

1 THESSALONIANS

Jesus Is Coming Back

AUTHOR	Paul, with Silvanus, also called Silas, and Timothy, 1:1. Almost no scholar doubts that Paul wrote it.
WRITTEN FROM	Corinth, right after Timothy came back with news, 3:6 and Acts 18:5.
DATE WRITTEN	About AD 50 to 51. Many say it is the oldest book in the New Testament. Others give that title to Galatians or James.
WRITTEN TO	The young church in Thessalonica, the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia in northern Greece.
WHY HE WROTE	Paul had to leave town in a hurry. He wanted to encourage a church under fire, answer charges against him, and comfort them about believers who had died.
KEY VERSE	1 Thessalonians 4:16. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.



AN EARLY COPY OF 1 THESSALONIANS

These are pieces of Papyrus 30, a page from a book of Paul's letters copied in Egypt in the 200s AD. It was found at Oxyrhynchus and is now at Ghent University Library in Belgium. This side holds bits of 1 Thessalonians 4:12 to 13, 4:16 to 17 and 5:12 to 14, and the start of 2 Thessalonians. Papyrus 46, from about AD 200, also holds parts of 1 Thessalonians, and Papyrus 65 is another scrap from the 200s.

THE HOPE ON PAPYRUS. Some of these scraps hold 4:16 to 17, the Lord coming down and believers caught up to meet Him. Christians in Egypt were reading that promise about 1,800 years ago.

Historical Setting

Thessalonica was founded about 316 BC and named after Thessalonike, a half sister of Alexander the Great. By Paul's day it was the capital of Macedonia, a busy port on the Via Egnatia, the great Roman highway. About AD 49 or 50, Paul and Silas came straight from being beaten and jailed in Philippi. For three Sabbaths Paul taught in the synagogue, and Jews, Greeks and leading women believed. Then a mob dragged Jason and other believers before the city officials, shouting that these men had turned the world upside down, Acts 17:1 to 9. Paul slipped out by night. A few months later he wrote this letter.

What Thessalonica Was Up Against

PERSECUTION. Their own neighbors turned on them, 2:14 and 3:3 to 4.

RUMORS ABOUT PAUL. Some said Paul was a con man who ran off, 2:3 to 6 and 2:17 to 18.

SEXUAL SIN. Pagan culture saw nothing wrong with it, 4:3 to 8.

NOT WORKING. Some had stopped working and were leaning on others, 4:11 to 12 and 5:14.

GRIEF AND QUESTIONS. Believers had died, and the church was afraid they would miss the Lord's return, 4:13.

The Idiot Proof Summary

1 Thessalonians is a letter from a spiritual dad to a brand new church. Paul was only with them a short time before a mob chased him out, and he was worried sick. When Timothy brought good news, Paul wrote to cheer them on. Every chapter ends with the return of Jesus. For a church losing loved ones and facing hate from their neighbors, that hope was everything. Jesus is coming back, the dead in Christ will rise, and we will always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians at a Glance

CH 1

A MODEL CHURCH

They turned from idols and are waiting for Jesus.

CH 2

PAUL'S HEART

Gentle like a mother, firm like a father, never in it for money.

CH 3

GOOD NEWS FROM TIMOTHY

They are standing firm, and Paul can breathe again.

CH 4

LIVING HOLY AND THE HOPE

Stay pure, work hard, and do not grieve without hope.

CH 5

STAY AWAKE

The Day of the Lord comes like a thief, so live in the light.

Where Jesus Shows Up

1 THESSALONIANS 1:10 Waiting for His Son from heaven, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15 TO 17 The Lord Himself will descend, the dead in Christ will rise, and we will be caught up to meet Him. Still to come.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1 TO 3 The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Still to come.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9 TO 10 He died for us so that, awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

What to Watch for in 1 Thessalonians

PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN SCRIPTURE	2:14, 3:4
END TIMES PROPHECIES	4:15-17, 5:1-3
THE HEART	2:4
DEMONIC	1:9, 2:18
NOTABLE	2:7-8, 4:11-12, 5:16-18, 5:21-22
JESUS SPEAKING	Words in red are Jesus speaking, or God the Father speaking from heaven.

