

1 Thessalonians 1 - Topics Discussed During Paul's 1st 3-Week Visit

I. Personal section: looking backward (1 Thess 1:1--3:13)

- (1) Greeting (1:1)
 - (A) Addressors (1:1a)
 - (B) Addressees (1:1b)
 - (C) Greeting (1:1c)
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1 Thessalonians 1

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- (1) Greeting (1:1)
 - (A) Addressors (1:1a)
 - (B) Addressees (1:1b)
 - (C) Greeting (1:1c)

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**.

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

1 From: Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. To: The church of the Thessalonians in union with God the Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be yours!

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- "Paul" - Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth, after he left Thessalonica, went to Athens, then moved on to Corinth (Acts 18:1) on his second missionary journey

- "...Silvanus" - aka Silas; he and Timothy were in Thessalonica with Paul, then later joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5)

— Luke always calls him Silas; Paul always calls him Silvanus (Cf. Acts 18:5, 2 Cor 1:19). He was an esteemed member of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:22); a prophet (Acts 15:32); a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). He was in hearty agreement with the Council decision regarding Gentile believers (Acts 15:22-32). He was a fitting co-worker and preacher (2 Cor 1:19); the amanuensis for 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:12).

- "...Timothy" - *Timotheos*, "honoring God"; he was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. He was one of Paul's converts at Lystra on his first missionary journey and is included as co-salutation in five of Paul's epistles

— Timothy's name appears in 10 of Paul's 13 epistles, all except for Galatians, Colossians and Titus. It also appears in Hebrews.

- "...peace" - Paul's typical greeting, but it had a special importance to the church in Thessalonica. After Paul's stint there, where he taught for some time and got to know the congregation very well, they began to be persecuted by the same unbelieving Jews who drove Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy out of town.

— However, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica once he arrived in Athens. Paul went on to Corinth, and Timothy returned from Thessalonica to Corinth and reported to Paul that the same unbelieving Jews who stirred up trouble and kicked him out of Thessalonica have now turned their sights on the new Christian converts in Thessalonica.

— These unbelieving Jews are jealous of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, so they began to lie about him, trying to wean these converts away from his teaching and doctrine. They got rid of Paul, but they also had to get rid of his influence.

— One of the things the unbelieving Jews were telling these new believers is that what they believed wasn't real, their conversion was illegitimate, it was just a phase that they were going through. At some point, they would snap out of it. Paul spends the entire first chapter of this epistle refuting this charge and rehabilitating the assurance of salvation of these infant Thessalonian believers.

— Another thing they were saying was that Paul was corrupt, he left, he was no longer ministering to them, and how could a guy that left you really love you anyway?

— See 1 Thessalonians - Introduction & Background for additional information and background on the occasion and purpose of 1 Thessalonians.

(2) Defense of the legitimacy of the Thessalonians' conversion (1:2-10)

(A) Summary statement (1:2-3)

(a) Thanksgiving (1:2)

2 We **always give thanks to God** for all of you, making mention of you in our **prayers**;

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

- 2 We always thank God for all of you when we mention you in our prayers.
- 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;
 - "...always give thanks to God" - the Thessalonians response to the gospel, and their continuance in the faith, caused Paul and his companions to thank God for them continually
 - Paul was thankful for their conversion and belief in Christ; he was thankful for their growth in Christ; he was thankful for the time he was able to spend with them in Thessalonica and how he got to know many of them.
 - These character traits in the Thessalonian believers was further proof that their conversion was authentic
 - "...prayers" - note the plural; Paul didn't just pray for them once, they were consistently held up by Paul in prayer



Dr. John Walvoord
The Thessalonian Epistles, 13

"He breathed out from his very heart in verse 2: 'We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.' Again something of the faithfulness of the prayer ministry of the Apostle Paul is indicated: 'We give thanks to God always.' In the days and the months which had passed since he left this little band of Thessalonians Paul had been faithful in prayer. What a rebuke it is to many of us who serve the Lord that often our hearts are not burdened with the needs of God's people nor thankful for the Lord's grace in their lives, especially when they are out of sight and out of mind. But Paul gives his testimony: 'We give thanks to God always for you all.'"

