

I thought that we should go ahead and study both Thessalonians and possibly both Timothys so that, then, we will have studied most of Paul's teachings with the exception of the large ones: Romans and both Corinthians. I'll need to do some weight lifting before we tackle those three; we'll save those for a later time unless we find God pushing us to go there... we'll see.

Before we go on to the introduction to 1 Thessalonians, I want to look at Psalms 2 because it prophetically describes the World as it is now:

Psalm 2: Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together,

Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying,*

³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."

⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.

⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:

⁶ "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."

⁷ "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You.

⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "

¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Verse 1: Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The *kings of the earth* set themselves, and the *rulers take counsel together*, against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*, ³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."

This Psalm is prophetic of the Nations of the World as they choose to reject the Lord Jesus Christ; they have always rejected Him but in the End Times it will be like never before. Those in Israel rejected Him when He came the first time but when He returns, all the Nations will reject Him and, in fact, will gather together at Armageddon for battle to once again reject His claim to Lordship and Kingship.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised a future deliverer Who would set right all that was lost in that first, so consequential sin. When the deliverer came the first time, He was rejected, crucified and thought to have been vanquished. When He comes again He will vanquish all His enemies as He comes with all power and authority as King of kings and Lord of lords.

All who gather against Him, then, will be destroyed. Before He comes, Man's rebellion will finally culminate in the worship of Antichrist and the war of Armageddon when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to destroy His enemies and to set up His Millennial Kingdom, to rule and reign for 1000 years and then forever.

This Psalm is also indicative of the attitude of most of the World throughout the time of Man; ever since Adam and Eve rejected God's Lordship over their lives in the Garden of Eden, choosing, instead, to believe the lies of Satan, that has been the pattern of most humans: rejecting God's free gift of Salvation and choosing, instead, to worship false gods and Nature, itself.

God is not threatened by those who reject Him; this Psalm says He laughs at their puny threats. Finally, when Jesus Christ returns, at Armageddon, to set up His Millennial Kingdom, He will rule with a 'rod of iron,' the Word says. He will brook no disagreement or rebellion whatsoever.

The *kings of the earth* set themselves, and the *rulers take counsel together*,

Against the LORD and against His Anointed,

It could not be more clearly stated than that. The kings and rulers of the World, conspire together against God and against His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Evil spirits guide them into Lucifer's plan...*saying*,³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."

What are the bonds and cords from God? The caution and restraint found in God's Word.

But:⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.

God is not concerned nor does He worry and neither should we. He is in complete control and everything is running smoothly toward His planned conclusion. Blessedly for us, I believe His plan is also to remove us, at any moment, before the final 7 years of the Tribulation begins.

The stage is being set; all the pieces are being placed in their proper position. All that remains, before God unleashes His Wrath on this World, which has despised and rejected His Son, is our sudden disappearance in the Rapture.

⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 'talk about an understatement.' He will unleash His righteous fury on this wicked World. But, He said to us, through His message to the Church at Philadelphia, 'Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, ***I am coming quickly!*** Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.' Rev 3:10

The stage is now set for the final act of unrighteous Man's rule on Earth. God has His planned culmination:

⁶ "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion."

⁷ "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You.

⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.'" (*He will rule in Righteousness and absolute control: no longer the humble suffering Servant*)

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "

(*Here is God's advice, I believe, to those who will hold positions of national leadership in His Son's Millennial Kingdom*)¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

(*I believe that time is coming soon; the time for it to begin could be very soon, possibly today!*)

Now: on to 1 Thessalonians 1:

The reason I think we need to continue studying and understanding what Paul has written is that he was given the responsibility of revealing and teaching the mysteries of God; a number of times he writes about different 'mysteries.' He is one through whom God is revealing to us the wondrous Gospel of His grace and mercy: that we are saved, completely and eternally, by God's grace and mercy alone. Paul was commissioned, by God, to reveal that He chose us from the foundation of the World and that it has been God's work, alone, to reveal Himself to us, to draw us to Himself in love, grace and mercy and to save us eternally.

Some, today, reject much of what Paul teaches us in his various letters; some seek to deny the foundations of the Gospel of Grace which God has revealed through Paul. They deny the foundational Truth of the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He died in our place. They deny that God's wrath was poured out on Jesus Christ so that it never would be so upon us and that our sin was imputed to Him while His righteousness was imputed to us.

Others seek to discount Paul's teaching by saying that we should only pay attention to the Words of Jesus, that His Words are all that matter, that '*Jesus was all about love, not condemnation; He accepted everyone without rejecting anyone.*'

Others seek to deny Paul's teaching because he is the one through whom God said, 'Pastors are to be men and only men' and also, that God has designed the family structure between husbands and wives and the responsibilities of each, before God, that the God-ordained family is the foundation of all civilization.

