

1 Thessalonians: Living in Light of the Lord's Return

The Thessalonian church was born in an environment of persecution. About two years earlier all the Jews had been expelled from Rome due to riots among the Jewish population. These riots were likely due to the preaching of Christ in Jewish areas of the city.

Word was getting around. When Paul got to Thessalonica, the patience of many of the Jews was getting short. He was there for not much more than three weeks, reasoning in the synagogue. Though some believed, others started a huge uproar in the city, forcing Paul and his team to leave.

They went on to the city of Berea, where they met with more success, but the unbelieving Thessalonian Jews followed them there and gave them trouble again. So Paul escaped to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy behind. From there he continued to Corinth where Silas and Timothy caught up with him and from Corinth Paul wrote this letter.

Read Acts 17:1-15

Galatians was likely the oldest letter we have from Paul and 1 Thessalonians is next. The faith of the Thessalonian believers was strong, despite their lack of much instruction.

Many of the key passages in 1 & 2 Thessalonians deal with end times events and prophecies such as the Rapture and the Day of the Lord. The term *Rapture* itself actually comes from the Latin for "caught up", which appears in 4:17. Altogether, the letters to the Thessalonians contain some 20 references to the return of Jesus Christ, which is mentioned in every chapter.

References to Christ's return: 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:13-18, 5:23

Important topics:

1. A strong church can be planted, grow and have a lot be effective in outreach in an environment of severe persecution.
2. Expect trials and trouble as Christian.
3. Christians should be hard-working people.
4. Christians should keep themselves sexually pure.
5. Christians should be able to minister to one another.
6. The wrath of God is coming upon a Christ-rejecting world.
7. Jesus is coming back. This is and has always been a vital doctrine of the church.

Read 1 Thessalonians straight through.

Repeat above points.

Extra-biblical sources consulted:
Life Application NT Commentary, International Bible Commentary, ESV Study Bible