



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N10

March 5, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“When Jesus Comes”

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23-24

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Hope

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with him.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.”

1 Peter 1:3-4



What happens
when Jesus
comes?

Our hope as Christians is in Christ. The New Testament makes this perfectly clear. Our hope for *salvation* is in him (Rom 5:1). Our hope for the *future* is also in him (Tit 2:13; cf. 1Pe 1:3, 13). Of course, viewed inclusively, our future hope entails much more than the *arrival* of Jesus; it entails all of the future events associated with his continuing *presence*. Jesus comes to rescue believers from God's wrath (1Th 1:10), to raise the righteous dead (1Th 4:16), to reward those who appear before his judgment seat (1Th 1:19; 3:13; cf. 2Co 5:10), to judge the living prior to the renewal of all things (Mt 19:28-30; 25:31-46), and to raise and sentence the unrighteous dead (Rev 20:12-13) prior to the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1-22:5).

Perhaps the following overview of these events may clarify their *temporal* relationship. Jesus is coming to *rescue* (1Th 1:10; 5:9; cf. 4:14-18) and then to *reign* (Mt 24:30-31; cf. 19:28). His return is *sequenced*, that is, it's a *complex* event that unfolds in two phases. In the same way that the prophesied advent of Christ unfolds in a first advent followed by a second advent, so also does the second advent unfold in a coming to *rescue*, the *rapture* (1Th 4:14-18), followed by a coming to *reign*, the *glorious appearing* (Mt 24:30-31). Following the *rapture*, those who are “caught up” (1Th 4:17) to be with the Lord will appear before Jesus, their judge, at the *bēma* of Christ, i.e., the judgment seat of Christ, “so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2Co 5:10). Following the *glorious appearing* of Jesus, those who are alive, both Jews and Gentiles, will appear before Jesus, their judge, who will determine who gains entrance into his kingdom. Jews who evidenced faith by faithfully watching for Christ's return and Gentiles who evidenced faith by demonstrating compassion to the least of Christ's brothers and sisters enter the kingdom – while the faithless are excluded.

Inserted between the two aspects of our Lord's return is a time of wrath (1Th 1:10; 5:9), God's

wrath, from which believers will be rescued by Jesus' coming. This time of wrath is defined in terms of various future judgments (i.e., the seals, trumpets, and bowls) described in the book of Revelation. Following the seal judgments (6:1-14), those who experienced them cry out saying: “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the *wrath of the Lamb*. For the great day of *their wrath* [i.e., God's wrath] *has come* and who can withstand it?” (vv. 16-17; cf. 15:1). This period of wrath is thought by some to be related to the day of the Lord and to coincide with a future seven-year period of time called the Tribulation (Da 9:24, 27; cf. Mt 24:4-31; esp. vv. 8, 21). Others think the period of wrath coincides with only a part of the Tribulation – either during the second half or at the very end. Hence the difference of opinion among scholars regarding the temporal relationship of the rapture to the Tribulation – the text reads “Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath” not “the coming Tribulation” (1:10).

Resurrections also occur in connection with the coming of Jesus. There are two resurrections separated by 1,000 years (Rev 20:4-6). The *righteous* (v. 4) are resurrected first and the *unrighteous* (v. 5) second – 1,000 years later – making the *first* resurrection a resurrection unto *eternal life* and the *second* resurrection a resurrection unto *eternal death*. What's more, the first resurrection does not take place all at once; it unfolds sequentially – “Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (1Co 15:23). Saints will be raised, resurrected, when Jesus comes to *rescue* (1Th 4:16) and other saints will be raised, resurrected, when he comes to *reign* (Rev 20:4). Both of these resurrections are part of the *first* resurrection – destiny is determinative. The resurrection of Jesus, of *saints* at the rapture, and of *saints* at the glorious appearing all belong to the *first* resurrection. Finally, following his glorious appearing, Christ will reign on earth for 1,000 years, during a form of the kingdom of God called the millennium.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