(b) Reasons for the thanksgiving (1:3)

- (i) Faith (1:3a)
- (ii) Labor in love (1:3b)
- (iii) Hope (1:3c)

3 constantly keeping in mind your **work of faith** and **labor of love** and **perseverance of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

3 In the presence of our God and Father, we constantly remember how your faith is active, your love is hard at work, and your hope in our Lord Jesus the Messiah is enduring.

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

- "...work of faith" - active faith; their faith that demonstrated itself in good works in the 2nd tense of their salvation (sanctification)

- "...labor of love" - a love (*agapaō*) that manifests itself in daily life (Cf. 1 John 3:17)

- One evidence that we're walking with the Lord daily is that selfless deeds will begin to effortlessly flow out of our daily life

- "...perseverance" - *hypomonē*, steadfastness; the ability to bear up under unfair circumstances; it is one of the fruits that the Holy Spirit seeks to develop in our lives

- "...hope" - *elpis*, as defined in Scripture, is the confident assurance of God's certain and future blessings

- Hope does not involve anxious wishing or uncertainty; rather, it is a confident assurance of something yet future.

- Unlike the empty and false hopes of this world system, God has given believers a "living hope" of guaranteed future blessings because of Christ's resurrection

- Paul's point to the Thessalonians is that if they were walking in *pistis*, *agapaō*, *elpis* and *hypomonē*, how could your conversion be illegitimate?

(B) Specific reasons evidencing their conversion (1:4-10)

4 knowing, **brothers and sisters, beloved by God, His choice of you;**

4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you;

4 Brothers whom God loves, we know that he has chosen you,

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

- Paul now gives his readers a third reason why their conversion was authentic: because of their response to the gospel

- Their response to the gospel was abnormal, it was supernatural. If the Holy Spirit was not at work in their lives, they would not have responded to the gospel in the way they did.

- "...brothers and sisters" - "brethren"; does not denote fellow Jews, but based on the context and the believers he is addressing in Thessalonica, who were mainly Gentiles, it refers to brothers and sisters in Christ

- Paul is using the term "brethren" in the same way Jesus used the term in Matt 12:46-50, to describe a relationship that transcends natural family lines

- Paul will later describe in more detail the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whereby all believers are baptized into the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor 12:13)

- In Eph 4, Paul begins to exhort believers to get along with each other, to unify under the banner of Christ, because they are all part of the same body

- "...beloved by God" - you can track this expression throughout the NT and find that "beloved" always refers to believers
- Of course God loves everyone (John 3:16), but only Christians are "beloved"
- "...His choice of you" - most Christians would like to just skip over the doctrine of election because they don't understand it
- Does God choose us or do we choose God? Yes. How can that be? I have no idea, but the Bible teaches both.
- Those who camp too much on the divine sovereignty of God focus on verses like this one, which talks about God choosing us (and He did), but they ignore the many other verses that also clearly state that we choose God out of our own free will (Cf. Rev 22:17).



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5 for our gospel **did not come to you in word only**, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with **full conviction**; just as you know **what kind of men we proved to be** among you for your sakes.

5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

5 for the gospel we brought did not come to you in words only, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction. Indeed, you know what kind of people we proved to be while we were with you, acting on your behalf.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

- This is one of the main purposes of Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians...because the persecuting Jews who drove Paul out of town then went on to persecute the believers Paul left behind

— These persecuting Jews were very jealous of Paul for the success that the Holy Spirit had wrought through his ministry there. Driving Paul out of town wasn't enough for these Jews, they also had to drive out the influence that he had on the infant believers there.

— What happened then also happens today...when people don't like something that someone says, they go behind that person's back and begin a character assassination because they can't stand the fact that everyone is listening to that person.

— This is why Paul spends chapters 1-3 of this epistle rehabilitating his reputation from the character assassination that had taken place at the hands of these unbelieving, jealous Jews. If Paul didn't do this, they wouldn't listen to him in chapters 4-5 when he responds to their specific theological questions.