Cool Stuff Most People Miss

MAYBE THE OLDEST

This may be the first book of the New Testament ever written, about 20 years after Jesus rose.

EVERY CHAPTER ENDS THE SAME

Each chapter ends with Jesus coming back: 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:16 to 17 and 5:23.

THE WORD RAPTURE

The word is not in English Bibles. It comes from the Latin Bible, where 4:17 says *rapiemur*, we will be caught up.

THE NEXT TOWN

After Thessalonica, Paul went to Berea, where people checked his teaching against the Scriptures every day, Acts 17:11. That is 5:21 in action.

Did Anybody Listen?

Yes. Paul soon wrote again, 2 Thessalonians, to clear up confusion about the Day of the Lord. Thessalonica became one of the strongest churches in Greece. Two men from there, Aristarchus and Secundus, traveled with Paul, Acts 20:4, and Aristarchus went all the way to Rome with him, Acts 27:2. Today Thessaloniki is the second biggest city in Greece, full of old churches, and believers still read 4:13 to 18 at funerals.

DEMONIC

1

CHAPTER 1 IN 30 SECONDS

Paul is bragging on a brand new church. People all over Greece are talking about how the Thessalonians turned from idols to the living God and are now waiting for Jesus to come back from heaven. Not bad for a few weeks of Bible study.

GREETINGS TO THE THESSALONIANS // 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-4

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace to you.

²We always thank God for all of you, remembering you in our prayers ³and continually recalling before our God and Father your work of faith, your labor of love, and your enduring hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴Brothers who are beloved by God, we know that He has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction—just as you know we lived among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord when you welcomed the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit, in spite of your great suffering.

⁷As a result, you have become an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸For not only did the message of the Lord ring out from you to Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone out to every place, so that we have no need to say anything more. ⁹For they themselves report what kind of welcome you gave us, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ¹⁰and to await His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH
FOR THE CITY · MOST OF IT AFTER PAUL

THESSALONICA

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1 · ACTS 17:1 TO 9



Left: the vaulted corridor, or cryptoporticus, and the square of the Roman forum. Photo Andrew Zorin, CC BY SA 3.0. Right: a round room of the older Greek era baths found under the forum. Photo Marsyas, CC BY 2.5.

WHAT IT IS

The heart of ancient Thessalonica, now in the middle of the modern city of Thessaloniki, Greece. Left: the big open square of the Roman forum with its arched underground corridor. Right: a round room from a public bath of the older Greek city, with stone basins set around the wall.

HOW OLD IT IS

The forum you see was built mostly in the late 100s AD, more than 100 years after Paul, and used into the 500s. Under it are older layers from the Greek city, like these baths. They are from before Paul, and they may still have been in use when he came. The site was found in the 1960s, when builders started digging for a new courthouse.

PAUL WAS HERE

Paul taught in the synagogue for three Sabbaths, Acts 17:2. A mob formed in the marketplace, Acts 17:5, rushed Jason's house, and dragged believers before the city officials. The marketplace of Paul's day lies somewhere under this later square.

THE POLITARCHS

Acts calls the city officials politarchs, a rare title. Stones from Thessalonica prove Luke got it right. See The Politarch Inscription page in Acts, p.~.

A CITY ON THE HIGHWAY

Thessalonica sat on the Via Egnatia and had a harbor. That is why the message rang out from you to Macedonia and Achaia, 1:8. News traveled fast from here. See The Via Egnatia page in Philippians, p.~.

■ 1TH 1:1 [FIELD NOTES] See the Thessalonica Field Notes page. For the riot and the politarchs, see Acts 17, p.~.

■ 1TH 1:9 [DEMONIC] The Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the living God

■ 1TH 1:9 [FIELD NOTES] See The Gods of Thessalonica Field Notes page.

THE HEART

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

Thessalonica was a big, busy Roman city with a public square, officials and crowds, just as Acts 17 describes.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

Most of what you see came after Paul. Nothing here names Paul or the church.

2

CHAPTER 2 IN 30 SECONDS

Paul did not come for money or fame. He was gentle like a nursing mother and worked night and day so he would not be a burden. They took his message as God's word, even when their own neighbors turned on them.