**Read 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2:19-20; 3:13;
4:13-18; 5:23-24**

1:9b-10

9b They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

2:19-20

19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

3:13

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

4:13-18

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

5:23-24

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "rescues" in 1:10.
- Underline "the coming wrath" in 1:10.
- Circle "crown" in 2:19.
- Bracket "in the presence of" in 2:19.
- Underline "blameless and holy" in 3:13.
- Bracket "with all his holy ones" in 3:13.
- Bracket "the dead in Christ will rise" in 4:16.
- Bracket "we who are still alive and are left will be caught up" in 4:17.
- Circle "sanctify" in 5:23.
- Underline "God himself" in 5:23 and "he will do it" in 5:24.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1:9b-10

1. From *what* is Jesus going to rescue Christians?
2. *How* is he going to rescue them? (Cf. 4:17)

2:19-20

3. The term “crown” is used figuratively in 2:19. To what does the *metaphor* refer?
4. *When* is the “crown” received and *who* gives it? (Cf. 2Co 5:10)

3:13

5. “Blameless and holy” refers to the end of the process Christians go through to become like Jesus (Ro 8:29). What is that process called?
6. The preposition translated “in the presence of” is used to refer to appearing before a judge. Explain its use here.

4:13-18

7. *Who* does Jesus bring with him when he returns?
8. Summarize what happens when he arrives with them.

5:23-24

9. Christians will one day be sanctified “through and through.” *What* does that mean and *when* will that be?
10. What makes their sanctification certain?

Commentary On The Text

In addition to commenting on the intensely personal character of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, especially the first one, commentators often mention the attention given to eschatology, "things to come," in them. One writes: "Far and away the largest theological contribution of the Epistles lies in what they say about eschatology" (Robert L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 233). Another adds: "The Thessalonian correspondence has much to say about eschatology. Several major passages in the letters (1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 2 Thess 2:1-12) along with several briefer references (1 Thess 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:5,13; 2 Thess 1:6-10; 2:14) address various aspects of the end times" (D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, 39). Paul does not speak to every event associated with the coming of Jesus mentioned on page one, and the ones he treats, he treats more or less independently, rather than the way they would be treated in a systematic theology. That said, this issue will simply examine five passages that explicitly refer to the coming of Jesus with a view to identifying the five things said to occur when he comes.

First, Christians will be rescued. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10, Christians will be rescued from disaster, namely, the coming wrath of God. The reference to "wrath" here is not a reference to the outpouring of God's wrath on unbelievers generally. In other words, the rescue about which Paul speaks is *not* a rescue from the divine judgment that falls on all those whose names are not found written in the book of life (Rev 20:11-15)—in eternity. It's reference to the outpouring of God's wrath prior to the glorious appearing of Christ—in time. One commentator explains: "Used technically, as it so frequently is in the NT, 'wrath' (*orgēs*) is a title for the period just before Messiah's kingdom on earth, when God will afflict earth's inhabitants with an unparalleled series of physical torments because of their rejection of His will (Matt 3:7; 24:21; Luke 21:23; Rev 6:16, 17)" (Thomas, 248). Jesus is the *agent* who rescues. His coming is the *means* whereby he rescues. And that coming is the *rapture* described by Paul in 4:16-17.

Second, Christians will be rewarded. According to 2:19-20, Paul is looking forward to being rewarded by the Lord Jesus when he stands in his presence. The "crown" to which Paul refers is the victor's wreath awarded to the winner of athletic contests in the Greco-Roman world. And the term translated "in the presence of" is used with reference to appearing before a judge. Here Paul is alluding to the judgment seat of Christ before which all believers will appear. Writing to Christians in 2 Corinthians 5:10, he says: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in

the body, whether good or bad." Good stewards will be rewarded; bad stewards will suffer the loss of reward. Salvation is obtained by grace; rewards are obtained by works (cf. Mt 6:19-20).

Third, Christians will be reunited. According to 3:13, when Jesus comes he will bring "all his holy ones" with him. The Greek term translated "holy ones" in the NIV can also be translated "saints" (cf. ESV, HCSB, NET, NKJV), clarifying that it refers to humans rather than angels. While opinion is divided, one commentator writes: "The holy ones accompanying Christ at His coming are probably the souls of the saints who have departed this life and gone to be with Christ, whose bodies will be resurrected when He comes (4:16). That is, they are Christians rather than angels" (Constable, 700; see also William Hendriksen, *Exposition of 1 and II Thessalonians: Commentary on 1 Thessalonians*, NTC, 92-94). There will be a grand reunion of the righteous when Jesus comes!

