

1 Thessalonians: Standing Firm
Lesson 6 “The Return of the Lord”

I. Review and Introduction - This church was founded on Paul’s second missionary journey after he left Philippi. Paul taught in Thessalonica for three Sabbaths and was then run out of town by unbelieving Jews. Paul then travelled to Berea and began to minister there, but the Jews from Thessalonica traveled there and ran him out of town there also.

A. Paul wrote *1 Thessalonians* about six months after he planted the church in Thessalonica to strengthen, comfort, and ground this church in truth.

B. Last week we looked at how Paul told the church in Thessalonica to walk in sexual purity. Tonight we are going to talk about the Return of the Lord. This is a hope we all have and a reality we are to encourage ourselves with in the midst of hardship.

1. Interestingly, this came right after three chapters where the main theme was persevering through hardship. He then talks about being a productive worker and not being a busy body before going on to talk about the return of the Lord.

2. The first 13 verses of *1 Thessalonians 4* almost seem out of place with the them of the rest of the letter, but they aren’t. So why are they there? Because God wants us to demonstrate what His kingdom looks like on the earth until He consummates it with the return of Jesus.

C. **1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 Live an Orderly Life** - I’m not going to spend too much time on these verses so we can get into the main subject for the evening. Paul tells the church to work with their own hands (many had stopped doing this because of hearing about Jesus coming back to set up the kingdom and thinking it was going to be immediate) and to mind their own business and not get caught up in gossip, silliness, etc. Being lazy and stirring drama in the lives of others is a bad witness. **Living right demonstrates His kingdom to the rest of the world.**

II. The Return of the Lord - Sometimes when ministers teach on the return of Jesus it can become very contentious because people have their personal eschatology’s and they hold to them tighter than their personal relationship with Jesus. Tonight what I want to do is present 4 major views of the return of the Lord and some strengths and weaknesses. I’m going to stick with what the Bible is very clear about. We can disagree and still love Jesus and go to church together. The main thing we need to understand is when He comes we need to be ready and we need to work to set up His kingdom on earth until He returns. Example of Jesus’s first coming. Prophecies he would come out Egypt, Bethlehem, and Nazareth. Some people missed him because they held so tight to the truth they knew that they actually missed additional truth.

A. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

1. Paul writes to encourage this church about their loved ones who have died. If the loved one knew Jesus, they would spend eternity with Him. This seems pretty obvious to us now, but this doctrine hadn't been established in the first century. The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection.
2. The word archangel means chief of angels. Throughout scripture this refers to Michael and he is seen often engaging in battle with Satan (*Daniel 10, Jude 1*).
3. Rapture is not in the bible. The Greek word is *harpazo* which means catching away. Meaning have assumed we will be caught up and go to heaven. That may be true, but the verse doesn't say that. It says we will be with Jesus forever.

Let's look at different views:

a. **Post-Trib rapture - Dominant view throughout the early church.**

The church will go through the tribulation and the Jesus will return at the end of the tribulation to consummate the kingdom. Interesting in the day Paul wrote a common custom was for people to go out to meet a dignitary as he was approaching their city before he got there, and accompanying or welcoming him back to where they came from. Example **Acts 28:15-16**

b. **Mid Trib - rapture** - Jesus will return after 3 1/2 years of peace and get the church out of the earth before it gets really bad. **Daniel 9:27, 1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 12:15** (the last trump is after plagues, locusts, Angels coming up out of the Euphrates, etc.

c. **Pre-Trib Rapture** - View the rapture occurs when Jesus comes secretly to gather the church prior a seven-year Great Tribulation that precedes the return of Christ to earth. 2nd advent is in two comings of Jesus. What is the scriptural evidence?

i. **Judges 13:5 and Matthew 2:23 - Judges 13:5** had a double fulfillment. There is no way on the front end of the 1st advent anyone could have known **Judges 13:5** referred to Jesus also.

Sometimes scripture can have double fulfillments - Isaiah, Psalms, etc. This principle makes it possible to have a pre-trib rapture.

ii. **Matthew 24:36-44** Short term fulfillment - Judgment on Jerusalem - double fulfillment could be the pre-trib rapture.

iii. This is newer view that did not come about until the 1840's and was introduced by John Nelson Darby after hearing about a little girl (Mary McDonald's) dream. Wrath coming on the world and antichrist and the church would be spared. This view was strengthened because of the Civil War and WWI - things got so bad in the earth - many believed we needed rescued.

d. **Extreme Preterism** - Jesus returned in the year 70 A.D. at the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and we are currently living in the millennial reign. Extreme preterists would argue all prophecy has been fulfilled and that the passages in **1 Thessalonians 4-5** were are about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Paul wrote to encourage the

Christian in Thessalonica to keep believing Jesus and He would destroy the temple. **I think that is error because he doesn't reference Jerusalem in this writing and the practical instructions he gives them about how to do life until Jesus comes, they would have to continue to do after Jesus came. The scripture seems to delineate our life will be different after Jesus consulates the kingdom on earth.**

i. Interestingly, preterists believe *Revelation* was written before 70 A.D. and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. They believe the book to be about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and is a warning and encouragement to God's people.

B. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Jesus will return like a thief in the night. The main theme of those verses is to be ready. Whenever and however Jesus comes we need to be prepared and walk in light. If we are, we can comfort ourselves with the fact the Lord is returning.

III. Conclusion - Whatever you believe about the return of the Lord, I'd encourage you to hold the timing loosely as it's a secondary issue. Let's work together to establish God's kingdom on the earth until God consummates it with the second coming of Jesus.

A. Call Up Prayer Team

B. Pray Closing Prayer