PAUL'S MINISTRY

¹You yourselves know, brothers, that our visit to you was not in vain. ²As you are aware, we had already endured suffering and shameful treatment in Philippi. But in the face of strong opposition, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God.

³For our appeal does not arise from deceit or ulterior motives or trickery. ⁴Instead, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, not in order to please men but God, who examines our hearts. ⁵As you know, we never used words of flattery or any pretext for greed. God is our witness! ⁶Nor did we seek praise from you or from anyone else, although as apostles of Christ we had authority to demand it.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH

THE GODS OF THESSALONICA

1 THESSALONIANS 1:9 · ACTS 17:4



Left: head of Sarapis, AD 150 to 200. Photo Yair Haklai, CC BY SA 4.0. Middle: stone ear dedicated to Isis, first century BC. Photo Gts-tg, CC BY SA 4.0. Both in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. Right: coin of Thessalonica with the god Kabeiros, about AD 193 to 217. Photo HJung-hans, CC BY SA 4.0.

WHAT IT IS

Three things from the idols the Thessalonians turned away from, 1:9. Left: a huge marble head of Sarapis, a god from Egypt. Middle: a stone carved with an ear, given to Isis, the goddess who listens, by a man named Marcus Agellieus. Right: a city coin showing Kabeiros, Thessalonica's own god, holding a hammer inside a little temple.

HOW OLD IT IS

The ear stone is from the first century BC, before Paul came. The head of Sarapis is from about AD 150 to 200. The coin was made about AD 193 to 217, under the empress Julia Domna.

THE TEMPLE OF EGYPT'S GODS

After a great fire in 1917, digging in 1921 found a sanctuary of Sarapis and Isis in the old city, with more than 70 inscriptions and a hidden underground room. People had worshiped the Egyptian gods in Thessalonica since about 200 BC.

A GOD WHO LISTENS?

People carved ears and gave them to Isis, hoping she would hear their prayers. Paul brought news of the living and true God, 1:9, who really does hear, 5:17.

KABEIROS

Kabeiros was a local god of mystery rites. Later the city put him on its coins as its protector. Some scholars think the cult was strong in Paul's day too, but that is debated.

■ 1TH 2:4 [HEART] Paul preaches to please God, who tests our hearts, not to please people.

PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN SCRIPTURE DEMONIC NOTABLE

TURNING FROM IDOLS

Leaving these gods was costly. It could mean losing friends, business and family, and it made the neighbors angry, 2:14. That is why everyone was talking about this church, 1:8 to 9.

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

Thessalonica was full of idols, just as 1:9 says.

⁷ On the contrary, we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother caring for her children. ⁸ We cared so deeply that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our own lives as well. That is how beloved you have become to us.

⁹ Surely you recall, brothers, our labor and toil. We worked night and day so that we would not be a burden to anyone while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless our conduct was among you who believed. ¹¹ For you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children— ¹² encouraging you, comforting you, and urging you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

¹³ And we continually thank God because, when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it truly is, the word of God, which is also now at work in you who believe.

¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Judea that are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the very things they suffered from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and drove

us out as well. They are displeasing to God and hostile to all men, ¹⁶ hindering us from telling the Gentiles how they may be saved. As a result, they continue to heap up their sins to full capacity; the utmost wrath has come upon them.

PAUL'S LONGING TO VISIT

¹⁷ Brothers, although we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in heart), our desire to see you face to face was even more intense. ¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you—indeed I, Paul, tried again and again—but Satan obstructed us. ¹⁹ After all, who is our hope, our joy, our crown of boasting, if it is not you yourselves in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? ²⁰ You are indeed our glory and our joy.

3

CHAPTER 3 IN 30 SECONDS

Paul got run out of town and could not stand not knowing how they were doing. So he sent Timothy. Timothy came back with good news: they are standing firm. Paul is so relieved he says, now we can go on living.

TIMOTHY'S VISIT

¹ So when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left on our own in Athens. ² We sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, ³ so that none of you would be shaken by these trials. For you know that we are destined for this. ⁴ Indeed, when we were with you, we kept warning you that we would suffer persecution; and as you know, it has come to pass. ⁵ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter had somehow

■ **1TH 2:7 [NOTABLE]** Paul, the tough apostle who was beaten and jailed, calls himself a nursing mother. Real leaders are gentle. He gave them not just the gospel but his own life, 2:8, and then he was a father to them too, 2:11.