- "...did not come to you in word only" - Paul is saying that I didn't talk you into believing in the gospel...you did it of your own volition

— Paul says that when I gave you the gospel, God testified to it in your own life through the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit, and this is why you're Christians today

— Paul didn't use cunning words or a slick sales pitch to twist their arm into believing (Cf. 1 Cor 2:1-6). The Greeks at that time placed a huge emphasis on human oratory. They would practice and hone their craft so as to, if they were good enough, create a following for themselves.

— Paul tells them that that is not how they got saved. It was the Spirit's conviction that brought them to Christ because if someone can talk you into something, someone else, with greater oratory, can come along later and talk you out of it.

- "...full conviction" - the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of unbelievers (Cf. John 16:7-11)

— The "full conviction" that the Holy Spirit used against the Thessalonians to move them to (convince them) into believing is of their sin (of unbelief), righteousness (that their righteousness was not good enough, that they needed Christ's righteousness), and judgment (they are riding on a sinking ship that has already been judged).

- "...what kind of men we proved to be" - Paul says, I didn't come to you as a philosopher, trying to use the Thessalonians to build some kind of following. I came to you with an upright life.

— Paul later describes his upright life in 2:9...when Paul showed up, he did not ask for money from these unsaved people, in contrast to the philosophers who showed up and asked for monetary support. Paul worked day and night to support himself (Cf. Acts 18:3).

— Within the context of the local church, it's completely right and biblical for the people to give to support their pastor. That's not what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about when he was with them, when they were unsaved people, he did not ask them for any financial support, but instead worked as a tentmaker to support himself. Paul understood that it was difficult to share the gospel with unbelievers who were supporting you financially. This was the complete opposite of what the philosophers of that day did.

- So after Paul explains to them that his life was upright as he shared the gospel with them, he uses all these arguments to show them that what happened to them and how they heard the gospel, how Paul presented the gospel and the Spirit testified to it through "full conviction"...these are things that a philosopher cannot just conjure up. This was truly a work of God.

The Spirit without the Word is weaponless. The Word without the Spirit is powerless.

6 You also became **imitators of us** and of the Lord, having **received the word during great affliction with the joy** of the Holy Spirit,

6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord. In spite of a great deal of suffering, you welcomed the word with the joy that the Holy Spirit produces.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

- Paul goes on to give them another evidence that was supernatural: they had joy in the midst of tribulation

- "...imitators of us" - Paul told the Corinthians to be imitators of him as he is an imitator of Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Cf. Eph 5:1)

— Most Christians today would rightly say, Don't follow me, follow Jesus. But Paul had such an honest, upright life among these unsaved people that he could tell them once they were saved to follow him as he followed Jesus.

- "...received the word during great affliction with the joy" - this is how we become Christ-like...we receive the word with joy, even during suffering and tribulation

— This is evidence of a Christian life...an unsaved person has no ability to be joyful in suffering. This is something that is completely supernatural. Only a person who has the Holy Spirit indwelling them has this capacity or ability (John 14:26-27).

Assurance of Salvation

How does one know they are saved? There is an objective test and there is a subjective test:

The objective test is the primary evidence for our assurance of salvation. Jesus said that I was saved when I put my belief/trust/reliance/dependence upon Him for the eternal salvation of my soul, therefore I believe His promises that I am saved (John 3:16; 5:24).

Paul here is talking to the Thessalonians about subjective experiences, which are secondary to the objective test given to us in Scripture. However, many times God privileges us with secondary (subjective) experiences. One kind of subjective experience is if you didn't love to read before you came to Christ, then after you came to Christ you have the desire to read the Bible, study it, and read books associated with it. Sometimes that subjective desire may be there, sometimes it's not. So I can't confirm I'm a Christian based on the fact that I want to read and study God's Word because that desire will go up and down throughout my life.

These secondary/subjective evidences are the things that Paul is talking to the Thessalonians about here...i.e. joy in the midst of trials.

