise to meet him? (vs. 16)
10. After the Christians who have died rise to meet Jesus, who will go with them, to be with the Lord forever? (vs. 17)

# I Thessalonians Chapter 4:17 – Raptus (The Rapture)

## Pre-Millennial View



## A-Millennial View



## 14 I Thessalonians Chapter 4 – What did it mean to them?

Paul begins this section by reminding the listeners that they know how they are supposed to be living. They had been instructed in both things to stay away from and things to be doing—simply staying away from wrong is not enough. Christians should also, actively, do the right things.

Next Paul talks about the process of sanctification. This word means the process of growing in holiness and dedication to God's will and way. Our salvation occurs when we commit ourselves to Christ. The process of sanctification lasts the rest of our lives.

Paul specifically mentions staying away from immorality. In this time, immorality referred to any kind of illicit sexual indulgence: in other words, any sexual activity outside of marriage. Pagan religions regarded sexual freedom and promiscuous practice as natural and normal. Pagan gods and goddesses were grossly immoral; their worship involved the sex act, priestesses being provided for men who came to worship. For Christians, there was supposed to be a stark contrast in behavior. The Thessalonian believers were constantly exposed to the sexual abuses of cults in Thessalonica, but God called them to holy living. Personal chastity and marriage were the ideals and goals for believers in God.

The believers were also encouraged to live quietly, to work hard and avoid gossip. The church seemed to be consumed with thoughts of the Lord's return, to the point that they were disrupting the peace of the body. Paul wanted to be sure that any outsiders would respect them for their lives.

The concern about what would happen to those who died was serious enough that Paul needed to specifically address it. The assurance that all who believed, living or dead, would be with Jesus in heaven was an encouragement to all. In Paul's understanding, the sequence was this: there is a word of command, the archangel shouts, the trumpet blasts, and Jesus comes down from heaven. Then, the dead in Christ will rise, and the living Christians will join them. We will be with the Lord forever.

## I Thessalonians Chapter 4 – Application Questions

1. Our current culture has a definite pagan attitude about sexual activity. Even among Christians, there seems to be a very casual attitude about it. Is there any practical way to speak against this behavior? Should we even try? Why or why not?
2. Paul seemed so certain about Jesus' return, and the things that would happen then. I'm not really sure. Is that okay? Am I going to be in trouble with God if I just can't quite convince myself that Jesus is really going to come back?
3. Just about every religion has beliefs about the afterlife. What if we've got it wrong? Will we go to hell?
4. The important topic/question of the day for the Thessalonians was about Jesus' return. What do you think is an important topic/question for our church today?

## 16

## I Thessalonians Chapter 5 – Scripture Questions

1. The Day of the Lord will come like (5:2-3):
  - a \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_
  - a woman in \_\_\_\_\_
2. Since we belong to the day (5:8):
  - let us be \_\_\_\_\_
  - put on the \_\_\_\_\_ of faith and love
  - put on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the hope of salvation
3. What does God intend for us to have? (vs. 9, 10)
4. How should we treat people who work with and for the believers? (vs. 12, 13)
5. Paul mentions several ways to interact with believers: (vs. 14, 15)
  - \* \_\_\_\_\_ those who are idle and disruptive
  - \* \_\_\_\_\_ those who are discouraged
  - \* \_\_\_\_\_ those who are weak
  - \* Be patient with \_\_\_\_\_
  - \* Always try to do what is \_\_\_\_\_ for each other—and for everyone
6. What is God's will for us in Christ Jesus? (vs. 16-18)
7. How should we deal with prophecies? (vs. 19-22)
8. Who sanctifies us? (vs. 23, 24)
9. How does Paul encourage the readers to act in their community? (vs. 25-27)



## I Thessalonians Chapter 5 – What did it mean to them?

Paul begins this last section by reminding the Thessalonians that they have already been taught at least some of what they need to know about Jesus' return. Their current concerns were about the timing of this return. "Times and dates" were words commonly used in end-time writings to describe both the literal timing and the character of the world before the return. The "Day of the Lord" was also a familiar term, and it was believed that on this "Day" God's enemies would be destroyed, Israel would be lifted up as a nation, and God's people would be saved. Jesus himself indicated that there would be a time of turmoil and destruction before the Day. Paul seems to be teaching that believers would be taken to heaven before this destruction. Even with this knowledge, however, the Thessalonians were having difficulty making practical application to their everyday lives.

Paul says, without qualification, that believers in Christ belong to a different kingdom than that of the world. Our position in Christ guarantees our deliverance! Because of that guarantee, Paul urges believers to live a lifestyle that is deliberately good. The implication is that though we will be saved, it is possible to take on the same lifestyle as those who will be surprised—and lost—when the Lord returns. Paul wanted them to be aware of the Coming, but not to be in a state of wild alarm or panic.

The letter ends with teachings and encouragements concerning responsibilities of believers to one another. He starts with responsibilities to leaders, which was most likely the elders appointed by Timothy (at Paul's direction). The leaders were required to care for the welfare of those whom they led, and the members were required to follow their lead.

The remaining teachings refer to the responsibilities believers have for one another, to themselves, and to public worship. Overall, Paul is concerned that the body (church) should be uplifted and that mutual love and concern are implemented.

## I Thessalonians Chapter 5 – Application Questions

1. What should we do about people that are obsessed with the end of the world (and when/if it's going to happen)?
2. What do you think it means to be “children of the light”? How does this work out in practical terms for our everyday activities?
3. We are supposed to respect, honor and love our church leaders. What's the best way to do that?
4. Paul seems to think that the relationships between believers are really important. What are some good ways to build up these relationships? Are there any specific things we can do to build up relationships in our Sunday School class?
5. Paul says to test everything. Why is testing important? What do I use to do this testing?