■ **1TH 2:9 [NOTE] NIGHT AND DAY.** Paul made tents, Acts 18:3, so no one could say he preached for money. He had the right to be paid, 2:6 and 1 Corinthians 9:14, but chose not to use it here. Ministry and business can go together. See 4:11.

■ **1TH 2:14 [FULFILLS]** Paul warned the believers in Thessalonica that they would suffer persecution ← 1TH 3:4 p.-

■ **1TH 2:15 [NOTE] HARD WORDS.** Paul was a Jew, and so were Jesus and all the first apostles. Here he means the leaders who opposed Jesus and the men who drove Paul out of town, Acts 17:5, not every Jewish person. Elsewhere he says he would give up his own soul for his people, Romans 9:3, and that God has not rejected Israel, Romans 11:1, p.-. Sadly, these verses were later misused to justify hatred of Jews. Some scholars think 2:15 to 16 was added later, but every manuscript has it.

■ **1TH 2:18 [DEMONIC]** Satan hindered us

■ **1TH 3:4 [PROPHECY]** Paul warned the believers in Thessalonica that they would suffer persecution → ACTS 17:5-9; 1TH 2:14 p.-

NOTABLE

tempted you and that our labor might have been in vain.

TIMOTHY'S ENCOURAGING REPORT

⁶ But just now, Timothy has returned from his visit with the good news about your faith, your love, and the fond memories you have preserved, longing to see us just as we long to see you. ⁷ For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we have been reassured about you, because of your faith. ⁸ For now we can go on living, as long as you are standing firm in the Lord.

⁹ How can we adequately thank God for you in return for our great joy over you in His presence? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you.

¹² And may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone else, just as our love for you overflows, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts in blamelessness and holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. Amen.

4

CHAPTER 4 IN 30 SECONDS

Stay sexually pure, love each other and work with your hands. Then the big one. Some believers had died, and the church was worried they would miss out. Paul says no. The dead in Christ rise first, then we are caught up with them to meet the Lord. Encourage each other with that.

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

¹ Finally, brothers, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to live in a way that is pleasing to God, just as you have received from us. This is how you already live, so you should do so all the more. ²

For you know the instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

³ For it is God's will that you should be holy: You must abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ each of you must know how to control his own body in holiness and

honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ and no one should ever violate or exploit his brother in this regard, because the Lord will avenge all such acts, as we have already told you and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness. ⁸ Anyone, then, who rejects this command does not reject man but God, the very One who gives you His Holy Spirit.

⁹ Now about brotherly love, you do not need anyone to write to you, because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. ¹⁰ And you are indeed showing this love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to excel more and more ¹¹ and to aspire to live quietly, to attend to your own matters, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you. ¹² Then you will behave properly toward outsiders, without being dependent on anyone.

THE RETURN OF THE LORD

¹³ Brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who are without hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

■ **1TH 4:4 [NOTE] CONTROL YOUR BODY.** The Greek says your own vessel. Most read it as your own body, keep it under control. Some read it as take a wife for yourself in holiness. Either way, God's will is clear: sex belongs in marriage, 4:3, and cheating on a brother hurts real people, 4:6.

■ **1TH 4:11 [NOTABLE]** Mind your own business and earn your own way. Some in Thessalonica had quit working, maybe waiting for Jesus to come back. Paul worked night and day himself, 2:9. Later he wrote, if anyone is not willing to work, he shall not eat, 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

END TIMES PROPHECIES

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH
FOR THE WORDS · THE LINK IS A SCHOLARS' VIEW

WHEN THE KING COMES

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15 TO 17 · 2:19 · ACTS 28:15



Both sides of a bronze coin of Corinth honoring Nero's arrival in Greece, AD 66 to 67. The ship side reads ADVE AVG, the arrival of the emperor. Bibliothèque nationale de France, public domain.

WHAT IT IS

A coin from Corinth, the city where Paul wrote this letter. One side shows the emperor Nero. The other shows a warship and the words ADVE AVG, short for adventus Augusti, the arrival of the emperor.

