

## WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY THE 1 THESSALONIANS SERIES

### COMMENTARY ON MESSAGE #13 and #14

May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018

We have covered much ground in the last few sermons as it pertains to eschatology (the study or knowledge of the end times or last things). However, in some ways we have barely seen the tip of the iceberg. This edition of commentary is a combination of the two most recent studies (Messages 13 and 14) in our I Thessalonians series. But it will also attempt to give a review of everything we have studied about eschatology so far.

Before reviewing end time events, let's remember that what the Bible reveals about the **future is intended to influence how we think and act today**. At first glance it may seem as though I Thessalonians is written in a patchwork style = "a little of this, a little of that". It seems to have two different themes that are miles removed from each other. The first theme is **sanctification**. As you might recall, the root word for sanctification, or sanctify, is **holy, set apart**. Sanctification is the process of growing in the Christian life in such a way that one becomes more like Jesus Christ in character and in behavior. Paul commended the Thessalonians for how passionately they were seeking to honor Christ with their lives and for having set a tremendous example for other Christians (see 1:1-9; 4:1-2; 9-10; 5:23-24).

**Q1:** Where have you recently seen growth in your personal sanctification? Where do you need to put greater focus?

Since the doctrine of sanctification is found in each of the five chapters of I Thessalonians, why does so much of this letter deal with eschatology (1:10; 4:13 – 5:11)? You have probably already answered that. Think of the following dynamic that we experience in our lifestyles. What we anticipate about our future affects us today. Let's say you are seriously wanting to take a dream vacation next year to Hawaii but you know that financially it is on the outer edge of what you can afford. You don't want to go into debt, but you really want to go to Hawaii. So, you decide to stop buying your lunch every day. Instead, you pack an inexpensive bag lunch at home and take it with you. You know that over the course of a year you can save enough money to take your vacation. In other words, what you know about the future affects you today.

**Q2:** Can you think of an example of how your plans or expectations for the future affected how you lived or acted ahead of time or prior to that plan/expectation?

Although the study of eschatology can be a fascinating exercise and many people are interested in it, sometimes there are Christians who think it is impractical and is a waste of time. Now it may be that this attitude is simply a result of being confused or frustrated by not being able to understand some or much of what the Bible teaches about the end times. When someone has great difficulty understanding a topic it is easy to throw up one's hands and say, "What's the use? I give up!"

**NOTE:** Over the years I have heard many Christians say this about the book of Revelation.

**Q3:** Have you ever avoided portions of the Bible because you had difficulty making sense of it?

The study of eschatology is very important, and this should be obvious based upon the simple fact that God's Word says so much about it. Why has God included so much eschatology in His Word?

1. To reveal to us Who He is as the Sovereign Ruler over all things. One can correctly say that HISTORY IS **HIS** STORY. We so easily worship ourselves or accept cheap idols into our hearts. He alone is God, and there is none like Him!
2. To confirm to us that the Bible is His Word. Many prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled in stunning ways. As a Christian, when I study and consider the unblemished record of the Bible in giving prophecies which were later fulfilled, I realize this is a book unlike any other book. I want what it says to take hold of my heart!
3. As is evident in I Thessalonians, God wants what he has revealed to us about the future to be a motivation for us today in the process of sanctification. And the central truth that God has revealed about our future is this: **Someday we will see Jesus in all His glory.** Could there possibly be a greater motivation or inspiration to grow than that?

**Q4:** Here are some passages that link sanctification and eschatology. What is a specific change you should make in your life today based upon these verses? See I John 3:1-3; Jude 24-25; I Peter 4:7-11, and here is a biggie → II Peter 3:10-14.

### A REVIEW OF FUTURE THINGS IN I THESSALONIANS

*"... and to wait for His Son from Heaven,  
Whom He raised from the dead – Jesus,  
Who rescues us from the coming wrath."*

I Thessalonians 1:10

This is the first mention of the end times in this letter and it occurs early. Wrath, as used here, is not wrath in a general sense, it refers to a specific event. Some Christian teachers say that this verse is speaking of salvation. In other words, Jesus rescues us from Hell by having paid for our sins and forgiven us. One of my heroes, Dr. John MacArthur, says that. Well, Dr. John is wrong ☺. In light of the emphasis on eschatology (the rapture and second coming in 4:13 – 5:11), the wrath Jesus rescues us from in 1:10 ultimately includes Hell, but it is the wrath of the seven year tribulation that is the focus.

*“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

I Thessalonians 5:9

This verse is embedded in a discussion of the second coming and the judgment which befalls a sinful and unbelieving world. This indicates that while the ultimate rescue we have from Jesus is the rescue from an eternity in Hell, the wrath that comes beforehand, the wrath of the tribulation period, is the primary meaning of 1:10 and 5:9. **Thank-You, Father, that you have not treated us as our sins deserve.**

We believe that I Thessalonians 4:13-18 pertains to the rapture of the church to Heaven. In I Thessalonians 5:1-11 Paul transitions to a related but very different event – the physical return of Jesus Christ to earth. This is called the second coming and it occurs at least seven years **after** the rapture. In 5:1-11 Paul contrasts the destinies of believers and unbelievers. He does this to call the Thessalonian Christians (and us) to have a completely different mindset than that of the unbelieving world, and to have priorities and actions that demonstrate an awareness of what God has revealed about the future.