Believers need to get this straight in their minds because one of the greatest attacks that Satan has against Christians today, and he has a lot of very successful ones, is to get Christians to doubt their salvation, to question whether or not they are saved. If you are a Christian and have these doubts, you're not going to be very effective for the Lord. It is our birthright as a child of God to know for sure, to have full assurance, of our salvation.

Assurance of our salvation means that we're no longer worrying about something that God says He took care of a long time ago.

Workers building the Golden Gate Bridge were dying often, falling and plummeting to their deaths. Then someone got a great idea to put a net below the bridge to catch people who fell. Once those nets were in place, productivity skyrocketed because the workers were no longer afraid of falling to their deaths. They were secure that if they did fall, the net would catch them.

Lewis Sperry Chafer



“There is a normal Christian experience. There are new and blessed emotions and desires. Old things do pass away; and behold all things do become new; but all such experiences are but secondary evidences, as to the fact of salvation, in that they grow out of that positive repose of faith which is the primary evidence.”

Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: A Clear Doctrinal Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 60. Italics added

- 7 so that **you became an example** to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.
- 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
- 7 As a result, you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.
- 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.
 - God worked strategically through the lives of the Thessalonians that they had a ministry when they didn't know they had a ministry
 - "...Macedonia" - the "county" (surrounding area) around Thessalonica
 - "...Achaia" - the area further south in Greece, including Athens and Corinth
- 8 For the word of the Lord has **sounded forth** from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place *the news of* your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need to say anything.
- 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.
- 8 From you the word of the Lord has spread out not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place where your faith in God has become known. As a result, we do not need to say anything about it.
- 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

- "...sounded forth" - *execheo*, derived from *echos*, a loud noise, trumpet, thunderclap
- Implies the persistence of the testimony over an ever-increasing expanse
- The Holy Spirit was doing such a mighty work that word spread far and wide about what the Spirit was doing in this church
- One of the main reasons that news of these Christians traveled so far so fast is that Thessalonica was located on a major trade route. Those passing through the city would get word about these Christians who were under persecution from these unbelieving Jews, but still lived in joy. They witnessed something that was supernatural.
- A similar situation happened to Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:22-25)...they were beaten, thrown in prison and their feet were fastened in stocks, yet at midnight they began praying and singing hymns of praise to God, while the other prisoners listened.
- Paul is recounting this fact back to them because of their doubting whether or not their conversion was real. Paul's reasoning is that they are missionaries with a wide audience and they didn't even know it, so how could you think your original conversion wasn't real?

9 For they themselves report about us as to the kind of reception we had with you, and how you **turned to God from idols** to serve a **living and true God**,

9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

9 For people keep telling us what kind of welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve a living and true God

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

- Others continually told Paul how effective the Thessalonians had become at spreading the gospel ever since they heard it from him

- "...turned to God from idols" - they "repented"...changed their minds from believing in and worshiping idols to instead serving God

— "turned" - *epistephō*, a synonym for "believed" (Cf. Acts 9:35)

— What got the Thessalonians to turn from idols to God is the same thing Paul used in Ephesus to get people to turn to God from idols: preaching the gospel (Cf. Acts 19:9-20)

— This also indicates a sizable Gentile population in the church, since idolatry was a Gentile vice

— Salvation does not begin with giving up something, but with receiving Someone

— Paul gives more evidence of the validity and authenticity of their salvation by reminding them of their changed lives...that they haven't only been justified by faith, but that they have also made significant progress in their sanctification

— If these things are happening, how could you be talked into your salvation not being real by these unbelieving Jews?

- "...living and true God" - in contrast to the dead, worthless idols they used to worship, they now serve a living and true God. God is 100% true 100% of the time.
- Jesus is not just true, He is *the* truth (John 14:6); the church, of which Christ is the Head, is "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15)

Prophetic hope drives one toward personal holiness and evangelism.

10 and **to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is,** Jesus who **rescues** us **from** the **wrath to come**.

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

10 and to wait for his Son whom he raised from the dead to come back from heaven. This Jesus is the one who rescues us from the coming wrath.