HOW OLD IT IS

It was made about AD 66 to 67, when Nero toured Greece, about 15 years after Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians.

THE WORD PAROUSIA

Paul's word for the coming of the Lord, 4:15, is parousia. In Paul's world it often meant the official visit of a king or emperor to a city. Latin called it adventus. Cities minted coins and held parties to mark it.

GOING OUT TO MEET HIM

When a king came, the leading citizens went out of the city to meet him on the road, then walked back in with him. The Greek word for that meeting is apante-sis. Paul uses it in 4:17, to meet the Lord in the air. Luke uses it when believers from Rome came out to meet Paul, Acts 28:15.

WHAT IT MEANS

Paul took the words people used for Caesar and gave them to Jesus. The real King is coming, and His people will go out to meet Him.

THE DEBATE

Some teachers say this picture means believers meet Jesus in the air and come right back down with Him to earth. Others say the picture does not

settle where they go next, John 14:3. See The Big Question pages that follow.

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

Paul's words in 4:15 to 17 are the same words used for royal visits in his day.

¹⁵ By the word of the Lord, we declare to you that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. ¹⁷ After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

THE RAPTURE

What the Church Has Believed

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 TO 18 · 5:1 TO 11

WHAT PAUL SAID

Believers in Thessalonica had died, and the church was afraid they would miss the return of Jesus. Paul says no. The Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a shout and a trumpet. The dead in Christ rise first. Then believers who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord, 4:16 to 17. Every Christian group agrees on that much. The fight is over WHEN it happens and what happens next.

WHERE THE WORD COMES FROM

Caught up is harpazo in Greek. The Latin Bible says rapiemur, and that gives us

■ **1TH 4:15 [PROPHECY]** The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air → **STILL TO COME**

■ **1TH 4:15 [FIELD NOTES]** See the When the King Comes Field Notes page.

■ **1TH 4:17 [NOTE]** CAUGHT UP. The word rapture comes from this verse in the Latin Bible, rapiemur. When it happens is one of the biggest debates in the church. See The Big Question pages that follow.

the word rapture. The question is how the rapture fits with the tribulation, a time of great trouble, Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 6 to 19, and with the thousand years of Revelation 20, called the millennium.

THE EARLY CHURCH, AD 100 TO 300

Many early leaders expected Jesus to come back and reign on earth for 1,000 years. This is called chiliasm, or historic premillennialism. The Didache, about AD 100, warns that a world deceiver will come and believers must endure to the end. Justin Martyr, about AD 155, believed in the 1,000 years but said some true Christians did not. Irenaeus, about AD 180, and Hippolytus, about AD 200, taught that the church would face the Antichrist. Pre tribulation teachers point to one line in Irenaeus, when the church shall suddenly be caught up from this, Against Heresies 5.29. Most scholars read him as expecting the church to go through the trouble first.

AUGUSTINE CHANGES THE PICTURE

About AD 426, Augustine wrote The City of God. He taught that the 1,000 years is not a future kingdom but the church age right now, with Christ reigning from heaven. This is called amillennialism. It became the main view of the Catholic and Orthodox churches, and later of Martin Luther, John Calvin and most Protestant churches. In this view there is one return of Christ at the end, when believers rise to meet Him.

JOHN NELSON DARBY, 1830S

Darby was an Irish preacher who helped start the Plymouth Brethren. Around 1830 he taught a new system called dispensationalism, which keeps Israel and the church on two separate tracks. In it, Jesus comes FOR His church in a secret rapture before a 7 year tribulation, and later comes WITH His church to rule. Darby spread it at Bible meetings at Powerscourt, Ireland, 1831 to 1833, and on trips to America from 1862 to 1877.

CYRUS SCOFIELD, 1909

Cyrus I. Scofield learned Darby's ideas from the St. Louis pastor James H. Brookes. In 1909 Oxford University Press printed the Scofield Reference

Bible, with Scofield's notes right on the page under the Bible text. It was revised in 1917 and sold more than two million copies by the end of World War II. For millions of readers, the notes and the verses blended together. It is still sold today as the Scofield Study Bible.

