

The Second Coming in Thessalonians #2

Probably the most consistent theme of the two books of Thessalonians is the second coming of Christ. Last time we looked at 1 Thess. 1:10 and 2:19.

Holy and Unblameable Hearts

1 Thess. 3:12-13 – “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another ... To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”

Our goal in life should be to live unblameable and holy lives in brotherly love toward one another, so we will not be ashamed when he returns.

- We are to love one another. Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; 1 Jn. 3:14; 4:7-12
1 Jn. 4:17 even ties in with 1 Thess. 3:13 – “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.”
- We are to “increase and abound” in love to one another. We shouldn’t just tolerate one another, but to love and be kindly affectioned. Love works no ill to his neighbor.
- To say we are unblameable does not imply “sinless perfection”. But we should not allow ourselves any unconfessed, or hidden sins. We should be fighting against all sins of the flesh and spirit.
2 Cor. 7:1 – “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
- Holy lives. We are to live set apart and consecrated to God. Not double-minded, not straddling the fence, with one desire on the advancements and pleasures of this world, and another on the things of God.
- God has chosen us to be a holy people to him.
Eph. 1:4 – “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” (“in love” may better start verse 5 than to end verse 4)
Heb. 12:14 – “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”
1 P. 2:9 – “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness, into his marvellous light.”

Jesus will Return WITH All His Saints

1 Thess. 3:12-13 – “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another ... To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”

- When Christ returns, it will be “with all his saints”.
 - 1 Thess. 4:14 – “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”
 - Col. 3:4 – “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”
 - Zech. 14:5 – “... and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”
 - Jude 14 – Enoch prophesied “...Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.”
 - Rev. 19:11-14 – “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war ... his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in linen, white and clean.”
- There are some who say that “the saints” who return with Christ are not us, but only the angels. I do not believe this is justified, especially in the light of Col. 3:4 and 1 Thess. 4:14, but also by the way the word “saint” is used in both OT and NT.

- In the OT, “saint” is used very many times throughout Psalms in obvious reference to people. For example, Ps. 106:16, “Aaron the saint of the LORD”.
- Also in Dan. 7:18-27 repeatedly refers to the saints of the most High, who are warred against and worn out by “the little horn” (the Antichrist) who temporarily prevails against them. Yet in the end they take the kingdom and possess it for ever. “the kingdom and dominion ... shall be given unto the people of the saints of the most High ...” (v. 27).
- In the NT, the word “saint” or “saints” occurs 61 times. 58 of those refer to Christian believers. The only 3 that would even be questionable are 1 Thess. 3:13, 2 Thess. 1:10, and Jude 14.
- In the OT, I see only 4 places where the word could conceivably refer to angels (Job 5:1, 15:15; Dan. 8:13; Zech. 14:5), and even there it is not definite.
- There is no reason to say that “saints” in those 3 NT and 4 OT verses refer exclusively to angels.
- I do not deny that angels could be called saints, because they are certainly called holy, and are set apart to God. Jesus does say clearly that when he returns, it will be with his angels.
Mt. 25:31 – “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”
- So I believe that when Jesus returns, it will be with his mighty angels, accompanied by the resurrected/raptured saints, and that these angels and saints together are called “the armies of God”.

Jesus’ Return is Preceded by the Resurrection and the Rapture of Saints

1 Thess. 4:13-18 – “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ...” (verse 13 is all we can get to today)

There were evidently concerns at the time of this writing, because Christians were dying. How would this affect the coming of Christ’s kingdom? Would those dead saints miss out on what would happen at his coming? Paul is reassuring them that just because some have died doesn’t mean they will miss out. In fact they will be resurrected, right before the living saints will be raptured.

Those who die in the Lord are really present with Christ now, even before the resurrection of their physical bodies, enjoying him in the pleasures of Paradise (Lk. 16, Lk. 23:43). This is our great hope, and is why apart from a temporary sorrow, we do not grieve at the funerals of believers, like those who are unbelievers. For the unbeliever, there is no confidence of life after death, or being accepted by God. They have no hope, because all they lived for w/as in this life – all their desires, goals, pleasures, and hopes were of what they could do in the physical world. If they have any hope at all, it is in the misguided feeling that God is all mercy and no judgment, and that their good will outweigh the bad. At funerals you always hear people say, “He is in a better place now”. Well, we can hope so, but apart from a believing, regenerating faith in Christ, such sentiments are without any basis in fact.

(Sneak preview) If the resurrection and rapture of saints takes place when Jesus descends from heaven with a shout (4:16 and 1 Cor. 15:51-52), how can it be said that them which sleep will he bring with him?

1. Perhaps he brings the unresurrected saints with him from Paradise to the earth, at which time they will receive their resurrected and glorified bodies.
2. But primarily, there is a distinction between Christ coming to raise and rapture the saints, and his coming in mighty fury to defeat the armies of the Antichrist in Rev. 19, at the end of the Tribulation. The rapture is imminent (it can occur at any time, which is why we need to be watching and ready, but the real Second Coming in judgment, with the armies of heaven, will be at the end of the Tribulation and is so is not imminent.