Fourth, Christians will be resurrected and raptured. According to 4:16-17, "the dead in Christ" will be raised to receive an immortal body like Jesus' resurrection body, and the perishable bodies of "those who are still alive" will be "changed," that is, clothed with the imperishable (1Co 15:51-54). Once mortality is clothed with immortality and death is "swallowed up in victory" (v. 54), all will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air" (1Th 4:17). "The *rapture* is a theological term that refers to the 'catching up' of the church to meet the Lord in the air in association with his return and with the resurrection of believers. The term comes from the Latin verb *rapio* ('I seize,' 'I [violently] carry off'), which is the Vulgate's equivalent of the root Greek verb *harpazō* ('I seize,' 'I snatch away') that Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the primary text that teaches this concept [cf. Jn 14:2; 1Co 15:51-52]" (Alan Hultberg, "Introduction," in *Three Views on the Rapture*, 11).

Fifth, Christians will be sanctified through and through. According to 5:23-24, the *sanctification* process that begins with justification at conversion ends when Jesus comes and Christians are found "blameless" before him. In his prayer for the Thessalonian believers, Paul asks that their "whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.23). "Throughout the epistle, Paul has been concerned with sanctification (3:13; 4:3, 4, 7, 8). Now he prays that God will sanctify (separate to himself) the readers of the Epistle 'through and through.' *Holoteleis* ('through and through') speaks of the ultimate maturity of Christian character. It presents the qualitative side of spiritual advance in its final perfection. Toward this goal sanctification is directed" (Thomas, 294). His prayer will be answered when Jesus comes. God will do it.

Word Studies/Notes

1:9 *rescues*

“Rescues is a synonym of ‘saves,’ but one which places greater emphasis on the negative aspect of liberation from some danger” (Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Thessalonians*, 16). “In 1:10 Paul uses the verb *rhyomai*, which emphasizes more the aspect of rescue from disaster than *sōzō*, which can include the idea of the end for which one is saved” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 110).

v. 10 *the coming wrath*

“Used technically, as it so frequently is in the NT, ‘wrath’ (*orgēs*) is a title for the period just before Messiah’s kingdom on earth, when God will afflict earth’s inhabitants with an unparalleled series of physical torments because of their rejection of His will (Matt 3:7; 24:21; Luke 21:23; Rev 6:16, 17)” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 248). “If this was the only reference to the wrath to come in this epistle, we might conclude that Paul was probably referring to the outpouring of God’s wrath on unbelievers generally (cf. Col. 3:6). There is no specific reference to a particular judgment here. However, later he spent considerable space writing about the outpouring of God’s wrath in the Tribulation (4:13-18; 5:1-11). Therefore it seems to me that this is the first reference to that outpouring of wrath in the epistle (cf. 2:16; 5:9)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2023 ed., 20, plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessaonians.pdf).

2:19 *crown*

“The crown (*stephanos*) was a wreath signifying victory. Sometimes it was placed on the head of victorious military leaders. But Paul’s frequent use of athletic imagery (cf. the ‘opposition’ mentioned in 2:2) would indicate that he had in mind the victor’s wrath bestowed at the athletic contests held throughout the Greco-Roman world. Though Paul rejected human arrogance before God (1 Cor 1:26-31), he recognized that God’s servants may either serve him well or serve him poorly (1 Cor 3:10-15) and *be rewarded appropriately*” (D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, 99, italics added).

v. 19 *in the presence of*

“The local force of *empros-then* (‘in the presence of’) obtains whenever this preposition relates appearance before a judge (Matt 27:11; 25:32; Luke 21:36; 2 Cor 5:10; *contrast* 1 Thess 1:3; 3:9; 1 John 3:19) (cf. BAG, p. 256). Earlier Paul has made ‘our Lord Jesus’ the judge at this scene (1 Thess 2:19). This is no contradiction. The unity of the Father and Son, just seen in v. 11, allows a joint judgeship. The *bēma* of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) is also the *bēma* of God (Rom 14:10), because Christ in his present session is with the Father in his heavenly throne (Rev 3:21; cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3; 10:12). This hearing will take place at the future ‘visit’ (*en tē parousia*, ‘in the coming’) of the Lord Jesus (cf. 2:19). For the Thessalonians Paul

prays for a favorable verdict at that time” (Thomas, 268).