THE 1900S

Dallas Theological Seminary, founded 1924, trained thousands of pastors in this view. Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth, 1970, and the Left Behind novels, 1995 to 2007, sold tens of millions of copies. For many American churches, pre tribulation became the only view they ever heard. Worldwide, it is still a minority view.

When Does It Happen?

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 · 5:9 · MATTHEW 24:29 TO 31 · REVELATION 3:10

PRE TRIBULATION

Jesus takes His church to heaven BEFORE the 7 years of trouble. Key verses: God has not appointed us to suffer wrath, 5:9; I will keep you from the hour of testing, Revelation 3:10; I will come back and welcome you, John 14:3. Best case: Jesus could come at any moment, so stay ready, and after Revelation 3 the word church does not show up again until 22:16. Held by Darby, Scofield, Dallas Seminary and many Baptist, Bible church and Pentecostal churches.

MID TRIBULATION

The rapture comes in the MIDDLE, after 3 and a half years, when Daniel's 70th week breaks in half, Daniel 9:27. Key verses: Paul's last trumpet, 1 Corinthians 15:52, matched with the seventh trumpet, Revelation 11:15. Best case: believers face the first trials but are taken before the worst. Held by a smaller group, like the scholar Gleason Archer.

PRE WRATH

The rapture comes after the Antichrist's persecution starts but BEFORE God pours out His wrath, somewhere in the second half. Key verses: the sun is darkened and then the angels gather the elect, Matthew 24:29 to 31; the great day of their wrath has come, Revelation 6:17. Best case: the church suffers from

END TIMES PROPHECIES

man but never from God. Made popular by Marvin Rosenthal's book in 1990.

POST TRIBULATION

There is ONE return of Jesus, AFTER the tribulation. Believers are caught up to meet Him and come right back with Him, like a city going out to welcome a king, Acts 28:15. Key verses: Immediately after the tribulation, Matthew 24:29 to 31; that day will not come until the man of lawlessness is revealed, 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Best case: it is the simplest reading and closest to the early church. Held by scholars like George Eldon Ladd and Robert Gundry.

AMILLENNIAL

No 7 year countdown and no future 1,000 year kingdom on earth. The millennium is now. Jesus returns once at the end, the dead rise, believers meet Him, and the judgment and new creation follow. Held by Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and many Reformed churches, which means most Christians in history.

POSTMILLENNIAL

The gospel will slowly win the world and bring a long golden age, and THEN Jesus returns once. Popular with the Puritans and Jonathan Edwards in the 1700s and still held by some today.

ANY OLDER PRE TRIB VOICES?

Supporters point to a sermon called Pseudo Ephraem, written sometime between AD 300 and 700, that says the saints are taken to the Lord before the tribulation; scholars argue about what it means. Morgan Edwards, a Baptist, wrote in 1788 about a rapture three and a half years before the end. A Scottish teen, Margaret MacDonald, had a vision in 1830; some say Darby borrowed from it, but scholars dispute both what she meant and whether he did.

PRETERISM

Preter means past. Preterists say many of these prophecies already came true when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. Key verse: this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened, Matthew 24:34. PARTIAL preterists say the great tribulation happened then, but the return of Jesus, the resurrection and 4:16 to 17 are

still to come; R.C. Sproul and Kenneth Gentry taught this. FULL preterists say everything happened in AD 70, even the return of Jesus and the resurrection. To them every prophecy in the Bible has already come true, so every verse highlighted Blue in this Bible as still to come would already be fulfilled. Partial preterists keep a few Blue verses, like 4:16 to 17, in the future; Catholic, Orthodox and nearly all Protestant churches reject that, because the creeds say He will come again. The first full preterist commentary was by Luis de Alcázar, a Spanish Jesuit, printed in 1614.

WHAT WE ALL AGREE ON

Jesus is coming back. The dead in Christ will rise. We will always be with the Lord. Nobody knows the day, 5:1 to 2. Stay awake and live ready, 5:6. And as Paul says, encourage one another with these words, 4:18, not fight with them.

5

CHAPTER 5 IN 30 SECONDS

Nobody knows the date. The Day of the Lord comes like a thief. So stay awake and sober. Respect your leaders. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in everything. Test everything and keep the good. The God of peace will finish what He started.

