

The Second Coming in Thessalonians #1

Probably the most consistent theme of the two books of Thessalonians is the second coming of Christ. We will look at each reference and bring in related scriptures as they apply.

Waiting on Our Lord from Heaven

1 Thess. 1:10 – “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

The point we are interested in here is that we are still in this world, expectantly waiting for Christ's return. Waiting involves expectation and preparation, not just passing time.

Lk. 12:35-40 says we are like men waiting for their lord to return from a wedding, so that when he comes and knocks they can open immediately. “Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching”. v.40 makes the application – “Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”

Mt. 24:36-44 says Christ's return will be like the days of Noah, unexpected. He warns us in 42-44, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Then follows the warning of 12:45-51, of faithful and evil servants who either do his will in his absence, or not.

Mt. 25:1-13 is the parable of the 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins waiting for the bridegroom. It ends in v. 13, “Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

1 Thess. 5:2-9 speaks of the Lord coming as a thief in the night, and how it will catch the world totally unprepared and unexpected. But it says we are not in darkness to be overtaken as a thief. Obviously the exact moment will take us by surprise, but it means that we can and should be ready for it, whenever it occurs. Verse 6 says “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Verse 9 also goes along well with 1:10, because it says God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 P. 4:7 – “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

2 P. 3:10-14 – “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

Rev. 16:15 – “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

Rev. 22:7 says “Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of this book.”, and it is repeated in verses 12 and 20, “I come quickly”. That was almost 2000 years ago, so “quickly” doesn't mean soon (at least in our way of thinking), but suddenly.

In conclusion, what should be our attitude and activity while we are waiting for his return?

1. We are to watch and be ready.
2. To do his will as good stewards, during his absence.
3. To make sure we keep our oil stocked and our lamps burning.
4. Not to be “sleeping”.
5. To be sober and watch in prayer.
6. To live holy lives in godliness, and to be “without spot and blameless”.
7. To “keep our garments” (garments of righteousness).

8. To “keep the sayings of this book”.

The Relationship Between Pastors (Shepherds) and the Flock

1 Thess. 2:19 – “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

- There will be a special joy for ministers of the gospel (pastors, apostles, teachers), to stand before Christ at his coming along with those who they have successfully taught and shepherded in this life.

The hope of a real pastor is to present the people of his flock before Christ with joy and not shame. The crown of rejoicing is a result of his faithful laboring for the people God put under his care, knowing that he did not fail to lead them properly (Ac. 20:24-27). The crown of rejoicing is also his being able to present a people whom God had genuinely changed and made fruitful, through the ministry of that pastor.

1 P. 5:1-4 is an exhortation to elders (pastors) to feed God’s flock faithfully and to be good examples, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

- Conversely, there will be grief for those shepherds who did not feed the flock, or used it for their own pride or prosperity. Other pastors will face the fact that they were not called at all, and so will be judged.

Jer. 23:1-2 – “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! Saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.”

Ezek. 34:2, 4 – “... Thus saith the LORD God unto the shepherds; woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ... The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.”

Ezek. 34:8-10 – “... my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, ... Thus saith the LORD God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.”

Jn. 10:12-13 – the hireling abandons the sheep and flees, leaving the flock to the wolves, because he is just a hireling and doesn’t care for the sheep.

- Also, some people will need to face God in the knowledge that they sat unmoved by a faithful pastor’s or teacher’s exhortations. They heard but did not respond, and will be responsible. Unto whom much is given, much is required.

Ezek. 33:30-32 – the people say “... Come, I pray you, and hear the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.”

Lk. 12:47-48 – “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more.”