

WHEN SHALL CHRIST RETURN?

(1 & 2 Thessalonians)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Lord Is Coming Again! He Came The First Time In Humiliation, But His Second Coming Will Be With Power And Great Glory. (Cf. *Matt. 25:31-32*)

1. He came the first time in poverty. (*2 Cor. 8:9*) He was born in a stable; lived in a carpenters shop; crucified on a Roman cross and buried in a borrowed tomb.
2. He is coming next as God Almighty, owner of heaven and earth. When He came as a babe in Bethlehem, He was welcomed by His mother and by Joseph and the limited number to whom the announcement was made. When He comes the second time, only God can estimate the number who will welcome Him. One thing is for sure, ALL will BOW before Him. (Cf. *Phil. 2:9-11*)

B. When Shall He Come Again?

1. Some are preaching that He is coming soon because the signs of *Matt. 24* are being fulfilled. (See previous lesson "The Time of the End.")
2. Some say He came in 1914. (The Jehovah's Witnesses)
3. Some say He is never coming and that the "second coming" is the Christian's "pie in the sky."
4. *1 & 2 Thessalonians* will answer the questions, "Shall He come?" and "When shall He come?"

II. AIM.

- A. To Present An Analysis Of *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Known By Some As The "Advent Epistles."
- B. To Encourage Christians To Cling To The Lord's Second Coming As The Basis Of Their Hope And Not Merely A Fact Upon Which We Agree.

- C. To Encourage Us To Be Expectant. He Is Coming!
"Maranatha." (1 Cor. 16:22)

III. OUTLINE.

A. THE OUTLINE AND ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS.

1. Outlines.

- a. 1 Thessalonians. (W. G. Scroggie)
- 1) A word of *exultation*. (1:1-10)
 - 2) A word of *explanation*. (2:1 - 3:13)
 - 3) A word of *exhortation*. (4:1-28)
- b. 2 Thessalonians.
- 1) The Lord is coming back again. (1:1-12)
 - 2) The Lord's coming preceded by the falling away. (2:1-12)
 - 3) The Lord's coming should comfort the heart and encourage the saints to work and be at peace. (2:13 - 3:17)

2. An analysis of the writings.

- a. Written by Paul, probably from Corinth.
(Cf. Acts 18:1-5 w/ 1 Thess. 3:1-6)
- b. The date of the writings - 52 - 53 A.D.
- c. The church at Thessalonica was very special to Paul as seen in the warmth and tenderness of the letters. (Cf. 1 Thess. 2:17 w/ 2 Thess. 1:3-4)
- d. The theme of both epistles is hope. In both letters, hope is presented by three different Greek words related to the Lord's second coming.
- 1) Parousia, παρουσία - This word generally means presence, in the sense of arrival, an advent. (Cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8)
 - 2) Epiphaneia, επιφάνεια - An appearing, appearance, a shining forth. Translated

"manifestation" in *2 Thess.* 2:8 in the A.S.V. and "splendor" in the N.I.V. and "appearing" in *2 Tim.* 4:1, 8 in the A.S.V.

- 3) Apokalupsis, ἀποκάλυψις - The verb means to reveal, and the noun is an unveiling of what already exists. (*2 Thess.* 1:7) Translated "revelation" in the A.S.V.
- 4) To the afflicted saints, who had received the gospel with many trials and much persecution, the return of Christ as the avenger, the one to judge between right and wrong, would give them hope and courage to "keep on keeping on." (Cf. *1 Thess.* 1:6, 10; 3:4; 4:6; *2 Thess.* 1:6-9) (*1 Thess.* 4:13 - "No hope.")

B. THE LORD IS COMING AGAIN.

1. The certainty of His coming is seen both by the expectancy of the saints in Thessalonica and by plain statements of scripture.
 - a. The Thessalonian saints were waiting for His coming and expected it immediately. (*1 Thess.* 1:10; *2 Thess* 2:2)
 - b. The second coming of Christ is a statement of fact in these two letters. Study these passages. (*1 Thess.* 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-6, 23; *2 Thess.* 1:6-9; 2:1, 8)
 - c. This is a constant theme in the New Testament. (Cf. *Matt.* 25:13, 31-46; *Acts* 1:11; *Heb.* 9:28; *Phil.* 3:20-21)
2. The manner in which He will come.
 - a. It will be personal. (Unlike His coming in destruction of Jerusalem through an ambassador, Titus the Roman general.) (Cf. *Matt.* 24:30)
 - 1) "This same Jesus." (*Acts* 1:11)
 - 2) "The Lord Himself shall descend..." (*1 Thess.* 4:16)
 - b. It will be mysterious. In *Acts* 1:9-11, the

clouds veiled His ascension, but the clouds will unveil His return. (*Rev. 1:7 cf. 1 Thess. 4:17*)