THE DAY OF THE LORD // ZEPHANIAH 1:7-18;

MALACHI 4:1-6; 2 PETER 3:8-13

1 Now about the times and seasons, brothers, we do not need to write to you. **2** For you are fully aware that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, "Peace and security," destruction will come upon them suddenly, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

4 But you, brothers, are not in the darkness so that this day should overtake you like a thief. **5** For you are all sons of the light and sons of the day; we do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **6** So

1TH 5:1 [PROPHECY] The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman → STILL TO COME

1TH 5:3 [FIELD NOTES] See the Peace and Security Field Notes page.

NOTABLE

then, let us not sleep as the others do, but let us remain awake and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of our hope of salvation.

⁹ For God has not appointed us to suffer wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage and build one another up, just as you are already doing.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

¹² But we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who work diligently among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ In love, hold them in highest regard because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone.

¹⁵ Make sure that no one repays evil for evil. Always pursue what is good for one another and for all people.

¹⁶ Rejoice at all times. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not extinguish the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt, ²¹ but test all things. Hold fast to what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

■ **1TH 5:8 [ALLUDES TO]** Refers to ← IS 59:17 p.-

■ **1TH 5:16 [NOTABLE]** People always ask, what is God's will for my life? Here it is in three short lines. Pray without ceasing does not mean nonstop words. It means keep the line open all day. Give thanks IN everything, not FOR everything.

■ **1TH 5:20 [NOTE]** DO NOT DESPISE PROPHECY. Paul expected real prophecy in the church, and he expected it to be tested, 5:21. See the Ephesians pages on prophets today, p.-.

■ **1TH 5:21 [NOTABLE]** God does not want blind faith. Check every teaching, prophecy and preacher against Scripture, keep what is good and throw out the rest. The very next town Paul visited, Berea, did exactly that, Acts 17:11.

FINAL BLESSINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your entire spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

DEBATED FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH FOR THE COINS · THE LINK IS DEBATED

PEACE AND SECURITY

1 THESSALONIANS 5:3 · JEREMIAH 6:14



Top: silver denarius of Claudius, AD 46 to 47, with Pax and the words PACI AVGUSTAE. Photo Coin Archives, CC BY SA 2.5. Bottom: bronze dupondius of Nero, about AD 66, with Securitas and the words SECVRITAS AVGVSTI. Photo EttuBruta, CC BY SA 4.0.

WHAT IT IS

Two Roman coins. Top: Claudius, the emperor when Paul wrote, and on the back a winged goddess Pax, peace, with the words To the Emperor's Peace. Bottom: Nero, and on the back the goddess Securitas, safety, sitting on a throne, with the words The Security of the Emperor.

HOW OLD IT IS

The Claudius coin was made in Rome in AD 46 to 47, just a few years before Paul wrote. Coins like it were in people's pockets. The Nero coin is from about AD 66.

■ **1TH 5:23 [NOTE]** SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY. Some read this as three parts of a person: a spirit that knows God, a soul that thinks and feels, and a body. Others say we are two parts, body and soul, and Paul is just saying all of you, the way Jesus said heart, soul, mind and strength, Mark 12:30. Either way, God wants to make all of you holy.

THE EMPIRE'S SLOGAN

Rome bragged that it had brought peace and safety to the world. People called it the Pax Romana, the Roman peace. Coins, statues and temples all told the same story: trust Caesar, and you are safe.

WHAT PAUL SAID

While people are saying, Peace and security, destruction will come upon them suddenly, 5:3. Many scholars think Paul is poking at Rome's slogan. The peace of Caesar will not save anyone on the Day of the Lord.

THE OTHER VIEW

Other scholars say Paul is echoing the prophets, who blasted false prophets for saying Peace, peace when there is no peace, Jeremiah 6:14 and Ezekiel 13:10. He may mean both.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

Every age has its own peace and security. Money, government and tech all promise it. Only Jesus delivers from the coming wrath, 1:10.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

No coin mentions Paul. The coins show what people were saying, not which words Paul had in mind.

²⁵ Brothers, pray for us as well.

²⁶ Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

²⁷ I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.