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

- Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to the return of Christ
- "...to wait for His Son from heaven" - notice that it does not say to wait for a set of signs/prophecies to come to pass; it also doesn't tell us to be on the lookout for the Antichrist
- Every reference to the Rapture in Scripture implies the doctrine of imminency, that there is no prerequisite or preceding sign that must take place prior to the Rapture. Thus, the Rapture is "imminent" (the next event).
- The doctrine of imminency is taught here (v10), as well as in: John 14:1-3; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20; James 5:8. In each of these references to the Rapture, no prerequisite prophetic signs are given.
- The reality of the doctrine of imminency is one of the most compelling arguments supporting the pre-Tribulational Rapture viewpoint (see Rapture View Comparison chart below). All other Rapture views cannot support imminency because by definition the events of the Tribulation must come to pass before the Rapture takes place.
- To wait means to keep on serving the Lord, giving out the Word of God while you wait. The coming of Christ to take His Church out of the world is not an escape mechanism, it is an incentive to serve Him.
- The hope of the Rapture was real and powerful with Paul, as it should be with us. It was subject to abuse then as now as Paul will show in this very letter. He alludes to this hope at the close of each chapter in this Epistle.
- Paul obviously did not follow the same pattern of ministry/teaching that most do today... many today will tell new believers to concentrate on the gospels or epistles, on the deity of

Christ, His life, ministry, death and resurrection. I'm sure Paul covered these topics as well, but he also covered eschatology, including the Rapture.

— "to wait" - *anamenō*, present tense, meaning they were actively waiting, continuously, on-going

— Church Age believers are never told to "watch"; we're only told to "wait"

— When Jesus is addressing Israel in the Tribulation (Matt 24-25), He tells them to "watch" (Matt 24:15; 24:32—25:13 [esp 24:42]; 1 Thess 5:1-8; 2 Peter 3:8,10). Jesus tells them to "watch" because they have specific signs/events to watch for; Church Age believers have no such signs to watch for, so we are only to "wait" (1:9-10; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28).

- "...whom He raised from the dead" - notice that Paul links the Rapture to Jesus' resurrection

- "...rescues" - *rhyomai*, deliverer, rescuer; to draw one away from danger, evil

— It's very clear that Paul taught the Thessalonians that Jesus would come back for them before the wrath of God (Tribulation) begins. This is why when you get to 2 Thessalonians (2:2), they are very upset because they had received a forged letter, allegedly from Paul, saying that the Tribulation period had started.

— If Paul taught the Thessalonians that they would be going through the wrath of God, why would they be "shaken" (2 Thess 2:2)? The reason why they were shaken is that Paul taught them crystal clear in 1 Thessalonians, and while he was with them (Acts 17), that they are not going to see the wrath of God. This is why they were upset with the forged letter telling them they were currently in the wrath of God.

- "...from" - *ek*, if Paul wanted to communicate that believers were going into the Tribulation but would be protected in it, he would've used the Greek word *para* or *en*, not *ek*.

— If believers go into the Tribulation, then the doctrine of imminency is destroyed because there are signs that must happen before the Rapture happens

— It's interesting that Paul never tells us to prepare for the Tribulation. If the Church were going into the Tribulation, why are there absolutely no instructions for us on how to handle it?

— Believers today must deal with the wrath of this world, the wrath of man, the wrath of Satan, but we are exempt from the wrath of God. The Bible teaches how to deal with each of these, but it never instructs us on how to deal with God's wrath because we're exempt.

- "...wrath" - *orgē*, we get some sexual terms from this word, but what it means is "passion out of control" or "passion without limits"

— Here the word obviously is not being used in the sexual sense, but rather in the anger sense. It is the holy revulsion of God against that which is a contradiction of His holiness.

— It's referring directly to a time in history where God's passionate anger will be unleashed on the entire earth, and there will be no limitation on it (Cf. Rev 6:16-17)

- Paul uses the same exact sentence structure in 2 Cor 1:10: "who delivered (*rhyomai*) us from (*ek*) so great a peril of death (*thanatos* instead of *orgē*), and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us."