- c. It will be sudden. (*Matt. 25*) The virgins and the talents are parables indicative of the suddenness of His return. Like a woman in travail with child. (*1 Thess 5:3*)
 - d. It will be triumphant. (*2 Thess. 1:5-10*)
 - 1) Rest for His people.
 - 2) Eternal punishment to the unknowing and disobedient.
3. There will be different reactions when He comes.
- a. Some shall be terrified. (*Cf. Heb. 10:26, 27, 31; Rev. 6:14-16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 7:21-23*)
 - b. Some shall glorify Him and marvel at Him. (*2 Thess. 1:10*) "The saints will surround their Lord with praise, honor and glory; His believers will marvel at His glory 'in that day' when their bodily eyes shall see Him as He is." (*1 John 3:2*) (Lenski)
 - c. Discuss *2 Thess. 1:10*. How do you think you shall respond when you see Him?

C. WHEN IS CHRIST COMING AGAIN?

1. "This has been the question of the ages! Great Bible students have pondered this question. Wild-eyed religionists have cried 'wolf' too many times. The public is skeptical about the whole subject.... But the time has come to silence this doubting, skeptical and cynical attitude. This is the 'end time'! Prophecies are being fulfilled at an ever-accelerating and snowballing rate. The words of *Matthew 24* are coming alive in today's world news." (G. T. Armstrong)
 - a. Hal Lindsey's latest book, There's A New World Coming, has similar ideas.
 - b. The Bible very plainly teaches that the Lord's second coming is not known.

2. Evidently it was being taught in the church at Thessalonica that the day of the Lord was present. (*Cf. 2 Thess. 2:1-2*)
3. In clearing up some mistaken ideas and seemingly false teaching concerning Christ's coming, *2 Thess. 2:1-12* was written.
 - a. The passage is difficult. If we can understand what is meant by - "The day of the Lord? The falling away? The man of sin? The son of perdition? The temple of God? That which restraineth? The mystery of lawlessness? One that restraineth? Taken out of the way? The Lord shall slay? The working of Satan? Power and signs and wonders and falsehood?" - then we would have no difficulty with the passage. To those to whom it was written, it was understood clearly. (*2:5*)
 - b. Some things we know for sure are that the Lord would not come before "the falling away"; the revealing of the "man of sin" and the "son of perdition"; the removal of "he who restraineth"; the "revealing of the lawless one."
4. When is Christ coming. NOBODY KNOWS!
 - a. *1 Thess. 5:1-4* - "...as a thief in the night" - when ye least expect it.
 - b. *2 Thess. 1:10* - "when He shall come..." points again to the unknown date of the Lord's Parousia.
 - c. The hour is coming when the Son of God shall come. Believe it and be prepared no matter when He comes. (*Matt. 25:1-13; esp. ver. 13; cf. 2 Pet. 3:1-14*)
5. Because He has not yet come, do not lose faith that He will. (*2 Pet. 3:9*) For if He does not come:
 - a. All gospel preaching and Christian faith would have no meaning. (*1 Cor. 15:14*)
 - b. All who preach He is coming are false teachers. (*1 Cor. 15:15*)

- c. All faithful Christians are still in their sins. (*1 Cor. 15:17*)
 - d. All the dead in Christ have no hope of future glory. (*1 Cor. 15:18*)
 - e. All faithful Christians are the most pitiable on earth. (*1 Cor. 15:19*)
 - f. All things perish, there is no victory and service is vain. (*1 Cor. 15:50-58*)
6. It is foolish for men to try and figure out what cannot be known. The only thing we need to concern ourselves with is the fact of His coming and being in a state of alertness. (*1 Thess. 5:5-11*)
- a. Encourage each other to be prepared for that day.
 - b. You who are Christians, should be in a state of constant preparedness. (*Cf. Titus 2:10-14*)

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. The Thessalonian Saints Are Exhorted, In View Of The Second Coming Of Christ, To:
 - 1. Live holy lives. (*1 Thess. 3:11-13; 5:12-23*)
 - 2. Be comforted. (*1 Thess. 4:18*)
 - 3. Maintain their present state. (*2 Thess. 2:13-17*)
 - 4. Work and not be sloven servants. (*2 Thess. 3:6-15*)
 - 5. Live in peace. (*2 Thess. 2:16*)
- B. We, Today, Need To Be More Conscious Of The Coming Of Our Great God. It Would Inspire Us To Holy Living If We Really Believe He's Coming Back Again.
- C. May Our Watchword Be - Maranatha. (*1 Cor. 16:22*)
O Lord Come! (*Cf. Rev. 22:20*)
- D. In View Of The Lord's Coming, And He Is Coming, "What Manner Of Persons Ought Ye To Be In All Holy Living And Godliness, Looking For And Earnestly Desiring The Coming Of The Day Of God..." (*2 Pet. 3:11-12*)