3:13 *blameless and holy*

“Paul did not pray that they would be sinless; that was impossible. He prayed that they would **be blameless** (cf. 2:10), that is, that after they sinned they would deal with it as God requires and so be free from any reasonable charge by their fellowmen. Before God they should be **holy**, separated to **God** in their hearts and habits. Paul longed that when Jesus Christ would return. He would find them blameless before men and holy before God” (Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 700).

v. 13 *in the presence of*

See note on 2:19.

4:16 *dead in Christ*

“Note that only the dead ‘in Christ’ will experience resurrection [at the rapture], not Old Testament saints, as some believe. As Paul used the phrase ‘in Christ’ it means Christians, members of the body of Christ, the church. God will reunite their resurrected glorified bodies with their spirits (1 Cor. 15:35-58)” (Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 54); see also (Thomas, 279; Martin, 152; Green, 225). Old Testament saints would then be raised in connection with the glorious appearing rather than the rapture (Rev 20:5).

v. 17 *caught up*

“The living among whom Paul still hoped to be (cf. ‘we’) will be suddenly snatched away (*harpagēsometha*, ‘caught up’; cf. Acts 8:39; 2 Cor 12:2, 4; Rev 12:5). This term in Latin, *raptus*, is the source of the popular designation of this event as the ‘rapture’” (Thomas, 279).

5:23 *sanctify*

Cf. 3:13; 4:4-7. I.e., “may he separate you from the life of sin and cause you to be dedicated to him (cf. Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 7:14; Rev. 22:11)” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians: Commentary on I Thessalonians*, NTC, 141). “It is clear from the context that, if *hagiazein* is a process, it is the completion of the process that is in view here, as in 3:13” (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 129).

vv. 23, 24 *God himself, he*

“What God began in the election and calling of the Thessalonians (1.4; 2.12; 4.7; 2 Thess. 2.13-14) he will complete at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8.30). They had received a call from God to sanctification, and the apostle expresses his complete confidence that God will continue this sanctifying work in them to the very end” (Green, 269).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

When Jesus comes, believers *in Christ* will be rescued, rewarded, reunited, resurrected, raptured, and sanctified through and through.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Lately I've been thinking a lot about Jesus' return. Actually, a better word is yearning; I'm yearning for Jesus to come today, right now, mainly because I'm really tired. Tired of the junk, the discouragement, the harsh circumstances of this world. I hurt for my friends who are hurting. I'm burdened for the sick. I'm standing with the parents of young kids and teenagers carrying an overwhelming load or facing incredibly challenging circumstances. My heart aches for those of us on this side of heaven and I'm just ready for Jesus to come claim us. That being said, after reading this week's passages I'm feeling pretty convicted because my desire for Jesus' return is out of hopelessness. I know we're all going to feel some measure of hopelessness when the brokenness of the world reveals itself so openly. However, today I feel a need to shift my perspective from *hopeless* to *hopeful*. I can have hope because I know He is faithful to fulfill His promises. The end of the story is already written (literally; read 1 Thessalonian 4:13-18 for a glimpse). He will return and when He does, He'll take me with Him to be with the Father. The fact that I have a place waiting for me fills me with overwhelming, abounding hope. I'm going to take my eyes off my circumstances and turn them to Jesus. I'm praying Romans 15:13 for us today, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Rejoice, friends, because hope does not disappoint!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, 2:19-20, 3:13, 4:13-18, 5:23-24

1. To whom did the Thessalonians turn and serve?
2. Who were the Thessalonians waiting on?
3. What will Jesus do when He returns?

What Do You Think?

What do you think Jesus' return to earth will be like?

What Do You Do?

Creatively show what a strengthened heart means – draw a picture, write a poem, choreograph a dance, etc. Bring it to the KidPix or send a picture/video of your work to kids@wearecentral.org for 3 extra tokens.

CORE COMPETENCY: Hope

I cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 1:15

"But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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