The following flow chart covers the cross to the second coming of Christ.



Jesus dies on the cross, and 3 days later rises from the dead.



Before Jesus ascends back to Heaven, the apostles ask if this is the time He will restore Israel as a Kingdom (see Acts 1:6).



Jesus ascends to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11) and the angels promise His return.



Jesus is now in Heaven interceding for us and preparing to keep the promise of John 14:1-3.



In Acts 2 the church is born on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 33, perhaps A.D. 31)



In A.D. 70 the Jews revolt against Rome. Jerusalem is destroyed and Israel ceases to exist as a nation.



For nearly 2,000 years, the church of Jesus Christ has been the focus of God's plan.



But so much of the Old Testament promises to Israel are still unfulfilled. And what of Acts 1:6?



May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Israel celebrates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its restoration as a sovereign nation.



When Israel was "resurrected" in 1948 it ended 1878 years of not existing as a nation.



What other people than God's chosen could possibly still have an identity such as the Jews after not being a nation for 1878 years?



However, Israel continues to reject the gospel of her Messiah, the Lord Jesus.



At a moment known only to God, "in the twinkling of an eye" (I Corinthians 15:51-52) the church will be taken to Heaven. This is known as the rapture. See I Thessalonians 4:13-18.



Then will begin an unprecedented time of tribulation on earth. This 7 year period was prophesied by Daniel in Daniel 9:25-27.



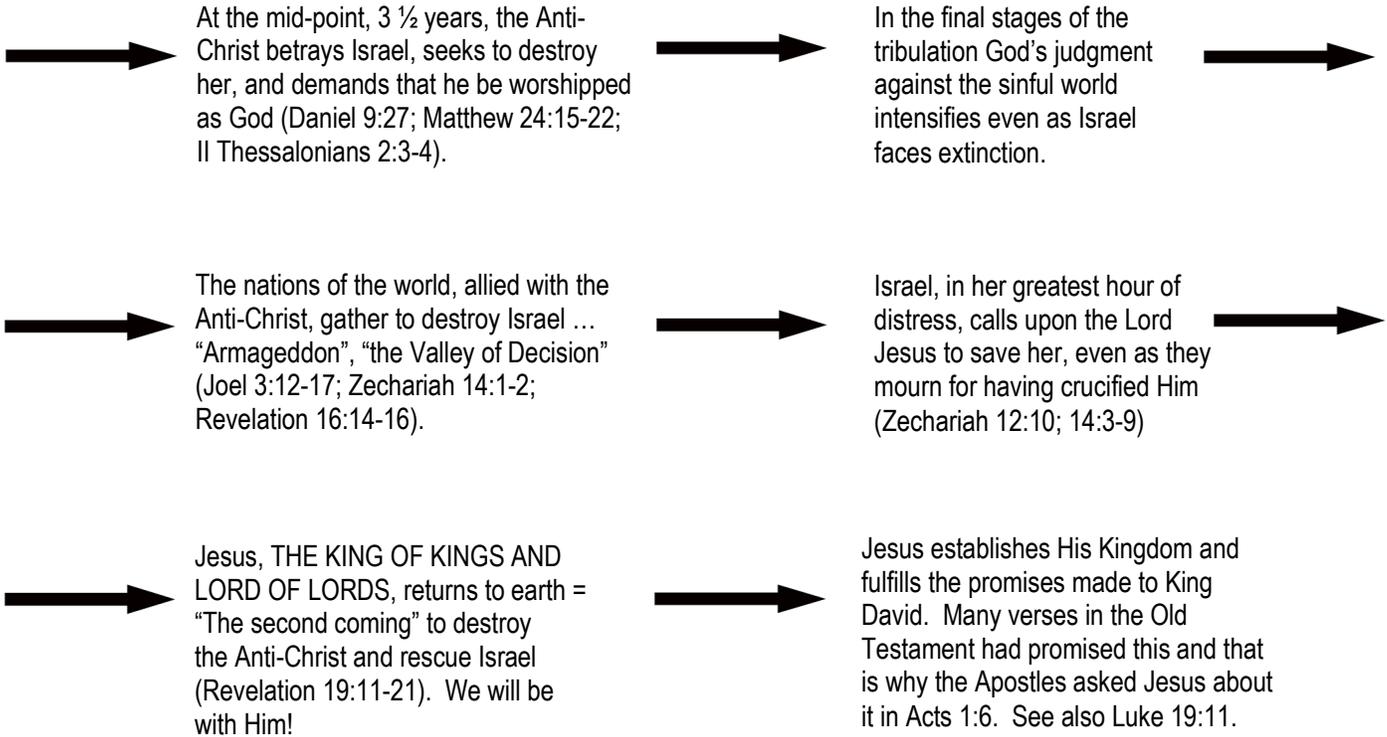
During this time many people will turn to Jesus Christ, but circumstances will probably prevent them from forming traditional local churches as we know them. There is no mention of the church on earth from Revelation 4 until the return of Christ in Revelation 19.



At the beginning of the tribulation the Anti-Christ (who is first seen only as a dynamic world leader) makes a 7 year covenant with Israel, guaranteeing their "peace and safety".



## CONTINUED ...



Beloved, let us love Jesus all the more dearly as the Day approaches.

Let us serve Him and the church which He loves.

Let us tell the gospel story to those who do not know Him.

Let us be **WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY.**