



April 24 – 25, 2010

1 Thessalonians 1 – 3

“What Does the Lord’s Return Mean?” Part 1

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Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian church from Corinth while he was on his 2nd Missionary Journey, about 53AD. The church there was made up mostly of Gentile believers. ([Acts 17:4](#)) Thessalonica is located in modern Greece and is called Solonica today. In Paul’s day the population was about 200,000 and was considered to be a very large city. It was originally called Therma because of the hot springs. It was later renamed after Alex the Great’s half-sister, Thessalonika.

There is a consistent theme of the 2nd Coming of Christ in [1 Thessalonians](#). In fact, every chapter ends with a reference to the Lord’s return: [1:10](#); [2:19](#); [3:13](#); [4:13–18](#); [5:23–24](#). The idea, plain and simple, is that Jesus is coming again!

There were a lot of people who missed his 1st Coming despite the fact that there were 300+ prophecies in Scripture foretelling his coming into the world. The people’s ignorance was so great, that when Wise Men came from the East to seek the Messiah – the king of the Jews – Herod called together “*all the chief priests and teachers of the law*” to ask them “*where the Christ was to be born.*” “*In Bethlehem in Judea,*” they replied... “*for this is what the prophet has written...*” ([Matthew 2:1–12](#)) When the Wise Men were sent on their way, never once did it occur to them that perhaps they should go, too. And, on Palm Sunday, when Jesus was on his way to the cross, the Bible tells us Jesus referred to the fact that “*they did not recognize the time of God’s coming to them.*” ([Matthew 19:44](#))

The point that needs to be made for people today is that there are more than three times the number of prophecies about Jesus’ 2nd Coming that there were about his 1st Coming! That Jesus is coming again is a major tenant of the Christian faith ([Acts 1:1–10](#)) and it will be important for all Believers as we wait for the Lord to rescue us from the coming wrath, look forward to the experience of knowing and being reunited with friends and loved ones, and knowing that the Lord will strengthen our hearts to be holy in his presence.

Waiting For Him To Rescue Us From The Coming Wrath

1. The reason for God's delay is because he desires as many as would believe to turn to him before it's too late.
 - a. **Hebrews 9:28** – *“[S]o Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*
 - b. **James 5:7–8** – *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”*
2. Some believe the wrath spoken of in **1 Thessalonians 1:10** refers to Hell and others believe the reference is to The Great Tribulation.
 - a. Whether it's one or the other, the point is that being rescued from any kind of God's wrath is a good thing!
 - b. In the context of Christ's 2nd Coming, it's probably meant as a reference of God's rescuing Christians from the Great Tribulation. (**1 Thessalonians 5:1–3, 9**)
3. Why does the Lord delay in his coming?
 - a. **2 Peter 3:4** – *“They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ ”*
 - b. **2 Peter 3:8–9** – *“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

The Joy Of Knowing And Being Reunited With Friends And Loved Ones

4. **1 Thessalonians 2:19–20** – *“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*
5. Paul is saying that the Thessalonian Believers are his pride and joy, and that he has a great love for them.
6. These Christians are commended in Paul's letter for their endurance in the face of suffering, their love and faith, and their model Christian lives; and one day there will be a glorious reunion and a joyful celebration in the presence of God!
7. The implication regarding the reunion is that we will all know each other, otherwise, how can Paul say that *“we will glory in the presence of the Lord because of you,”* if he won't know them when they are in the Lord's presence?

8. **1 John 3:2** – *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*
 - a. To be like him means to have a glorified body like he has, and to be recognized like he was by friends and loved ones.
 - b. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, Peter was able to recognize them without ever having known them.
9. **1 Corinthians 13:12** – *“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”*

He Will Strengthen Our Hearts To Be Holy In His Presence

10. **1 Thessalonians 3:13** – *“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”*
11. Jesus warned in **Luke 21:34, 36**: *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation¹, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap... Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”*
12. Jesus knows the pull of this world is strong – the cares, the anxieties, getting drunk, etc. – and he doesn’t want any of us to be pulled away by the world and miss his 2nd Coming.
13. Guard your hearts!
 - a. **Proverbs 4:23** – *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **1 Thessalonians 1:1–10; 2:19–20; 3:13** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss **Acts 1:1–10**, focusing on the details of the ascension and the fact that Scripture affirms the 2nd Coming.

¹ Dissipation basically means a life lived with careless ease. <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,dissipation> Dissipation – 1. The act of scattering; dispersion; the state of being dispersed; as the dissipation of vapor or heat. 2. In physics, the insensible loss or waste of the minute parts of a body, which fly off, by which means the body is diminished or consumed. 3. Scattered attention; or that which diverts and calls off the mind from any subject. 4. A dissolute, irregular course of life; a wandering from object to object in pursuit of pleasure; a course of life usually attended with careless and exorbitant expenditure of money, and indulgence in vices, which impair or ruin both health and fortune.

4. Read and discuss **2 Peter 3:4, 8–9**.
 - a. How do you respond to skeptics regarding Christ's 2nd Coming?
 - b. Do you think most unbelievers think Christians who believe the Lord could come at any time are like the cartoon characters with the signboard that says, "The End is Near!"?
 - c. Read **1 Peter 3:15** and discuss ways you can effectively help people understand the simplicity of the "good news."
5. The Lord continues to show mercy to lost people by giving them time and opportunities to repent and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - a. How is the Lord calling you to be involved in the process of evangelism?
 - b. Allow time for people to share recent experiences they've had with unsaved people and the sharing of the Gospel.
6. How has the knowledge of the Lord's 2nd Coming made a difference in your life?
7. Allow the people in your group to briefly share the names/stories/relationships they've had with people they long to see in Heaven.
8. Read and discuss **1 Thessalonians 3:13** and **Proverbs 4:23**, focusing on the seriousness of Christians being diligent to watch and be ready.
9. Close your time in prayer by: thanking the God for his wonderful plan of salvation, and that he was merciful to allow the people in your group time and opportunities to hear and respond to the Gospel; asking the Lord to help each person to recognize that the Bible indicates there isn't a single prophecy left to be fulfilled before the return of Christ and that being watchful and ready is important for every Believer; asking the Holy Spirit to help each person to be ready when opportunities to share their faith come up and that they would listen to Spirit to know what to say and when to say it, because the Spirit is, and has been, doing a work in people's lives to bring them to the moment of salvation.