— In 2 Cor 1:10, Paul says he was kept completely out of death (delivered/rescued from death); in 1 Thess 1:10, Paul says that believers will be kept completely out of God's wrath. Because of the same sentence structure, and the fact that God kept Paul from death (he didn't die 25%), this verse is proof of a pre-Tribulation Rapture.

- Those who don't believe in the Rapture interpret "wrath to come" to refer to hell rather than the Tribulation. So how do we know that "wrath to come" refers to the Tribulation instead of hell?

— The Bible talks about wrath that is going on currently. When an unbeliever dies, they immediately are under God's wrath (Cf. Luke 16:23). Immediately after death, the rich man "lifted up his eyes being in torment."

— In Jude 6-7, referring to the angels who did not keep their own domain (Gen 6) and Sodom & Gomorrah, it says that they are "exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." The verbs in these verses are present tense, meaning that the angels and unbelievers of Sodom & Gomorrah are currently (today) under punishment of eternal fire.

— So Paul is not making a generic reference to hell...hell is an on-going reality, in Paul's day as well as today

— The interpretation of this verse as referring to the Tribulation fits very well with the context of all of 1 Thessalonians. The last verse in each chapter is a reference to either the Rapture or Second Coming.

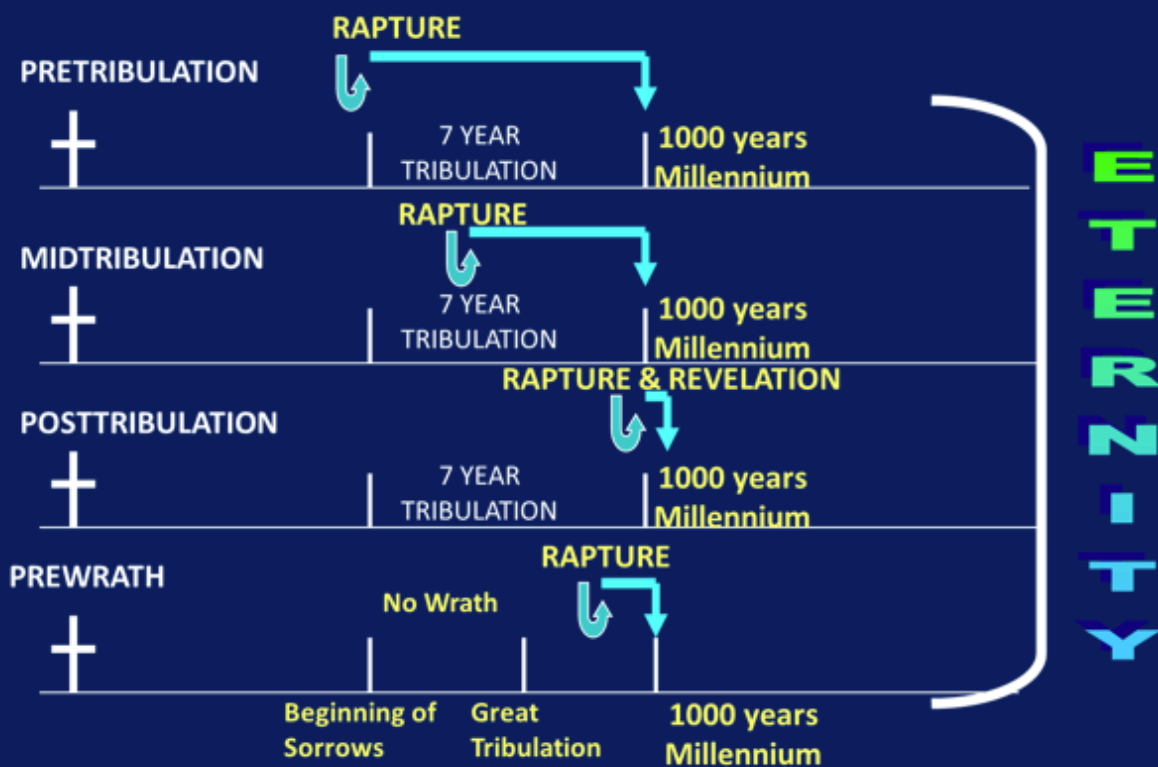


Wayne Brindle

"Biblical Evidence for the Imminence of the Rapture,"
Bibliotheca Sacra 158, no. 630 (April-June 2001): 138-51.