Paul is the one to whom the Lord Jesus Christ chose to reveal the truth of the Rapture. Because we are seeing so much prophecy fall into place around the World, today, it is important for us to study Paul's letters to the Thessalonians because it is here, as well as in 1 Cor. 15, that we find, I believe, some of the clearest, most obvious revelation of Jesus Christ's promise to come for us at any moment in the Rapture: '*Behold, I tell you a*

mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Cor 15:51

Many deny the truth of the Rapture; that is certainly their right and it is important to remember that our understanding of the Rapture is one of those areas where we can disagree and still fellowship together as believers because what we believe regarding the Rapture is not a necessary component of Salvation. On the other hand, Paul's teaching regarding our Salvation as being only by God's Grace through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ... that is a very necessary component to our Salvation.

1 Thessalonians

Introduction: Of the 13 or 14 (if Hebrews is included) letters Paul wrote, as inspired by the Holy Spirit and preserved for the Church down through the Centuries, his two, to the Thessalonians, were the earliest, written about AD 51. They were written while he was in Corinth after he left Berea because of persecution. Silas and Timothy, who had stayed in Thessalonica, had come to Corinth to tell Paul of the condition of the Church in Thessalonica.

In Acts, we read that Paul preached the Gospel, in the synagogue, for three Sabbaths in Thessalonica. As the result of his preaching, a large number of Gentiles and a few Jews believed the Gospel and turned from their idolatry to trusting in the sacrifice and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation.

Paul was worried about these young Christians, even though he's the one who told us 'to be anxious for nothing.' In the 3rd chapter, he tells them how concerned he was for their spiritual health, fearing that 'the tempter' might have been able to take advantage of them. He was thankful, then, when Silas and Timothy brought to him a good and encouraging report about the Thessalonians.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is taught, I believe, throughout 1 Thessalonians, and we will see in Paul's 2nd letter to them that he needed to comfort them because false teachers had come in, teaching that the return of Jesus Christ had already happened and that they had missed it.

Some teach that same thing today: that Jesus already returned, spiritually, in the year AD 70, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem or that His return was when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Some, today, deny the Bible's teaching regarding Jesus promise to return for us and take us, with Him, back to Heaven; the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again and receive you to Myself*;' John 14:2.

I believe more pastors and teachers should be teaching their flocks to '*walk in a manner worthy of their calling*,' teaching and stressing Jesus Christ's return at any moment: it's Paul, who wrote: 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**,' Titus 2:11 and then John wrote, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ **And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself**, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:2 This is what I believe pastors and teachers should be teaching regularly because it is the belief and understanding of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Bride, in the Rapture, that we will stand before Him, at any moment, which causes us to discern our walk, to carefully stay in a place of close fellowship with God, through His Holy Spirit. If we have no understanding of His soon return, we could be like those, of whom, Jesus said: 'But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of...' and Peter wrote: 'knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.'"

I believe we should always warn and be warned of Jesus Christ's soon return.

Verse 1: 'Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Paul acknowledges his fellow workers, Timothy and Silvanus, or, Silas as we've better known him. Paul is reminding these young Christians, previously pagans, of just what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for them; they are now 'in' God, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; they have been granted, by God's grace, eternal life which is in the Father and in the Son. Remember, Jesus prayed, 'I pray for them... those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them... Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We *are*... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; (us, today) ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.' John 17

Paul assures these young believers that God's grace and His peace are always theirs in which to rest and walk.

Verse 2: 'We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers...'

Paul must have had a huge prayer list: those from every church and especially those whom he remembered. God wants all of us to be faithful in praying for each other and for others we know: family, friends, neighbors, extended relatives... enemies... I surely could do without that particular reminder... but we are commanded! Notice Paul says, 'we' give thanks in 'our' prayers... they were praying together for so many needs. Jesus said, 'Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.' Matt 18:19 Debbie and I are two; whenever we pray together, the Lord Jesus Christ is in our midst.

Verse 3: '...remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,'

The Thessalonians were working together, in love, taking the Gospel to those around them and, I believe, again, Paul brings in the Rapture: that we are patiently waiting, in hope, of the Lord's return for us. I believe that is always what Paul means when he refers to *our hope in Jesus Christ*. Our patience of hope: Jesus said, 'Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.' Rev. 3:10

I believe Paul is always teaching that our hope is in Jesus Christ's soon return for us in the Rapture.

Paul doesn't refer to 'hoping' regarding Salvation; that is an accomplished fact. We don't hope we are saved... we know it and are assured of it by God's Holy Spirit within us. 'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...' Rom 8:16 We don't 'hope' He is always with us; the Word tells us He will never leave us: 'For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?' We don't hope against fear.

Paul defines what our hope is and what it is in: '...looking for the *blessed hope and glorious appearing* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,' Tit. 2:13 Our hope is in His soon appearing, His coming for us.

I don't know of anything else Paul wrote that explains our hope as being in anything other than His coming for us in the Rapture... our Blessed Hope. And it is John who seems to have written that those who expect Him at any moment are much more apt to walk in purity and holiness before the Lord: 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:3 Again... even here, John is not saying that our hope is even in our being changed to be like Him: 'We KNOW that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him: we KNOW that to be true; there is no hope involved. The only thing that requires our 'hope,' I believe, is in the timing of His being revealed at His coming and our being changed to be like Him.

Some may disagree but, again, this is not anything to argue over or to disfellowship from other believers; our belief regarding the End Times is a secondary matter for believers.