

1 Thessalonians

THEME: "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ."

INTRODUCTION: The Apostle Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica. The Gospel was first preached in Europe at Philippi on Paul's second missionary journey. He left Philippi and came to Thessalonica, which was a busy, thriving seaport which had a Jewish synagogue. There the Apostle preached and began his church.

Thessalonica was on the great highway connecting Rome with the East. It was nearly 100 miles from Philippi, and it attracted the notice of Constantine. He loved the city so much that he almost selected it as his capital instead of the city of Constantinople. The name of the city is now "Saloniki." It had a population of nearly 100,000.

The Apostle preached to the Thessalonians concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When our Lord was here, He instructed His disciples specifically concerning this important event. The night before His crucifixion He talked to them in the upper room about the coming of our Lord. He comforted them with the statement that He would come as surely as He was going away, and that His coming would be literal, bodily, physical, etc. Paul stressed these doctrines to the Thessalonians. They became so interested in the doctrine of the coming of the Lord that they were anxiously awaiting Him to come at any moment. Something happened to them, however. The Apostle had taught them that our Lord would come in the sky and call all Christians up in the air to meet Him. The thing that happened at Thessalonica was that one of the church members died. Now then, what would happen to him when the Lord returned? The church at Thessalonica had written Paul a letter asking him to explain this great doctrine of the coming of the Lord in the light of the death of this man. What would happen to this dead Christian? What would happen to the dead saved man when the Lord returned? The book of I Thessalonians was written to explain the exact order of our Lord's return, especially as it pertains to the dead in Christ.

In this epistle are Paul's first written instructions regarding this important doctrine. The church at Thessalonica was one vitally interested in the blessed truths concerning the coming of our Lord.

I. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK.

1. Paul's commendation and personal interest. 1 Thessalonians 1-3. He expressed his gratitude for their faith and for the fact that they were examples to others in Macedonia and around the world. He told them that he desired their confidence in the sincerity of his ministry. He reminded them that he could not return to them.
2. Exhortation to purity and brotherly love. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.
3. Instruction concerning the second coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:28. These believers were disturbed concerning those who had died who, they feared, would have no part in the glory of this event which they supposed would happen soon. The Apostle Paul told them that their sorrow was groundless, that those living at the coming of Christ will have no advantage over those who would be asleep, for they will not precede them, but the dead in Christ shall rise first. The Apostle Paul gives them the order of these great events. First, the Lord will descend from Heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Then the dead in Christ should rise first. Then the living believers shall be translated and caught up in the air to meet the Lord. The whole company, both dead and living believers, will rise to meet the Lord in the air and shall be with Him.

The Apostle Paul reminds them that the time of Jesus' coming is unknown. Read

I Thessalonians 5:1, 2. He then reminds them of the spiritual effect of this great truth. In other words, this truth should lead us to holiness and living for God. See 1 Thessalonians 5:3-24. We are admonished to live under the power and inspiration of this great hope and to be ready for His coming, whether we belong to the resurrected or to the translated company when He comes.

II. WE SHOULD NOT SORROW AS THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE THIS HOPE.

Read I Thessalonians 4:13. Here is one of the key verses in the entire book. The Christian is to sorrow, but not with the same sorrow as the unconverted have. When we bury a loved one, we weep, but not with the same tears of the unconverted. The Apostle is telling us that we are to sorrow, but not as those which have no hope.