"Four criteria may be suggested, any one of which indicates imminence: (1) The passage speaks of Christ's return as at any moment. (2) The passage speaks of Christ's return as 'near,' without stating any signs that must precede His coming. (3) The passage speaks of Christ's return as something that gives believers hope and encouragement, without indicating that these believers will suffer tribulation. (4) The passage speaks of Christ's return as giving hope without relating it to God's judgment of unbelievers."

RAPTURE VIEW COMPARISON





Lewis Sperry Chafer

Systematic Theology, Vol. 4, p. 367

“THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST. Whether it be that coming of Christ to the earth in glory when Israel is to be delivered or that coming into the air to receive His Bride, the coming is imminent. Scripture which directs Israel in the tribulation, which time is terminated by the glorious return of Christ as their judge and Deliverer, warns her to **watch**, for He will then come ‘as a thief in the night’ (Cf. Matt 24:32–25:13; 1 Thess 5:1–8; 2 Peter 3:8,10). Over against this, the Church is instructed to **wait** and to look for His return for her (1 Thess 1:9–10; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28). In both instances the return of Christ is unannounced...



Lewis Sperry Chafer

Systematic Theology, Vol. 4, p. 367

...and therefore impending, within the period to which each event belongs. The return of Christ for His Church was not impending in Old Testament days; nor is the glorious appearing impending until the tribulation (2 Thess 2:3).”



Dr. John Walvoord

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“It is significant that Paul in such a brief period of ministry not only led them out of darkness into the light in the gospel, but also faithfully preached to them the truth of the coming of the Lord. By contrast today, some folks who go to church year after year never hear the precious truth that Christ who came to Bethlehem so long ago is coming again and that we can be looking for that wonderful return of the Lord for His own. So, in verse 10 he reminds the believers in Thessalonica that they not only have turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God—a present work—but they also have a new hope for...



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...the future: ‘And to wait for His Son from heaven. The word ‘wait’ is in the present tense. They had turned to God in one act, but there remained the constant, day by day expectation. In other words, they were constantly looking for the return of the Lord, the coming of the Lord for His saints.”

Believers Not Appointed to God's Wrath

- John 3:36: The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”
- Rom 1:18: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
- Rom 2:5: But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,
- Rom 5:9: Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

- 1 Thess 1:10: and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is*, Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come.
- 1 Thess 5:9: For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

How will God keep believers “away from” His wrath as He pours it out during the Tribulation?

- Pre-Tribulationists say He will do so by taking us to heaven before the Tribulation begins
- Mid-Tribulationists say we will enter the Tribulation, but God will take us to heaven before the outpouring of His wrath that will occur only during the second half of the Tribulation
- Post-Tribulationists believe we will go through the entire Tribulation and God will protect us from the outpouring of His wrath during that time

1 Thess 1:10 does not state exactly *how* God will deliver us “away from” His wrath, but other passages in 1 Thess, however, point to a Pre-Tribulational deliverance (Cf. 4:13-18; 5:4-10).

If the Thessalonians had been taught that the Great Tribulation, in whole or in part, must first run its course, it is difficult to see how they could be described as expectantly awaiting Christ’s return. If that was the case, they should have been described as bracing themselves for the Great Tribulation and the painful events connected with it.

The coming of Christ for His Church is called the Rapture. ***It is not a doctrine to argue about; it is a doctrine to live.*** Unfortunately, there are many who believe Christ is coming after the Great Tribulation. There are those who believe He is coming before, and some believe He is coming during that period of time. Then there are others who don’t believe that He is coming at all, and yet they say that they trust Him as their Savior.

For all the groups there is one important question: How does your interpretation affect your life? If your view has no effect on your life, then you should reconsider what you believe.

The expectation of the return of the Lord should be the motivating factor in the life of the believer.